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**State Government Committee**

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**HB 2054**

**Brief Description:** Restoring voting rights to felons upon completion of supervision.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Darneille, Pettigrew, O'Brien, Upthegrove, Chase, Flannigan, Wood, Hudgins, Sullivan, Santos and Edwards.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Restores a felon's voting rights after he or she has completed all conditions of the sentence, except for financial obligations.

**Hearing Date:** 3/4/03

**Staff:** Anne Warwick (786-7291).

**Background:**

The state Constitution prohibits "all persons convicted of infamous crimes" from voting unless they have their civil rights restored. "Infamous crimes" is defined in statute as "a crime punishable by death in the state penitentiary or imprisonment in a state correctional facility." Only persons convicted of a felony may be sentenced to a state correctional facility.

A convicted felon's right to vote is restored once his or her sentence has been discharged. This includes payment of all financial obligations. Restoration of voting rights is accomplished as follows:

- For a person convicted of a crime committed on or after July 1, 1984, the Department of Corrections (DOC) notifies the sentencing court when the person has completed his or her sentence. The court then issues a certificate of discharge, which restores the civil rights of the person, including the right to vote.
- For a person convicted of a crime committed before July 1, 1984, the Indeterminate Sentencing Review Board (ISRB) issues the certificate of discharge.
- For a person convicted of an out-of-state crime, the person may petition the Clemency and Pardons Board for restoration of his or her voting rights. The board may recommend such restoration to the Governor.

The Department of Justice issues an educational pamphlet titled "Restoring Your Right to Vote" for Washington State residents needing guidance in restoring their civil rights. These pamphlets are available at the Office of the Secretary of State and county election departments.

**Summary of Bill:**

A person convicted of a felony may have his or her civil right to the elective process restored if he or she has completed all requirements of the sentence, excluding financial obligations. This does not affect or prevent the enforcement of the financial obligation or any other legal authority that excludes or prohibits the offender from having contact with a specified person or location that was contained in the judgement and sentence.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 26, 2003.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.