**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, SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE, 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, TO PROVIDE THAT A CITIZEN OTHERWISE INELIGIBLE TO VOTE WHO IS RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION RECEIVE A REGISTRATION FORM WITH A LETTER EXPLAINING THAT HIS VOTING RIGHTS HAVE BEEN RESTORED AND THAT HE IS ELIGIBLE TO REGISTER AND VOTE, AND TO REQUIRE COUNTY ELECTION BOARDS TO REGISTER CITIZENS WHO SWEAR OR AFFIRM THE VOTER DECLARATION WITHOUT ADDITIONAL PROOF.

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. The State Department of Education and the State Election Commission, and the county boards of election, shall ensure that all high school students seventeen years of age 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 and Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services, shall ensure that when a person completes a prison sentence, if he is not otherwise ineligible to vote, he must receive a voter registration form with a letter explaining that his voting rights have been restored and that he is eligible to register and vote.

(F) County boards of election shall not require an otherwise qualified elector to provide proof of completion of a sentence for a disabling criminal conviction, beyond signing the ‘Voter Declaration’ on the voter registration form, where the registrant swears or affirms, under penalty of law, that: ‘I have served my entire sentence, including probation or parole, or I have received a pardon for the conviction.’”

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

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