

College Democrats of Connecticut

Testimony to the Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 29, 2008

Hello, my name is David Steuber and I am the President of the College Democrats of Connecticut. On behalf of both the College Democrats and myself, I would like to express our organization's support for HJ21. We believe that it is very important to encourage youth and student participation in the political process, and we feel that this amendment is a fantastic measure that helps achieve these laudable aims.

The involvement of citizens in the political process is a key component of any democratic society, and as such our country, our state, and our local communities all have a vested interest in promoting ever higher levels of voter participation. Voting is a fantastic habit for citizens of all ages to fall into, and by expanding the right of young citizens to vote, our state will be encouraging young people to begin a lifetime of civic involvement. Eighteen-year-olds already have the right to vote in our general elections, it only makes sense that those very same voters should also have the right to vote in our related primaries.

I am well aware that some individuals have concerns about the maturity of our seventeen-year-old citizens, and wonder if those citizens might be able to handle the responsibility of casting a ballot. To anyone who asks these questions, consider this: our country is at war, and it is young people that bear the largest part of this burden. Our federal government is running massive deficits, and it is our generation that will have to pay for them. There are so many important issues that face our state and nation today, and the decisions we make now will have consequences that continue to impact our society for decades to come. Young people are well aware of these things (as you can see by the large number of us here today) and we take our responsibilities on these matters very seriously.

I can speak with some authority on this kind of amendment, because I have personally been a beneficiary of a similar provision. I went to high school in Ohio, where for a few years now there has been a similar law on the books. As a seventeen-year-old high school student, I was privileged to be able to cast my vote in the 2004 presidential primaries. It was extremely exciting to be voting for the first time, and the experience truly set me on a path for future political involvement; I haven't missed an opportunity to cast my ballot since. The experience of having begun to vote regularly from a young age has been invaluable for me, and I fully anticipate continuing in this habit for the rest of my life. I know that this will soon be true of many other Connecticut voters as well.

The twenty-sixth amendment to the US Constitution was ratified in 1971, guaranteeing suffrage to all eighteen-year-old citizens. Connecticut, in fact, was the very first state in the union to ratify that amendment. With HJ21, Connecticut is once again leading the nation in expanding suffrage to young people who are so dramatically affected by the issues confronting our nation today. On behalf of the College Democrats of Connecticut, I would like to once again express my strong support for HJ21, and I would encourage everyone else here today to do the same.