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# Bill proposes restoration of pris

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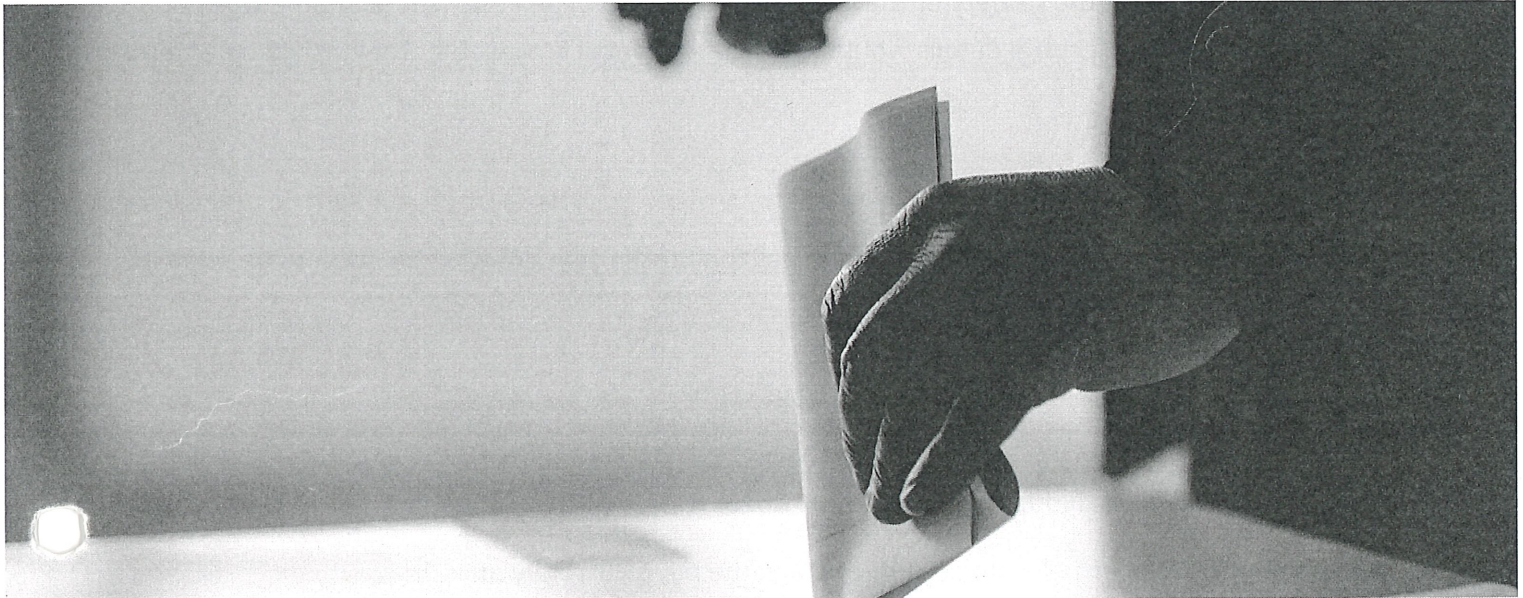
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## The **Electoral (Registration of Sentenced Prisoners) Amendment Bill**

([https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL\\_94947/electoral-registration-of-sentenced-prisoners-amendment](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_94947/electoral-registration-of-sentenced-prisoners-amendment)) aims to change an existing law to allow prisoners with sentences shorter than three years to enrol to vote. It also seeks to set up a process for getting other prisoners onto the electoral roll when they are released, so that they can then participate in elections.

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### Details

Electoral (Registration of Sentenced Prisoners) Amendment Bill



**MP in charge**

Little, Andrew

### What is this bill about?

Minister of Justice Hon Andrew Little **said his bill aims to amend the Electoral Act 1993 before the 2020 general elections.** (<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/prisoner-voting-rights-be-restored-ahead-2020-general-election>)

"This threshold of a three-year jail sentence means those prisoners will be able to vote on the Government will be in power when they are released," he said.



Before 1993 and after 2010, all sentenced prisoners were disqualified from voting. Between 1993 and 2010, prisoners sentenced to less than three years' imprisonment were able to vote.

In 2015, the High Court ruled the existing law to be **inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990** (<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-provide-greater-protection-rights-under-nz-bill-rights-act-1990>). The ruling was upheld by the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court.

A **2019 Waitangi Tribunal report** (<https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/news/tribunal-releases-report-on-maori-prisoners-voting-rights/>) also found the law disproportionately affected Māori prisoners due to increased incarceration rates and low re-enrolment during release.

## What does this bill mean?

The key changes proposed include:

- Allowing prisoners who are serving a sentence of less than three years to enrol to vote.
- Facilitating prisoners' participation in elections by directing prison managers to engage with them about the option to enrol to vote. This would be done when they are due to be released from a sentence of three years or more, or if they are serving a sentence less than three years long.
- If a prisoner believed that their safety or their family's safety would be at risk if their name was published in an electoral roll, their electoral details would not be made publicly available. They would be entered into the "unpublished" roll.

## Who might this bill affect?

- People who are serving a prison sentence that is less than three years or who are soon to be released.
- Families of people in prison.

## What happens next?

This bill was introduced in the House on 25 February 2020.

Please check the progress bar below to see which stage the bill is currently at.

### Progress of the bill

