

By: Senator(s) Hickman

To: Elections

SENATE BILL NO. 2280

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE EASE ACCESS TO SUFFRAGE (EASE) ACT; TO
 2 ESTABLISH THE EASE ACCESS TO SUFFRAGE PROGRAM WITHIN THE EXTERNAL
 3 AFFAIRS DIVISION OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE; TO
 4 PROVIDE THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM SHALL BE TO PUBLISH THE
 5 CRITERIA FOR THE RESTORATION OF SUFFRAGE IN MISSISSIPPI, TO CREATE
 6 A PUBLIC PORTAL FOR APPLICATIONS, TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE
 7 SUFFRAGE PROCESS AND TO ENSURE THAT A PERSON'S RIGHT TO VOTE IS
 8 FULLY RESTORED FOR THE NEXT ELECTION AFTER THE RESTORATION OF THE
 9 RIGHT BY THE LEGISLATURE UNDER ARTICLE 12, SECTION 253 OF THE
 10 MISSISSIPPI CONSTITUTION OF 1890; TO SET FORTH CERTAIN CRITERIA
 11 FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE RIGHT TO SUFFRAGE; TO REQUIRE THE
 12 DIVISION TO CREATE A PUBLIC PORTAL FOR APPLICATIONS; TO REQUIRE
 13 THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE
 14 PROGRAM THROUGH A MEDIA CAMPAIGN; TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF
 15 STATE TO COORDINATE WITH CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE IN
 16 DETERMINING THE CRITERIA FOR THE RESTORATION OF SUFFRAGE AND THE
 17 PROGRAM; TO AUTHORIZE THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO
 18 PROMULGATE RULES OR REGULATIONS TO ADMINISTER THIS SECTION; TO
 19 REQUIRE THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO PROMULGATE CLEAR
 20 RULES AND REGULATIONS TO ENSURE THAT A PERSON'S RIGHT TO VOTE IS
 21 FULLY RESTORED FOR THE NEXT ELECTION AFTER THE RESTORATION OF
 22 SUFFRAGE UNDER ARTICLE 12, SECTION 253 OF THE MISSISSIPPI
 23 CONSTITUTION OF 1890; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

24 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

25 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the
 26 "Ease Access to Suffrage Act" or the "EASE Act."



27 **SECTION 2.** As used in this act, the following terms shall
28 have the meaning herein ascribed unless the context clearly
29 requires otherwise:

30 (a) "Department" means the Office of the Secretary of
31 State.

32 (b) "Division" means the External Affairs Division
33 within the department.

34 (c) "Program" means the Ease Access to Suffrage Program
35 established in Section 3 of this act.

36 (d) "Suffrage bill" means a bill that restores the
37 right to vote of a person who was disenfranchised.

38 **SECTION 3.** (1) The Ease Access to Suffrage Program is
39 established within the External Affairs Division of the
40 department.

41 (2) The purpose of the program shall be to:

42 (a) Publish the criteria for the restoration of
43 suffrage in Mississippi;

44 (b) Create a public portal for applications;

45 (c) Raise awareness about the suffrage process; and

46 (d) Ensure that that a person's right to vote is fully
47 restored for the next election after the restoration of suffrage
48 by the Legislature under Article 12, Section 253 of the
49 Mississippi Constitution of 1890.

50 **SECTION 4.** The published criteria within the program shall
51 include, but not be limited to:



52 (a) How long an individual should be released from the
53 custody of the Department of Corrections before requesting the
54 filing of a suffrage bill;

55 (b) The required information for the drafting of a
56 suffrage bill;

57 (c) The proof of payment on fines, fees or restitution
58 if needed;

59 (d) The proof of any completed programs of
60 rehabilitation if needed; and

61 (e) Other criteria as required by the Mississippi
62 Constitution or either chamber of the Legislature.

63 **SECTION 5.** (1) The program shall include a public portal
64 for applications from persons to the Legislature for the
65 restoration of the right of suffrage. The public portal shall
66 regularly update an applicant on the status of the application, to
67 include its acceptance or rejection.

68 (2) It shall be the duty of an applicant to retain a member
69 of the Mississippi House of Representatives or the Mississippi
70 Senate to sponsor a suffrage bill under the program.

71 (3) Suffrage bills shall be prepared and drafted by the
72 Legislative Services Offices of either the House or the Senate.
73 The division may prepare a draft of a suffrage bill as part of the
74 portal to be used in the preparation and drafting of the actual
75 suffrage bill.



76 (4) Once a suffrage bill is filed in either chamber, the
77 portal shall update an applicant on the bill's status in the
78 Legislature.

79 **SECTION 6.** The department shall raise awareness of the
80 program via a media campaign on one or more public facing
81 platforms to include, but not be limited to, a website, social
82 media platforms or a newspaper.

83 **SECTION 7.** In establishing the criteria for suffrage bills
84 and the rules and regulations required by subsection (2) of
85 Section 8 of this act, the Secretary of State shall coordinate
86 with the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House, the Chairs
87 the Senate Judiciary, Division B Committee, the Senate Elections
88 Committee, the House Judiciary B Committee and the House
89 Apportionment and Elections Committee.

90 **SECTION 8.** (1) The department shall have the authority to
91 promulgate rules or regulations to administer this section.

92 (2) The department shall promulgate clear rules and
93 regulations to ensure that a person's right to vote is fully
94 restored for the next election after the restoration of suffrage
95 under Article 12, Section 253 of the Mississippi Constitution of
96 1890.

97 **SECTION 9.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
98 and after July 1, 2024.

