



IOWA HOUSE DEMOCRATS

BILL SUMMARY

Restoration of Voting Rights HJR 14

Status of Bill: House Calendar
Committee: Judiciary Committee (21-0)
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Lead Democrat: Rep. Wolfe
Floor Manager: Rep. Kaufmann

Background

In 2005 on July 4th former Governor Tom Vilsack put into effect Executive Order 42 which restored the voting rights to felons in Iowa who had completed their sentences for their convictions. The order was in effect for 6 years. According to the Brennan Center for Justice an estimated 115,000 citizens were given their voting rights back.

When Governor Branstad retook office in 2011, he rescinded Executive Order 42. The elimination of Executive Order 42 required a person convicted of a felony to apply to the Governor's office for approval to get the person's rights restored. The original requirement after the rescission of Executive Order 42 required a credit check and the paying off all fines, restitutions and court costs. The process now includes 29 questions about the person's criminal backgrounds, requires payment of a fee for a criminal history check, and requires proof the person is making a "good-faith" effort to pay court debts. In February 2019, Governor Reynolds announced a new voting rights application for felons. The governor's press release on the new application form stated the form is simplified and easier to understand. The form removes the requirement to submit a background check and the related \$15 fee and does not require the collection of redundant financial documentation. Governor Reynolds also announced her intention to grant or deny applications within one month of receipt. The new application can be found at governor.iowa.gov/services/voting-rights-restoration.

Iowa is one of only two states, along with Kentucky, that imposes a permanent ban on voting for anyone with a felony conviction unless the governor restores the person's voting rights.

To amend the Iowa Constitution, a resolution must be passed in two consecutive General Assemblies. If the same language is passed in two consecutive General Assemblies the proposed amendment is put before the voters in the state at the next general election. If the voters approve the amendment by a majority vote, the Iowa Constitution is amended.

Bill Summary

Amends the Iowa Constitution to provide that a person found guilty of a felony is not entitled to be an eligible voter in the state until the person has discharged his or her sentence. Under the current Iowa Constitution, anyone convicted of an "infamous crime" is not entitled to vote in the state unless the person's rights are restored by the governor.