

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** SJ-35

RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE ATTAINED THE AGE OF SIXTEEN TO APPLY FOR ADMISSION AS ELECTORS AND TO BE SO ADMITTED UPON

**Title:** ATTAINING THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN.

**Vote Date:** 03/15/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/6/2023

**File No.:** 260

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

This Resolution proposes an amendment to the state constitution that would allow for individuals at the age of sixteen to register so that upon turning eighteen, they would automatically be admitted to the state as electors. Studies in states which similar programs have been adopted, show that such programs have a positive impact on youth voter turnout.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of State, Office of the Secretary of State:** Secretary of state Stephine Thomas begins her testimony, by citing that she believes that "one of the most important duties of the Office of the Secretary of the State is to educate and inform the public, particularly in a way that encourages voters to become engaged in the civic process and public service". She then states how one of the most important demographics this applies to in her opinion is the youth, as they are the next generation, and it is the duty of the current generation to ensure they are prepared for the future. She then provides comparison, as fifteen states, and Washington D.C. currently allow pre-registration at the age of sixteen and states that "A number of studies out of these states have shown that pre-registration has a concrete and positive impact on youth turnout in elections". The Secretary then calls for a similar program in the state of Connecticut suggesting automatic voter registration with the DMV, when a sixteen-year-old obtains their license. The Secretary concludes her testimony, by citing that if youth become engaged in politics early, they are likely to remain engaged. She then urges support for SJ-35.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Evan Preston, Director of Advocacy, Secure Democracy USA:** Mr. Preston and secure Democracy USA, stated their full support for the passage of SJ-35, stating that "Pre-registration offers an opportunity for young people to prepare to exercise their freedom to vote". They call this a powerful step in conjunction with learning about voting and the rights that come with it, during their high school education. They conclude their testimony by urging once to support for SJ-35

**New Haven Votes Coalition, Nonpartisan alliance supporting voter participation and civic engagement in New Haven:** The New Haven votes Coalition begins their testimony, by stating volunteer representatives of the Coalition regularly go into all New Haven high schools, to register new voters, and that they register several hundred each year. They then note how sometimes they have individuals who turn eighteen only a few days after election day, and the most they can do with these students is give them the form and ask that they fill it out when they are eighteen. The Coalition then states how their "inability to register these young people is frustrating for us and a disservice to the students". The Coalition then goes into detail about other states which currently have pre-registration at sixteen years old. They note how fifteen states currently have pre-registration available, and that this is not a partisan issue, it exists in both blue and red states. They conclude their testimony, by stating that pre-registration is simple, cheap and bi partisan and should be adopted, and once more urge the passage of SJ-35.

**Karen Edwards, Professor of public health and a retired pediatrician/public health professional, Member of Indivisible Stamford:** Professor Edwards, begins her testimony, by noting her strong support for SJ-35, citing her Father as inspiration, a disabled WW2 Veteran, who always volunteered at his Westport polling place. She then cites her reasoning for her support of SJ-35, stating that "encouraging those who are eligible to begin the process at age 16, we will send a strong message to young people that their voices and their votes can make a difference for all Connecticut citizens". To conclude her testimony, she once more urges support for SJ-35.

**Carol Rizzolo, Retired Physician Assistant, Co-founder of CT Shoreline Indivisible:** Ms. Rizzolo supports the passage of SJ-35, stating that allowing these individuals to register to vote would send a strong message to these individuals, that their voices matter in government. She concludes her testimony, saying that giving these young voters reason to be involved would increase voter awareness and participation.

**Beck Danger Cyr (they/them), MSW Candidate: Policy Practice, UCONN School of Social Work:** Beck Danger Cyr, stated their support of for the concept of registering to be able to vote at the age of eighteen, but suggested that the committee add language "on how the State will educate and inform young people". They conclude their testimony, by stating that they believe that allowing sixteen-year-old who are getting their drivers license or permit to pre-register to vote, will improve civic engagement in the K-12 school system.

**These individuals submitted testimony in Support of SJ-35. They cited reasons similar to those mentioned in aforementioned testimony:**

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT)

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Timothy De Carlo, Registrar of voters City of Waterbury, Chair of the New Haven County ROVAC association and the chairman of ROVAC legislative committee:** Mr. De Carlo and ROVAC, wish to remove barriers for individuals to be able to vote, but asks that the committee and members of the General assembly oppose this legislation. ROVAC also asks that no additional changes be made to the current system, which currently allows for individuals to register to vote at 17 and be able to vote once they turn 18. Mr. De Carlo concludes his testimony by thanking members of the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on pending legislature.

**Melissa Albrecht:** Ms. Albrecht stated her opposition to SJ-35, calling for the voting age to stay 18 if it is not moved to the age of 21. She states that "16 years should not be able to participate in the process at any level".

**Linda Dalessio, Taxpayer:** Ms. Dalessio adamantly opposes SJ-35, noting that " Most sixteen-year-old cannot even tell you what they want to wear, or eat for dinner and you want to allow them to vote? This is the epitome of lunacy. They can't smoke, can barely drive, must be made to do chores, can't drink, can't own a gun, can't get married without parental consent and can't serve in the military". She also notes how they are susceptible to propaganda and "Brain-washing"

**Gary Corigliano:** Mr. Corigliano opposes all bills as he believes members of the General assembly have broken several laws and believes that the government currently overreaches.

**Debbie Esposito:** Ms. Esposito believes that by allowing 16-year old's to register to vote, it would place more undue burden upon already overwhelmed registrars. She believes that same day voting registration which is currently in place is more than enough.

**These individuals submitted testimony in Opposition of SJ-35. They cited reasons similar to those mentioned in aforementioned testimony:**

Jerry Cincotta  
Jennifer Damon  
Ross Detwiler  
Kevin Riordan  
Anthony Vitale

**Reported by: Thomas Togneri**

**Date: 03-15-2023**