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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **SB 25**

#### ***AN ACT RESTORING ELECTORAL PRIVILEGES TO FELONY CONVICTS WHO ARE ON PAROLE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill restores the voting rights of convicted felons on parole, except those convicted of an election-related felony. Under current law, convicted felons may not become electors until discharged from confinement and parole, and those convicted of election-related felonies may not become electors until any probation ends.

Current law requires the corrections commissioner to (1) give the person upon release a document certifying his or her release from confinement and discharge from parole, if applicable, and (2) transmit on a monthly basis to the secretary of the state a list of all felony convicts released from confinement and discharged from parole, if applicable. The bill instead requires the commissioner to (1) provide the certification document upon a person's release from confinement and not upon parole discharge and (2) include all felony convicts released from confinement on the list, for the secretary of the state regardless of whether or not they are on parole.

Current law requires electoral privileges to be automatically restored if, at the time of such felony conviction, the person was (1) an elector and (2) residing in the same municipality as he or she is upon release from confinement and discharge from parole. If he or she was not an elector at the time of conviction, or was an elector but was living in a different municipality, then by law the person must register to vote in order for electoral privileges to be granted or restored. Under the bill, these requirements additionally apply to parolees.

The bill also permits convicted felons on parole to circulate nominating petitions.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Parole***

Parole is a period of conditional supervised release following incarceration. The Board of Pardons and Paroles has independent decision-making authority to (1) grant or deny parole, (2) set conditions of parole, and (3) rescind or revoke parole (CGS § 54-124a).

Inmates sentenced to more than two years in prison can be considered for parole. Inmates convicted of non-violent crimes are generally eligible for parole after serving 50% of their sentence. Inmates who committed violent crimes are eligible after serving 85% of their sentence. Those convicted of certain crimes, like murder, are not eligible for parole (CGS § 54-125a).

In some circumstances, inmates nearing the end of their sentence or scheduled parole release date can be released before that date. The board can also release certain inmates on medical or compassionate parole (due to physical or mental debilitation).

The board can release someone on parole if there is a reasonable probability that the inmate will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and the release is not incompatible with the welfare of society. The parole release panel conducting the parole hearing sets the terms and conditions for the inmate's parole. Department of Correction personnel supervise inmates on parole (CGS § 54-125a). The law requires an incremental sanctions system for parole violators and allows the parolee to be returned to custody.

### ***Related Bill***

HB 7213, favorably reported by the Government Administration and Elections Committee, also restores the voting rights of convicted felons on parole and permits such individuals to circulate nominating petitions. In addition, it removes the payment of all fines related to a felony conviction as a condition for restoring the electoral privileges.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 10 Nay 4 (03/29/2019)