
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 97 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY SIMS, HILL-EVANS, SANCHEZ, SCHLOSSBERG, LEE,
WEBSTER, INNAMORATO, SCHWEYER, McCLINTON, KINKEAD AND ROZZI,
MAY 5, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, MAY 5, 2021

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a
2 study on voting patterns and knowledge about voting rights
3 among formerly incarcerated qualified electors in
4 Pennsylvania and submit a report of its findings and
5 recommendations to the House of Representatives.

6 WHEREAS, The Department of Corrections operates facilities
7 where more than 40,000 incarcerated Pennsylvanians reside; and

8 WHEREAS, State law provides that individuals with a felony
9 conviction may exercise their right to vote upon release from a
10 correctional facility; and

11 WHEREAS, This Commonwealth is one of 18 states where former
12 felons regain the right to vote upon release; and

13 WHEREAS, Confusion over the laws of different states and
14 changes in Commonwealth law in recent decades may lead some
15 formerly incarcerated Pennsylvanians to believe they have
16 permanently lost the right to vote; and

17 WHEREAS, Some states disenfranchise individuals convicted of
18 misdemeanors, causing uncertainty among Pennsylvanians who are
19 not informed about the Commonwealth's voting laws; and

1 WHEREAS, A 2005 report published by The Sentencing Project
2 found that 37% of local officials surveyed in several states
3 were unfamiliar with their state's voting eligibility law or
4 unable to describe it correctly; and

5 WHEREAS, A lack of recent information about the voting
6 patterns of qualified voters who were formerly incarcerated in
7 this Commonwealth clouds the ability of the General Assembly to
8 act to ensure that all qualified electors are aware of their
9 right to vote and able to exercise it; and

10 WHEREAS, Ensuring that formerly incarcerated Pennsylvanians
11 are aware of and able to exercise the right to vote may increase
12 community and civic engagement; and

13 WHEREAS, Collecting data about the voting habits and
14 awareness of formerly incarcerated Pennsylvanians will help
15 policymakers identify problems, address existing knowledge gaps
16 and increase voter engagement; therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint
18 State Government Commission to conduct a study on voting
19 patterns and knowledge about voting rights among formerly
20 incarcerated qualified electors in Pennsylvania and submit a
21 report of its findings and recommendations to the House of
22 Representatives; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That the study conducted by the Joint State
24 Government Commission include, but not be limited to, the
25 following:

26 (1) Rates of voter participation among qualified
27 electors who were formerly incarcerated.

28 (2) The number of qualified electors who were formerly
29 incarcerated.

30 (3) The relationship between length of incarceration and

1 rates of voter participation.

2 (4) Self-reported information about future voting
3 intentions from qualified electors who were formerly
4 incarcerated.

5 (5) Information relating to the knowledge of corrections
6 employees about the relevant laws permitting formerly
7 incarcerated Pennsylvanians to vote.

8 (6) Self-reported experiences with incorrect information
9 about felony or misdemeanor disenfranchisement during a
10 period of incarceration.

11 (7) Barriers that formerly incarcerated qualified
12 electors face when attempting to exercise the right to vote.

13 (8) Recommendations to improve the civic knowledge of
14 qualified electors who were formerly incarcerated and
15 corrections employees;

16 and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission accept
18 and review oral or written comments, documents and other
19 information from individuals seeking to provide input regarding
20 this study; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue a
22 report of its findings and recommendations to the House of
23 Representatives no later than one year after the adoption of
24 this resolution.