

S. 975

Sponsors: Senator Leventis

Prefiled in the Senate on December 13, 2005

Currently residing in the Senate Committee on **Judiciary**

Summary: Voter registration for High School and Ex Felons

A BILL

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 7-5-275 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IN THE TENTH GRADE BE FURNISHED A VOTER REGISTRATION FORM AND BE INSTRUCTED IN A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OR THROUGH A METHOD APPROVED BY THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT TO BE APPRISED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING, TO ALLOW A STUDENT TO OPT OUT OF THE PROCESS, TO REQUIRE A HIGH SCHOOL REGISTRANT BE MAILED A VOTER REGISTRATION CARD BEFORE THE FIRST ELECTION IN WHICH HE IS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE; AND TO PROVIDE THAT A CITIZEN OTHERWISE INELIGIBLE TO VOTE WHO IS RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION RECEIVE A REGISTRATION FORM IN THE MAIL WITH A LETTER EXPLAINING THAT HIS VOTING RIGHTS HAVE BEEN RESTORED AND THAT HE IS ELIGIBLE TO REGISTER AND VOTE.

Whereas, voter registration laws in South Carolina have been historically used to disenfranchise citizens, it is the intent of the General Assembly of this State that all citizens of voting age, not otherwise prohibited by law, be guaranteed the right to vote. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 3, Chapter 5, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 7-5-275. (A) The State Department of Education and the State Election Commission, the entities charged by law with registering a person to vote, shall ensure that all high school students in the tenth grade have the opportunity to complete a voter registration form. The high school shall submit the form to the appropriate registration office.

(B) A student may opt out of the voter registration process for religious or philosophical reasons.

(C) All students, through their social studies, civics classes, or a manner decided by the local school board, shall have the opportunity to discuss the importance of registering to vote and voting.

(D) A registrant must be mailed a voter registration card before the first election in which he is eligible to vote. Each registrant must be added to the list of voters in his precinct and on the master list of registered voters.

(E) The State Election Commission, in conjunction with the Department of Corrections, Department of Pardon, Probation and Parole, circuit solicitors, and clerks of court shall ensure that when a person completes a prison sentence, if he is not otherwise ineligible to vote, must receive a voter registration form in the mail with a letter explaining that his voting rights have been restored and that he is eligible to register and vote.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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