

AN ACT concerning criminal law.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Re-Entering Citizens Civics Education Act.

Section 5. Definitions. In this Act:

"Committed person" means a person committed to the Department.

"Commitment" means a judicially determined placement in the custody of the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice on the basis of conviction or delinquency.

"Correctional institution or facility" means a Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice building or part of a Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice building where committed persons are detained in a secure manner.

"Department" includes the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice, unless the text solely specifies a particular Department.

"Detainee" means a committed person in the physical custody of the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice.

"Director" includes the Director of the Department of

Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice unless the text solely specifies a particular Director.

"Discharge" means the end of a sentence or the final termination of a detainee's physical commitment to and confinement in the Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice.

"Peer educator" means an incarcerated citizen who is specifically trained in voting rights education, who shall conduct voting and civics education workshops for detainees scheduled for discharge within 12 months.

"Program" means the nonpartisan peer education and information instruction established by this Act.

"Re-entering citizen" means any United States citizen who is: 17 years of age or older; in the physical custody of the Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice; and scheduled to be re-entering society within 12 months.

Section 10. Purpose; program. The Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice shall provide a nonpartisan peer-led civics program throughout the correctional institutions of this State to teach civics to soon-to-be released citizens who will be re-entering society. The goal of the program is to promote the successful integration of re-entering citizens, promote democracy, and reduce rates of recidivism within this State. This program shall coincide with and enhance existing laws to ensure that

re-entering citizens understand their civic responsibility and know how to secure or regain their right to vote as part of the exit process.

Section 15. Curriculum and eligibility. The civics peer education program shall consist of a rigorous curriculum, and participants shall be instructed on subjects including, but not limited to, voting rights, governmental institutions, current affairs, and simulations of voter registration, election, and democratic processes. Each workshop shall consist of 3 sessions that are 90 minutes each and that do not need to be taken consecutively. The Department must offer re-entering citizens scheduled to be discharged within 12 months with the civics peer education program, and each re-entering citizen must enroll in the program one to 12 months prior to his or her expected date of release. This workshop must be included in the standard exit process. The Department should aim to include this workshop in conjunction with other pre-release procedures and movements. Delays in a workshop being provided shall not cause delays in discharge. Detainees may not be prevented from attending workshops due to staffing shortages, lockdowns, or to conflicts with family or legal visits, court dates, medical appointments, commissary visits, recreational sessions, dining, work, class, or bathing schedules. In case of conflict or staffing shortages, re-entering citizens must be given full opportunity to attend a workshop at a later time.

Section 20. Peer educator training. The civics peer education program shall be taught by peer educators who are citizens incarcerated in Department of Corrections and Department of Juvenile Justice facilities and specially trained by experienced peer educators and established nonpartisan civic organizations. Established nonpartisan civic organizations may be assisted by area political science or civics educators at colleges, universities, and high schools and by nonpartisan organizations providing re-entry services. The nonpartisan civic organizations shall provide adequate training to peer educators on matters including, but not limited to, voting rights, governmental institutions, current affairs, and simulations of voter registration, election, and democratic processes, and shall provide periodic updates to program content and to peer educators.

Section 25. Voter and civic education program; content.

(a) Program content shall provide the following:

(1) nonpartisan information on voting history procedures;

(2) nonpartisan definitions of local, State, and federal governmental institutions and offices; and

(3) examples and simulations of registration and voting processes.

(b) Established nonpartisan civic organizations shall

provide periodic updates to program content and, if applicable, peer educators. Updates shall reflect major relevant changes to election laws and processes in Illinois.

(c) Program content shall be delivered in the following manners:

(1) verbally via peer educators;

(2) broadcasts via Department of Corrections and Department of Juvenile Justice internal television channels; or

(3) printed information packets.

(d) Peer educators shall disseminate printed information for voting in the releasee's county, including, but not limited to, election authorities' addresses, all applicable Internet websites, and public contact information for all election authorities. This information shall be compiled into a civics handbook. The handbook shall also include key information condensed into a pocket information card.

(e) This information shall also be compiled electronically and posted on Department of Corrections' website along with the Department of Corrections' Community Support Advisory Councils websites.

(f) Department Directors shall ensure that the wardens or superintendents of all correctional institutions and facilities visibly post this information on all common areas of their respective institutions, and shall broadcast the same via in-house institutional information television channels.

Directors shall ensure that updated information is distributed in a timely, visible, and accessible manner.

(g) The Director of Corrections shall order, in a clearly visible area of each parole office within this State, the posting of a notice stipulating voter eligibility and that contains the current Internet website address and voter registration information provided by State Board of Elections regarding voting rights for citizens released from the custody of the Department.

(h) All program content and materials shall be distributed annually to the Community Support Advisory Councils of the Department of Corrections for use in re-entry programs across this State.

Section 30. Power of the Department. The Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice shall adopt rules to carry out this Act within 6 months after the effective date of this Act.

Section 35. Funding. The funding for the voting rights and registration peer education program shall be subject to appropriation by the General Assembly. The Department may use private or federal funding to administer the program, including, but not limited to, funds from the United States Department of Justice.

Section 40. Voter and civic education program monitoring and enforcement.

(a) The Director of Corrections and the Director of Juvenile Justice shall ensure that wardens or superintendents, program, educational, and security and movement staff permit these workshops to take place, and that re-entering citizens are escorted to workshops in a consistent and timely manner.

(b) Compliance with this Act shall be monitored by a report published annually by the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice and containing data, including numbers of re-entering citizens who enrolled in the program, numbers of re-entering citizens who completed the program, and total numbers of individuals discharged. Data shall be disaggregated by institution, discharge, or residence address of citizen, and other factors.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect on January 1, 2020.