

By: Representatives Denny, McGee, Sykes,
Baria, Hines, Dixon

To: Apportionment and
Elections

HOUSE BILL NO. 637

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE VOTER ENFRANCHISEMENT JOINT LEGISLATIVE
2 STUDY COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF NONVIOLENT OFFENSES ON
3 FRANCHISEMENT; TO STUDY ANY POTENTIAL POLICY OR LAW CHANGES THAT
4 WOULD PROVIDE NONVIOLENT FELONS WITH THE ABILITY TO HAVE THEIR
5 RIGHT TO VOTE RESTORED UPON COMPLETING ALL SENTENCING
6 REQUIREMENTS, ANY NEGATIVE SOCIETAL EFFECTS THAT FALL UPON
7 NONVIOLENT FELONS WHO HAVE COMPLETED ALL OF THEIR SENTENCING
8 REQUIREMENTS BUT HAVE NOT HAD THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE RESTORED, AND
9 ANY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED BY OTHER
10 STATE LEGISLATURES TO RESTORE THE RIGHT TO VOTE TO NONVIOLENT
11 FELONS WHO HAVE COMPLETED ALL OF THEIR SENTENCING REQUIREMENTS; TO
12 REQUIRE A REPORT TO THE 2020 REGULAR SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE;
13 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby created the Voter
16 Enfranchisement Joint Legislative Study Committee to examine the
17 impact of nonviolent offenses to franchisement, establish
18 measurable goals and benchmarks for the State of Mississippi
19 relating to suffrage, and study available methods to ensure that
20 all persons who are eligible to vote face no continued barriers to
21 registration or voting that result from their nonviolent felony
22 convictions once they have completed all of their sentencing



23 requirements. The committee shall, at a minimum, study and report
24 to the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature the following:

25 (a) Any potential policy or law changes that would
26 provide nonviolent felons with the ability to have their right to
27 vote restored upon completing all sentencing requirements;

28 (b) Any negative societal effects that fall upon
29 nonviolent felons who have completed all of their sentencing
30 requirements but have not had their right to vote restored; and

31 (c) Any policies and procedures that have been
32 implemented by other state legislatures to restore the right to
33 vote to nonviolent felons who have completed all of their
34 sentencing requirements.

35 The joint committee shall make a report of its findings and
36 recommendations to the Legislature by January 1, 2020, including
37 any recommended legislation.

38 (2) The joint committee shall be composed of the following
39 fourteen (14) members:

40 (a) The Chair and Vice Chair of the House Apportionment
41 and Elections Committee;

42 (b) The Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Elections
43 Committee;

44 (c) The Chair and Vice Chair of the House of
45 Representatives Judiciary B Committee;

46 (d) The Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Judiciary,
47 Division B Committee;



48 (e) The Secretary of State, or his or her designee;

49 (f) The Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of
50 Corrections, or his or her designee;

51 (g) One (1) law enforcement officer, to be appointed by
52 the Governor;

53 (h) One (1) judge currently sitting on a bench, to be
54 appointed by the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court;

55 (i) One (1) prosecutor, to be appointed by the
56 Governor; and

57 (j) One (1) public defender, to be appointed by the
58 Governor.

59 (3) Appointments shall be made within thirty (30) days after
60 the effective date of this act. The joint committee shall hold
61 its first meeting before August 1, 2019. The Chair of the House
62 Apportionment and Elections Committee and the Chair of the Senate
63 Elections Committee shall serve as cochairs of the committee.

64 (4) A majority of the members of the committee shall
65 constitute a quorum. In the adoption of the rules, resolutions
66 and reports, an affirmative vote of a majority of the members
67 shall be required. All members shall be notified in writing of
68 all meetings, and such notices shall be mailed at least five (5)
69 days before the date on which a meeting is to be held.

70 (5) To effectuate the purposes of this section, any
71 department, division, board, bureau, committee or agency of the
72 state or any political subdivision thereof, shall, at the request



73 of the cochairs of the committee, provide such facilities,
74 assistance and data as will enable the committee to properly carry
75 out its duties.

76 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
77 and after its passage.

