

## **PROPOSAL: THE IMPACT OF FELON DISENFRANCHISEMENT LAWS ON TURNOUT, ELECTION OUTCOMES AND RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION**

**Ebonya Washington, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics**

Four million Americans have been stripped of their right to vote due to felony convictions. While the majority of states (48) prohibit those in prison from voting, some 14 states continue to withhold voting rights even after the prison sentence is completed. Given the racial and gender disparities in arrest and incarceration rates, these laws result in a large proportion (14%) of black men being disenfranchised.

This project will exploit variation in state disenfranchisement laws across states and over time to identify the impact of these laws on turnout, election outcomes and the distribution of resources to communities of varying racial composition. The research assistant will be responsible for law library research, data entry and possibly some statistical analysis. Knowledge of Excel is a must. Knowledge of STATA is a plus.

### **SUMMARY**

**Anna Peterson, Class of 2006**

The Felon Disenfranchisement Project seeks to determine the effects of felon disenfranchisement laws on voter turnout and election results by running various regressions and interpreting coefficients on key variables at the county level. I was responsible for preparing the data to run these regressions. More specifically, I was responsible for gathering and merging voting data, population data, and other county data such as median family income and the percent of the population below the poverty level.

After downloading the data from various websites, I created variables needed in the project from the variables available in the datasets. The often unclear nature of the data led me to contact the websites' helpline in order to clarify the definitions of variables and other uncertainties. I then began the process of standardizing each dataset so as to be able to merge the individual sets into one single dataset on which the regression would be run. Eventually, the final dataset was complete, and I was able to run a variety of regressions on the data during my final week on the project. At this point, unfortunately, I have not yet had adequate time to analyze and interpret the regression results.

During my ROME experience, I gained a thorough understanding of the laborious process of gathering and preparing data in order to perform regressions. I now feel confident in my abilities to accomplish this type of task. Additionally, I gained much familiarity with STATA, the statistical program I used during this project. I also believe this experience will be invaluable to me next year when I begin my senior project. Working with a professor was also a great experience. Overall, I found this project extremely helpful in introducing me to the world of econometric data analysis.