

By: Senator(s) Hickman

To: Elections

SENATE BILL NO. 2626

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 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:



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 9. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2025.

