

Article 18: Allowing 17-Year-Olds to Vote in Town Elections and Town Meetings

Mr. Grom moves: that the Town authorize the Select Board to petition the Massachusetts General Court for permission to adopt a Town Bylaw to define a “qualified voter” for the purposes of Town elections, Town Meetings, Town Caucuses, and the bringing forward and signing of all nominating, warrant, and other petitions authorized by the Town Charter or Town Bylaws as any citizen seventeen years of age or older, so long as said citizen is (a) a resident of Concord at the time that citizen registers to vote and (b) otherwise eligible under all provisions, other than age, set for voters in Chapter 51, Section 1 of the Massachusetts General Laws; provided, however, that persons wishing to serve in elected positions must be registered voters of at least 18 years of age.

Article 18: Allowing 17-Year-Olds to Vote in Town Elections and Town Meetings

There is a growing interest in many parts of the United States to extend voting rights to all those eligible to vote. Currently, however, 17 year-olds cannot vote in most elections, and at Town Meetings. This article is a small step in a much larger nation-wide effort to allow 17 year-olds and in some cases 16 year-olds to vote in local and statewide elections.

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There are active campaigns to lower the voting age in seven states and the District of Columbia. In California, for example, an Assembly Constitutional Amendment would lower the voting age to 17. Colorado is working on lowering the voting age to 16 for School Board elections. Washington, D.C. would lower the voting age to 16 in all elections. A State of NY bill calls for the voting age to be lowered to 17.

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In Massachusetts, there are three bills currently being heard our by state's legislature, specifically by the Committee on Election Laws, to allow 16 and 17 year-olds to vote.

- **H3838**-Shelburne
- **H3861**-Wendell
- **H3872**-Ashfield

These three towns are all located near Greenfield, MA

In Ashfield, Aaron Nelson, the petitioner, is quoted in the Town Meeting minutes, that he believes this will help build citizenship. He explained that 16 and 17 year old's have the mental capacity to be qualified voters and are more likely to continue to vote throughout life if they start early.

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Statement by CCHS Student Abigail Gordy

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According to an article published in the NY Times on March 2nd, 2018, "In Takoma Park, Md., a city that permits 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local elections, that age group is twice as likely to vote than are 18-year-olds. There is evidence that people who don't vote the first time they are eligible are less likely to vote regularly in the future. "

Individuals between the ages of 18-24 have the lowest voter turnout of any age group in the US. So I would conclude that allowing 17 year-olds to vote would very likely result in an increase in the future voter turnout of all ages.

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17 year-olds cope with many responsibilities that most adults are all too familiar with.

- They drive cars in all states,
- with parental permission can join our armed forces
- over a million Americans under the age of 18 have jobs

Studies have shown that current 17 year-olds are fully capable of making informed political decisions.

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Concordians are fortunate to have excellent teachers at our schools, who play a large part in providing the educational foundation enabling our students to make decisions based on knowledge and good judgment. Being able to vote at the age of 17 will likely result in becoming a more involved and productive member of society.

Please support Article 18. Thank you.

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