

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 235

By Senators Jeffries, Grady, Woelfel, and Hamilton

[Introduced January 16, 2023; referred
to the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §3-2-2 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to
 2 voting rights of formerly incarcerated individuals; and restoring suffrage for a person
 3 incarcerated for a felony conviction upon release.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 3. VOTING BY ABSENTEES.

§3-2-2. Eligibility to register to vote.

1 (a) Any person who possesses the constitutional qualifications for voting may register to
 2 vote. To be qualified, a person must be a citizen of the United States and a legal resident of West
 3 Virginia and of the county where he or she is applying to register, shall be at least 18 years of age,
 4 except that a person who is at least 17 years of age and who will be 18 years of age by the time of
 5 the next ensuing general election may also be permitted to register, and ~~shall~~ may not be
 6 otherwise legally disqualified: *Provided*, That a registered voter who has not reached 18 years of
 7 age may vote both partisan and nonpartisan ballots in a federal, state, county, municipal or special
 8 primary election if he or she will be 18 years of age by the time of the corresponding general
 9 election.

10 (b) Any person who has been convicted of a felony, treason, or bribery in an election, under
 11 either state or federal law, is disqualified and is not eligible to register or to continue to be
 12 registered to vote while serving his or her sentence, including any period of incarceration,
 13 probation or parole related thereto. A person's right to register to vote is automatically restored
 14 upon his or her release from incarceration for such felony conviction, whether or not the person is
 15 on probation, parole, or supervised release. Any person who has been declared mentally
 16 incompetent by a court of competent jurisdiction is disqualified and shall not be eligible to register
 17 or to continue to be registered to vote for as long as that disability continues.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to restore voting rights to formerly convicted voters upon release from incarceration in all circumstances.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.