Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7213
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTORAL PRIVILEGES OF CERTAIN PAROLEES AND CHALLENGERS IN THE POLLING PLACE.
Vote Date: 3/29/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/27/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Co-Sponsors
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Current state statute allows formerly incarcerated individuals that are on probation to have full voting rights. Individuals out on parole, however, are not allowed to vote. This disparity in rights for those who are reentering the community can be confusing. The bill would restore the voting rights of convicted felons on parole and permits such individuals to circulate nominating petitions. The bill also removes a piece of antiquated statutory language, by eliminating the term challenger. This term does not currently apply to current Election Day procedures.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Denise W. Merrill, Secretary of the State: Secretary of The State Merrill provided testimony in support of HB 7213. She stated in her written testimony that those who are leaving incarceration are often confused as to at what stage in leaving the criminal justice system their right to vote gets returned. She stated that it is important that those reentering the community to quickly become invested in their community by having their voting rights restored. Secretary Merrill stated in written testimony that her office is willing to work with the Judicial branch and Department of Corrections on how best to implement these changes should this bill become law.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
Julia Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (CCNA): The CT Community of Nonprofit Alliance provided testimony in support for HB 7213. They stated that there is a significant statistical benefit for reducing recidivism for offenders returning to the community after serving a prison sentence if they are given their full legal rights back after release. CCNA quoted a study that determined there is a reduction of 22% in recidivism for those given their full constitutional rights after incarceration versus those that were not.

American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT): The ACLU provided testimony in support of HB 7213. They stated that having individuals that are citizens but not able to engage in a citizen's most fundamental right creates an oppressed class of citizen that is subject to the rules and taxation required of everyone else but without the same rights and privileges.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Nicholas Rogers  
Committee Clerk  
Date: 4/13/19