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ATTORNEY GENERAL CAMPBELL, SECRETARY OF STATE GALVIN, MASSACHUSETTS SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION AND MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION COLLABORATE IN STATEWIDE EFFORT TO SUPPORT VOTING RIGHTS OF INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

BOSTON— To protect the voting rights of every eligible voter in Massachusetts, Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin, the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association (MSA) and the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) have joined together, to implement the requirements of the new VOTES Act, ensuring incarcerated individuals who are eligible to vote have access to voting information, understand their rights, and can exercise their voting privileges.

"Many incarcerated individuals are eligible to vote and want to be civically engaged — and they too deserve to have their vote and voice heard. I'm proud to join in this collaborative effort to provide eligible incarcerated individuals with information and access to the ballot which will serve to further advance the democratic principles of our Commonwealth," **said Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell.**

The collaboration with the Secretary of State's Office expands upon existing voting initiatives already underway in each of the Sheriff's Offices and the Department of Correction. These efforts include a multilingual messaging campaign focused on voting rights access and, new reporting requirements for the Sheriffs' Offices and the DOC.

"As President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association, I thank the Attorney General, Secretary of the Commonwealth, and our dedicated staff for their support on this important issue," **said Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi.** "Empowering those in our care to participate in the electoral process is the right thing to do, and it reinforces the principle that every citizen has a role in shaping our communities and our future."

Incarcerated individuals can vote if they are a U.S. citizen, a Massachusetts resident, at least 18 years old, not disqualified by law and not currently incarcerated for a felony conviction. Individuals who are in pretrial detention, awaiting sentencing, or serving time on a misdemeanor are eligible to vote so long as they are otherwise qualified.

"Through this election year, my Elections Division has been coordinating with the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association and the Department of Correction to ensure they have the information and materials needed to carry out their new duties under the VOTES Act," **said Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin.** "We are all committed to ensuring that any person who is eligible to vote, and wants to vote, is able to do so."

An incarcerated citizen can request an absentee ballot by submitting a signed request for a ballot to the local election office in the city or town of their legal voting residence. In most

cases, an incarcerated person's voting residence is the last place they lived before incarceration. Any signed request is an acceptable form of application for an absentee ballot. The Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office has also provided all Sheriffs' Offices and the Department of Correction with absentee ballot applications designed specifically for incarcerated voters.

Individuals housed within a Department of Correction facility who are not serving a felony sentence remain eligible to vote. This primarily includes those designated as pre-trial detainees or those under civil commitment. On average, approximately 500 individuals in DOC custody meet these eligibility criteria.

"The Massachusetts Department of Correction is committed to ensuring compliance with the VOTES Act. We have taken proactive steps to provide incarcerated individuals who are eligible and want to vote with the necessary information and resources to exercise their legal right to vote. Our department has implemented a comprehensive approach to voter education and absentee ballot access to facilitate eligible voter participation in the democratic process in accordance with state law," **said DOC Interim Commissioner Shawn Jenkins.**

For more information on how the AG's Office is protecting your right to vote, visit the Election Hub webpage full of resources and information that you can find here: mass.gov/PROTECTTHEVOTE.

AG Campbell reminds voters that if someone verbally or physically threatens or harasses you while you are trying to vote or interferes in some other way with your right to vote, you can call the **AG's Civil Rights Division** for help at **617-963-2917**. If you need immediate assistance, dial 911 or contact your local police department.

Information regarding voting procedures in Massachusetts can be found on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Elections Division website at: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele.

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<https://www.mass.gov/news/attorney-general-campbell-secretary-of-state-galvin-massachusetts-sheriffs-association-and-massachusetts-department-of-correction-collaborate-in-statewide-effort-to-support-voting-rights-of-incarcerated-individuals>