

MOTION EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Urging the General Assembly to promote the participation of our youth in the political process by undertaking a review to determine whether the voting age in Pennsylvania should be lowered with a goal of making the voting age consistent with other ages of access and eligibility for rights and responsibilities within the Commonwealth; and, further, urging Congress to consider the same.

WHEREAS, it is the belief of this Council that the sooner young people become involved in the political process, the more likely they are to remain a part of the process and participate through voting and civic service to the community and Commonwealth. The earlier in life a habit is formed, the more likely that habit will continue throughout life;

WHEREAS, numerous states are considering similar actions in efforts to improve the participation of youth in government, including Maine, Texas, California, Minnesota, Florida, North Dakota and Hawaii. Municipalities, too, are ensuring that the energy and passion that is evidenced in the lives of youth has the ability to be transferred to the political process. Anchorage, Alaska, New York, New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts are just a few recognizing the youth vote. Youth have a unique experience, based on their individual circumstances, that is not currently translated to government;

WHEREAS, at the age of seventeen, our young men and young women are able to enlist in the Armed Services with their parents' consent and could be sent to war and asked to put their lives on the line without ever having a voice in electing the leaders who make the decision to send them. Providing the right to vote at a lower age is a way to ensure that the person has a root in the community, has an appreciation for local issues and will be more concerned about voting. It can also encourage voting with a parent which, in turn, further affects voter turnout;

WHEREAS, youth have a double standard applied to them when they have adult responsibilities, but are not given adult rights. Youth are subject to adult penalties in criminal cases and even the death sentence despite lacking the right to vote – they are judged mature, responsible adults when committing murder but are otherwise considered immature and irresponsible to vote;

WHEREAS, youth pay taxes and live under our laws and should have the right to vote. Teens pay an estimated \$9.7 billion dollars in sales taxes alone, many millions more in taxes on income and billions in taxes to state, local and federal governments yet have absolutely no say over how much is taken or what it is used for, essentially providing taxation without representation, an evil the forefathers of our Country fought against;

WHEREAS, young people are not currently a voting constituency. While there are issues that specifically affect them and their lives, often their thoughts and desires are not considered because they are not voters. Lowering the voting age will give elected officials a real reason to respect their thoughts, ideas and opinions as well as encourage their responsible participation in the democratic process;

WHEREAS, youth have the same ability to make informed and intelligent decisions as do all other citizens. Assuming that age brings a maturity or intelligence to the table is not valid when there are no restrictions on individuals who are of age who may lack the maturity or intelligence needed to cast a vote. Lack of education or information about elections issues is not a basis for withholding the vote from adults. The same standard should be applied to youth;

WHEREAS, there are no wrong votes. Voters all have their own reasons for voting and while we may disagree with the results, we must respect the right to make the decision. This belief also applies to our youth; and

WHEREAS, lowering the voting age will provide a benefit to youth as well as to government. Granting youth the right to vote will have a direct effect on their character, intelligence and sense of responsibility. Including youth in a real, substantive way in the political system and government will lead to more interest in the process, encouraging them to become involved, active citizens of this nation and Commonwealth.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED, AND IT IS THE SENSE OF THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, that we urge the General Assembly to promote the participation of our youth in the political process by undertaking a review to determine whether the voting age in Pennsylvania should be lowered with a goal of making the voting age consistent with other ages of access and eligibility for rights and responsibilities within the Commonwealth; and, further, urge Congress to consider the same.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED that copies of this motion be transmitted to the Governor of the Commonwealth, the Members of the General Assembly from Allegheny County, the Members of the United States House of Representatives from Allegheny County, and the Members of the United States Senate from Pennsylvania.

SPONSORED BY COUNCIL MEMBER ROBINSON, FONTANA AND DEFAZIO

In Council October 21 2003 Read and Approved.



Rick Schwartz
President of Council

Attest: John Mascio
John Mascio
Chief Clerk of Council

From: Mascio, John
Sent: Friday, October 24, 2003 2:38 PM
To: 'Senator Arlen Specter'; 'Senator Rick Santorum'; John Murtha; Melissa Hart; Mike Doyle; Tim Murphy; David Brightbill; Jack Wagner; Jane Orie; Jay Costa; Jeffery E. Piccola; Jim Ferlo; Michael A. O'Pake; Robert J. Mellow; Robert Jubelirer; Sean Logan; Anthony DeLuca; Dan Frankel; David Levdansky; Don Walko; Frank Dermody; Frank Pistella; H. William DeWeese; Harry Readshaw; Jake Wheatley; Jeffrey Habay; John Maher; John Perzel; John Pippy; Joseph F. Markosek; Joseph Preston, Jr.; Kenneth Ruffing; Marc Gergely; Michael Diven; Michael R. Veon; Nick Kotik; Paul Costa; Samuel H. Smith; Susan Laughlin; Thomas C. Petrone; Tom Stevenson
Subject: Bill No. 1337-03 Motion of Council

At the Regular Meeting of Allegheny County Council held on October 21, 2003, Council passed Bill No. 1337-03, entitled, "A Motion Expressing the Sense of Allegheny County Council urging the General Assembly to promote the participation of our youth in the political process by undertaking a review to determine whether the voting age in Pennsylvania should be lowered with a goal of making the voting age consistent with other ages of access and eligibility for rights and responsibilities within the Commonwealth; and, further, urging Congress to consider the same."

The motion passed by a vote of 8-5 as follows:

Councilman DeFazio	Yes
Councilman Fawcett	Yes
Councilman Fontana	Yes
Councilman Francis	No
Councilwoman Frazier	No
Councilman Gastgeb	No
Councilman Jabbour	Yes
Councilman Martoni	Yes
Councilman Price	No
Councilwoman Rea	No
Councilman Shumaker	Yes
Councilman Robinson	Yes
Council President Rick Schwartz	Yes

Your attention to this motion is requested.

Sincerely,

John Mascio
Chief Clerk
Allegheny County Council