

# BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

## Summary 2009 Voting Rights Restoration in the States August 6, 2009

### Highlights

- **Washington** enacted a new law that automatically restores the right to vote upon completion of sentence and eliminates the requirement that people pay all fees, fines and restitution before being eligible to vote.
- **Nevada** enacted a new law that requires the State Board of Pardons to adopt an expedited process for restoration of civil rights.
- The **Minnesota** legislature passed legislation that would require the department of corrections to notify individuals about their voting rights, but Governor Pawlenty vetoed the bill.
- The **Mississippi** House of Representatives passed a bill that would require judges to notify individuals about their voting rights upon conviction.
- Restoration bills in **Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky and New York** passed one house of the legislature.

### Summary of all 2009 bills

In the 2009 legislative session, a total of 79 bills were introduced in 25 states: AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, DE, GA, HI, KY, MD, MN, MS, NM, NH, NV, NY, OK, PA, SC, TX, TN, VA, WA, WI, and WY.

- Bills seeking to restore voting rights to people with felony convictions were introduced in 15 states:
  - Bills seeking to restore voting rights to people in prison were introduced in HI and NY;
  - Bills seeking to restore voting rights to people on probation and parole were introduced in AK, AL, GA, MN, NM, NY, TX and WI;

- Bills seeking to restore voting rights upon completion of sentence, or to reduce or eliminate waiting periods were introduced in DE, MS, TN, VA and WY;
- Bills proposing a constitutional amendment to restore voting rights to certain individuals were introduced in KY and VA.
- Bills seeking to provide notice to individuals about their right to vote were introduced in 9 states: AK, GA, MD, MN, MS, NY, OK, PA and SC.
- Bills addressing the legal financial obligations individuals have to pay in order to be eligible to vote were introduced in MS, TN and AL.
  - Bills in AL and MS sought to decrease the amount of the financial obligations;
  - A bill in TN sought to increase the amount of the financial obligations.
- Bills seeking to increase information sharing among government agencies to provide accurate lists of disenfranchised individuals were introduced in MD and NH.
- Bills seeking to provide information or clarification of voter eligibility on registration forms and absentee ballots were introduced in MS and NY.
- Bills seeking to clarify existing law were introduced in AL, AR and WA.
- Regressive bills seeking to increase the types of crimes or qualifications that disqualify individuals were introduced in AL, CA, MS and NV.

## **Status**

- The 2009 regular legislative sessions have ended in all but two states where bills addressing felony disenfranchisement were introduced.
  - PA and WI legislatures are in regular session until the end of 2009.
- Bills in AK, CA, DE, GA, HI, MN, NH, NY, OK, PA, SC, WA and WI will carry over to 2010.