



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Scott, Henry, and Costello

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Action - Override the Veto of HB 980/SB 340

FOR the purpose of calling on the Maryland General Assembly to complete the work of restoring voting rights to all members of our communities that it began by passing HB 980/SB 340 in the last session by overriding the Governor's veto of this important legislation.

Recitals

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, approximately 40,000 Maryland citizens live and work in our communities but cannot vote because of a criminal conviction in their past. In April 2015, the General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a bill, which received some bipartisan support, to restore voting rights to these citizens. On May 22, 2015, Gov. Larry Hogan vetoed the legislation.

◆At a time when leaders of both political parties are uniting to reform our criminal justice system, this veto is a failure of leadership by Governor Hogan,◆ said Tomas Lopez, counsel in the Brennan Center◆s Democracy Program. ◆After the unrest in Baltimore, Marylanders are demanding to be heard. Restoring voting rights to 40,000 citizens would expand our democracy and increase public safety. Other lawmakers in Maryland understand this and have offered leadership. Governor Hogan has offered excuses. The General Assembly should respond by overriding his veto and giving these citizens a second chance.◆

The vetoed legislation, House Bill 980 and Senate Bill 340, would have built on the successful effort to end lifetime disenfranchisement for ex-offenders by allowing previously incarcerated individuals to vote once their period of incarceration had ended, even if they remained on parole or probation. According to the ACLU, a ◆clearly disproportionate◆ number of those denied the vote by the current policy are African Americans.

◆More than 50 years since the historic march in Selma, Alabama and enactment of the Voting Rights Act, nearly 2.2 million African Americans nationwide still cannot vote because of a criminal conviction. In Maryland, they constitute two▲thirds of those denied the vote ▲ the most fundamental right of any democratic society,◆ said Katrina Gamble, Director of Civic Engagement & Politics at the Center for Popular Democracy.

In order for our community to move forward, all of its members, even, perhaps especially, those who have made mistakes in the past, must feel that they have a stake in building progress towards a better tomorrow. Denying so many of our neighbors the right to vote makes it much more difficult to engage them in this process. The General Assembly was right to open the door to meaningful participation in our society to all non-incarcerated ex-offenders, and it should complete the process by overriding the Governor◆s veto at the earliest opportunity in the 2016 legislative session.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the Maryland General Assembly to complete the work of restoring voting rights to all members of our communities that it began by passing HB 980/SB 340 in the last session by overriding the Governor◆s veto of this important legislation.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor◆s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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