

LEGISLATIVE BILL 20

Became law April 18, 2024, without approval of the Governor.

Introduced by Wayne, 13; Blood, 3; Dungan, 26; Raybould, 28; Hunt, 8; Day, 49; Conrad, 46; Cavanaugh, J., 9; McDonnell, 5; Vargas, 7; Bosn, 25; Fredrickson, 20.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to voting rights; to amend sections 29-112, 29-113, 32-313, and 32-1530, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections 29-2264, 32-312, and 83-1,118, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022; to provide for the restoration of voting rights upon completion of a felony sentence; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original sections.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 29-112, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

29-112 Any person sentenced to be punished for any felony, when the sentence is not reversed or annulled, is incompetent to be a juror or to hold any office of honor, trust, or profit within this state, unless such person receives from the Board of Pardons of this state a warrant of discharge, in which case such person shall be restored to such civil rights and privileges as enumerated or limited by the Board of Pardons. The warrant of discharge shall not release such person from the costs of conviction unless otherwise ordered by the Board of Pardons.

Any person sentenced to be punished for any felony, when the sentence is not reversed or annulled, is not qualified to vote until such person ~~two years after he or she~~ has completed the sentence, including any parole term. The disqualification is automatically removed at such time.

Sec. 2. Section 29-113, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

29-113 Any person who has been convicted of a felony under the laws of any other state shall be deemed incompetent to be a juror or to hold any office of honor, trust, or profit within this state unless such person has been restored to civil rights under the laws of the state in which the felony was committed.

Any person who has been convicted of a felony under the laws of any other state is not qualified to vote until ~~two years after~~ such person has completed his or her sentence, including any parole term.

Sec. 3. Section 29-2264, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, is amended to read:

29-2264 (1) Whenever any person is placed on probation by a court and satisfactorily completes the conditions of his or her probation for the entire period or is discharged from probation prior to the termination of the period of probation, the sentencing court shall issue an order releasing the offender from probation. Such order in all felony cases shall provide notice that the person's voting rights are restored upon ~~two years after~~ completion of probation. The order shall include information on restoring other civil rights through the pardon process, including application to and hearing by the Board of Pardons.

(2) Whenever any person is convicted of an offense and is placed on probation by the court, is sentenced to a fine only, or is sentenced to community service, he or she may, after satisfactory fulfillment of the conditions of probation for the entire period or after discharge from probation prior to the termination of the period of probation and after payment of any fine and completion of any community service, petition the sentencing court to set aside the conviction.

(3)(a) Except as provided in subdivision (3)(b) of this section, whenever any person is convicted of an offense and is sentenced other than as provided in subsection (2) of this section, but is not sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than one year, such person may, after completion of his or her sentence, petition the sentencing court to set aside the conviction.

(b) A petition under subdivision (3)(a) of this section shall be denied if filed:

(i) By any person with a criminal charge pending in any court in the United States or in any other country;

(ii) During any period in which the person is required to register under the Sex Offender Registration Act;

(iii) For any misdemeanor or felony motor vehicle offense under section 28-306 or the Nebraska Rules of the Road; or

(iv) Within two years after a denial of a petition to set aside a conviction under this subsection.

(4) In determining whether to set aside the conviction, the court shall consider:

(a) The behavior of the offender after sentencing;

(b) The likelihood that the offender will not engage in further criminal activity; and

(c) Any other information the court considers relevant.

(5) The court may grant the offender's petition and issue an order setting

aside the conviction when in the opinion of the court the order will be in the best interest of the offender and consistent with the public welfare. The order shall:

- (a) Nullify the conviction;
- (b) Remove all civil disabilities and disqualifications imposed as a result of the conviction; and
- (c) Notify the offender that he or she should consult with an attorney regarding the effect of the order, if any, on the offender's ability to possess a firearm under state or federal law.

(6) The setting aside of a conviction in accordance with the Nebraska Probation Administration Act shall not:

- (a) Require the reinstatement of any office, employment, or position which was previously held and lost or forfeited as a result of the conviction;
- (b) Preclude proof of a plea of guilty whenever such plea is relevant to the determination of an issue involving the rights or liabilities of someone other than the offender;
- (c) Preclude proof of the conviction as evidence of the commission of the offense whenever the fact of its commission is relevant for the purpose of impeaching the offender as a witness, except that the order setting aside the conviction may be introduced in evidence;
- (d) Preclude use of the conviction for the purpose of determining sentence on any subsequent conviction of a criminal offense;
- (e) Preclude the proof of the conviction as evidence of the commission of the offense in the event an offender is charged with a subsequent offense and the penalty provided by law is increased if the prior conviction is proved;
- (f) Preclude the proof of the conviction to determine whether an offender is eligible to have a subsequent conviction set aside in accordance with the Nebraska Probation Administration Act;
- (g) Preclude use of the conviction as evidence of commission of the offense for purposes of determining whether an application filed or a license issued under sections 71-1901 to 71-1906.01, the Child Care Licensing Act, or the Children's Residential Facilities and Placing Licensure Act or a certificate issued under sections 79-806 to 79-815 should be denied, suspended, or revoked;
- (h) Preclude use of the conviction as evidence of serious misconduct or final conviction of or pleading guilty or nolo contendere to a felony or misdemeanor for purposes of determining whether an application filed or a certificate issued under sections 81-1401 to 81-1414.19 should be denied, suspended, or revoked;
- (i) Preclude proof of the conviction as evidence whenever the fact of the conviction is relevant to a determination of the registration period under section 29-4005;
- (j) Relieve a person who is convicted of an offense for which registration is required under the Sex Offender Registration Act of the duty to register and to comply with the terms of the act;
- (k) Preclude use of the conviction for purposes of section 28-1206;
- (l) Affect the right of a victim of a crime to prosecute or defend a civil action;
- (m) Affect the assessment or accumulation of points under section 60-4,182; or
- (n) Affect eligibility for, or obligations relating to, a commercial driver's license.

(7) For purposes of this section, offense means any violation of the criminal laws of this state or any political subdivision of this state including, but not limited to, any felony, misdemeanor, infraction, traffic infraction, violation of a city or village ordinance, or violation of a county resolution.

(8) Except as otherwise provided for the notice in subsection (1) of this section, changes made to this section by Laws 2005, LB 713, shall be retroactive in application and shall apply to all persons, otherwise eligible in accordance with the provisions of this section, whether convicted prior to, on, or subsequent to September 4, 2005.

(9) The changes made to this section by Laws 2018, LB146, and Laws 2020, LB881, shall apply to all persons otherwise eligible under this section, without regard to the date of the conviction sought to be set aside.

Sec. 4. Section 32-312, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, is amended to read:

32-312 The registration application prescribed by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 32-304 or 32-311.01 shall provide the instructional statements and request the information from the applicant as provided in this section.

CITIZENSHIP—"Are you a citizen of the United States of America?" with boxes to check to indicate whether the applicant is or is not a citizen of the United States.

AGE—"Are you at least eighteen years of age or will you be eighteen years of age on or before the first Tuesday following the first Monday of November of this year?" with boxes to check to indicate whether or not the applicant will be eighteen years of age or older on election day.

WARNING—"If you checked 'no' in response to either of these questions, do not complete this application."

NAME—the name of the applicant giving the first and last name in full, the middle name in full or the middle initial, and the maiden name of the applicant, if applicable.

RESIDENCE—the name and number of the street, avenue, or other location of the dwelling where the applicant resides if there is a number. If the registrant resides in a hotel, apartment, tenement house, or institution, such additional information shall be included as will give the exact location of such registrant's place of residence. If the registrant lives in an incorporated or unincorporated area not identified by the use of roads, road names, or house numbers, the registrant shall state the section, township, and range of his or her residence and the corporate name of the school district as described in section 79-405 in which he or she is located.

POSTAL ADDRESS—the address at which the applicant receives mail if different from the residence address.

ADDRESS OF LAST REGISTRATION—the name and number of the street, avenue, or other location of the dwelling from which the applicant last registered.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS—the telephone numbers of the applicant. At the request of the applicant, a designation shall be made that a telephone number is an unlisted number, and such designation shall preclude the listing of such telephone number on any list of voter registrations.

EMAIL ADDRESS—an email address of the applicant. At the request of the applicant, a designation shall be made that the email address is private, and such designation shall preclude the listing of the applicant's email address on any list of voter registrations.

DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER OR LAST FOUR DIGITS OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER—if the applicant has a Nebraska driver's license, the license number, and if the applicant does not have a Nebraska driver's license, the last four digits of the applicant's social security number.

DATE OF APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION—the month, day, and year when the applicant presented himself or herself for registration, when the applicant completed and signed the registration application if the application was submitted by mail or delivered to the election official by the applicant's personal messenger or personal agent, or when the completed application was submitted if the registration application was completed pursuant to section 32-304.

PLACE OF BIRTH—show the state, country, kingdom, empire, or dominion where the applicant was born.

DATE OF BIRTH—show the date of the applicant's birth. The applicant shall be at least eighteen years of age or attain eighteen years of age on or before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November to have the right to register and vote in any election in the present calendar year.

REGISTRATION TAKEN BY—show the signature of the authorized official or staff member accepting the application pursuant to section 32-309 or 32-310 or at least one of the deputy registrars taking the application pursuant to section 32-306, if applicable.

PARTY AFFILIATION—show the party affiliation of the applicant as Democratic, Republican, or Other or show no party affiliation as Nonpartisan. (Note: If you wish to vote in both partisan and nonpartisan primary elections for state and local offices, you must indicate a political party affiliation on the registration application. If you register without a political party affiliation (nonpartisan), you will receive only the nonpartisan ballots for state and local offices at primary elections. If you register without a political party affiliation, you may vote in partisan primary elections for congressional offices.)

OTHER—information the Secretary of State determines will assist in the proper and accurate registration of the voter.

Immediately following the spaces for inserting information as provided in this section, the following statement shall be printed:

To the best of my knowledge and belief, I declare under penalty of election falsification that:

(1) I live in the State of Nebraska at the address provided in this application;

(2) I have not been convicted of a felony or, if convicted, ~~it has been at least two years since I have~~ completed my sentence for the felony, including any parole term;

(3) I have not been officially found to be non compos mentis (mentally incompetent); and

(4) I am a citizen of the United States.

Any registrant who signs this application knowing that any of the information in the application is false shall be guilty of a Class IV felony under section 32-1502 of the statutes of Nebraska. The penalty for a Class IV felony is up to two years imprisonment and twelve months post-release supervision, a fine of up to ten thousand dollars, or both.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE—require the applicant to affix his or her signature to the application.

Sec. 5. Section 32-313, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

32-313 (1) No person is qualified to vote or to register to vote who is non compos mentis or who has been convicted of treason under the laws of the state or of the United States unless restored to civil rights. No person who has been convicted of a felony under the laws of this state or any other state is qualified to vote or to register to vote until ~~two years after~~ the sentence is completed, including any parole term. The disqualification is automatically removed at such time.

(2) The clerk of any court in which a person is convicted of a felony shall prepare an abstract each month of each final judgment served by the clerk

convicting an elector of a felony. The clerk shall file the abstract with the election commissioner or county clerk of the elector's county of residence not later than the tenth day of the month following the month in which the abstract is prepared. The clerk of the court shall notify the election commissioner or county clerk in writing if any such conviction is overturned.

(3) Upon receiving notification from the United States Attorney of a felony conviction of a Nebraska resident in federal court or of the overturning of any such conviction, the Secretary of State shall forward the notice to the election commissioner or county clerk of the county of such person's residence. The election commissioner or county clerk shall remove the name of such person from the voter registration register upon receipt of notice of conviction.

Sec. 6. Section 32-1530, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

32-1530 Any person who votes (1) who is not a resident of this state or registered in the county or who at the time of election is not of the constitutionally prescribed age of a registered voter, (2) who is not a citizen of the United States, or (3) after being disqualified by law by reason of his or her conviction of a felony and prior to ~~the end of the two-year period after~~ completing the sentence, including any parole term, shall be guilty of a Class IV felony.

Sec. 7. Section 83-1,118, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, is amended to read:

83-1,118 (1) If, in the opinion of the board, upon receipt of information from the Director of Supervision and Services, a parolee has shown suitable compliance with his or her parole programming plan, the board may reduce the level of supervision for a parolee that is commensurate with the best interests of the parolee and is compatible with the protection of the public.

(2) The board shall discharge a parolee from parole when the time served in the custody of the department and the time served on parole equal the maximum term less good time.

(3) The department shall discharge a committed offender from the custody of the department when the time served in the facility equals the maximum term less good time.

(4) Upon completion of the lawful requirements of the sentence, the department shall provide the parolee or committed offender with a written notice regarding his or her civil rights. The notice shall inform the parolee or committed offender that voting rights are restored upon ~~two years after~~ completion of the sentence. The notice shall also include information on restoring other civil rights through the pardon process, including application to and hearing by the Board of Pardons.

(5) The Board of Parole may discharge a parolee from parole when such parolee is under the supervision of another state's correctional institution and such offender has reached the expiration date of his or her Nebraska parole term.

Sec. 8. Original sections 29-112, 29-113, 32-313, and 32-1530, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections 29-2264, 32-312, and 83-1,118, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, are repealed.