

My name is Connor Toole, I am 17 years old, and I will graduate in 2009.

Shelby Farrell

As far as I can see, there are no arguments against extending the right to vote in primaries to 17 year olds who will turn 18 before Election Tuesday in November. I have heard some object to the idea because they think that the voting rolls will be flooded with voters for the Democratic Party, as they tend to associate those of younger age with the liberal label. However, just because someone does not necessarily coincide with your beliefs does not mean that they should be disenfranchised. In addition, the Connecticut primary is closed, meaning that unless one changes their party affiliation, they will only be able to vote for one party, therefore meaning that the opposition is virtually unaffected. No matter what, these seventeen year olds will be voting in November regardless, so why not give them a say in whom they will be voting for. There is also a civics requirement in place for all Connecticut high-schoolers, meaning that students will be taught the importance of voting, but once the opportunity arises, they will not be allowed to vote. In studies conducted by the University of Maryland, if one votes, they are 4-5 times more likely to cast their vote again than others who never voted at all. By allowing those interested to participate early, you will be responsible for creating lifetime voters. Other fringe arguments entertained are that 17 year olds are not mature enough to decide who to vote for. Do the people who think this really believe that in the nine months or less between primaries and general elections, one's views would have gone from total political idiocy to being knowledgeable enough to vote? These ages, as well as many other age restrictions in our state and country, are arbitrary. There are 12 year-olds knowledgeable enough to vote, while there are 40 year-olds who have no business doing so. If someone is interested enough to go out of their way to register to vote and do so, I hold them in higher regard from the number of Americans who don't even take the effort to participate. In my experience I have found that a large number of students I know are very knowledgeable when it comes to politics and from all different points on the political spectrum. Why not allow this amendment to be weighed by the people of Connecticut, and at least give 17 year-olds a chance.

There are currently nine states who allow 17 year olds to vote in the primaries. They are: Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina,

Ohio, and Virginia. In addition, 17 year olds are allowed to vote in the caucuses in Iowa, as well as the Republican caucus in North Dakota. There is current legislation being considered in New Hampshire to allow 17 year olds to participate in one of the most publicized primaries in the United States. This is for a reason. Other states and other people of all different political backgrounds and beliefs understand the importance of extending that right to further the democratic process.

I see no viable reasons why this initiative would not be passed by our state legislators. If you support it the bill, it will be remembered by the new voters you are helping create. I also see no reason why this would not be passed by the voters of the state, who also understand the importance of the democratic process. This may not seem like a matter of utmost importance, however, putting this measure in place could affect the state for years to come.