Resolution urging the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to lower San Francisco’s legal voting age to sixteen in municipal and school district elections.

WHEREAS, Vote16USA is a national campaign, organized by Generation Citizen, that aims to support efforts to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds on the local level, help start new local campaigns, and elevate the issue’s prominence on a national level; and

WHEREAS, On May 3, 2016, for the first time ever, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and San Francisco Youth Commission held a joint Committee of the Whole meeting to hear from youth in public comment on putting Vote16 on the ballot; and

WHEREAS, 9 out of 11 San Francisco Supervisors voted to put Vote16, which became Proposition F, onto the ballot in November 2016, where it lost by the close margin of 2.1%; and

WHEREAS, Proposition F was endorsed by former Board of Education Commissioners Sandra Lee Fewer, Shaman Walton, and Matt Haney, all of whom are now San Francisco Supervisors; and

WHEREAS, Proposition F was also endorsed by State Assembly Members David Chiu and Phil Ting in 2016, as well as by Former Supervisor and now State Senator Scott Wiener; and

WHEREAS, the San Francisco Democratic Central Committee, along with 17 San Francisco Democratic clubs endorsed Proposition F in 2016[1]; and

WHEREAS, Numerous countries—Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom—have extended the right to vote to 16 year olds in national, state, and local elections or are considering doing so, and these efforts have resulted in higher turnout among voters ages 16-17 than among voters age 18 and older; and

WHEREAS, in March 2019, twenty-eighth Assembly District Assemblymember, Evan Low, introduced Assembly Constitutional Amendment 8 (ACA 8) which proposes to lower the California voting age from 18 to 17 and is follow up legislation to his original ACA 10; and
WHEREAS, On March 14th, 2019, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA 12) publicly supported lowering the national voting age to 16, mainstreaming the lowering of the voting age; and

WHEREAS, on March 6th, 2019, Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA 7) introduced an amendment to H.R. 1, or the For the People Act which would lower the national voting age to 16, and 135 Democratic Representatives voted to support it; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Berkeley voters passed Measure Y1, which lowered the voting age to 16 for Berkeley Unified School District elections; and

WHEREAS, In May 2013, Takoma Park, Maryland became the first municipality in the United States to reduce its legal voting age to 16 years of age;[2] and

WHEREAS, Voter turnout among these newly enfranchised voters in Takoma Park was 44 percent, as compared to the overall voter turnout which was 11 percent;[3] and

WHEREAS, In December 2010, the Lowell, Massachusetts City Council proposed a resolution petitioning the Massachusetts State Legislature to lower the city’s voting age to 17[4] and

WHEREAS, The Scottish government allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in its referendum on declaring independence from the United Kingdom, as well as general elections:[5] and

WHEREAS, These 16 and 17 year old voters used this opportunity to exercise their newfound right to vote en masse, with over 90 percent of 16 and 17 year old voters registering to vote in the Scottish independence referendum;[6] and

WHEREAS, In 2016 the San Francisco Youth Commission adopted Resolution No. 1617-AL-05[7] that supported the state legislation Assembly Constitutional Amendment 10 (ACA 10) introduced by twenty-eighth Assembly District Assemblymember, Evan Low, which would have “reduce[d] the minimum voting age [in California] to 17”; and

WHEREAS, In 2014 the San Francisco Youth Commission adopted Resolution No. 1314—02[8] that called on the Board of Supervisors and Youth-Serving Commissions to create a “Youth Voice” Policy that would allow more young people to
come to testify at public meetings to voice their concerns and opinions on legislation
that would directly impact them; and

WHEREAS, Resolutions adopted by both the San Francisco Youth Commission
(Resolution 0405-013)\(^9\) and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (File No.
051215)\(^10\) in 2005 supported expanding suffrage to citizens of 16 years and older in
city and county elections; and

WHEREAS, Upon turning 16, young people can drive, work without limitations on
hours, pay taxes, take classes on government in school, are subject to adult criminal
charges, and yet are denied the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, Young people often feel excluded from being engaged in their
government and are underrepresented in local government; and

WHEREAS, Extending voting rights to youth of 16 years of age would empower
young people to become engaged in our local government; and

WHEREAS, Undocumented and incarcerated young people in the City and
County of San Francisco currently have no outlet to directly impact policy other than
physical activism, which many undocumented people consider to be dangerous; and

WHEREAS, With the right to vote, young people would increase their knowledge
and interest in politics and the issues directly affecting them; and

WHEREAS, 16 year olds possess roughly the same political knowledge as 21
year olds and come close to the average for all adults;\(^{11}\) and

WHEREAS, Young people who vote will make voting habitual, as voting is a life-
long practice begun once one casts their first vote; \(^{12}\) and

WHEREAS, Young voters will be more likely to continue civic engagement
throughout their lives than are those who begin voting later in life;\(^{13}\) and

WHEREAS, Having young people voting at earlier ages would increase voter
turnout in future elections and further stimulate interest in getting more involved in local
government affairs; and

WHEREAS, Studies have proven 16 year old voters are competent and mature
enough to make well-informed decisions that will influence their lives and the broader
electorate;\(^{14}\) and
WHEREAS, The median age of a San Francisco resident as of 2016 is 38, but the average age of the electorate has risen from 44.2 in 1980 to 45.8 and is projected to be 47.6 by 2025; and

WHEREAS, Young people have interests and priorities that differ from those of older voters and an aging electorate may neglect the interests of more diverse younger generations; and

WHEREAS, Between 2000 and 2013, San Francisco lost about 8,000[15] school age youth and now has the lowest percentage[16] of children of any major U.S. city; and

WHEREAS, The young people impacted by these trends are best positioned to identify solutions, and their political enfranchisement is a vital step toward combating family flight; and

WHEREAS, The city has seen fit to make investments in the leadership and civic engagement of young people that DYCF’s Youth Leadership and Organizing programs, Youth Empowerment Fund, and annual Youth Advocacy Day, among other initiatives; and

WHEREAS, thousands of SFUSD high school students have cast votes in mock elections and ballot measures through the Youth Vote program, gaining exposure to the electoral process and civic norms and practices; and

WHEREAS, the current political moment has galvanized civic involvement among young people in SF in resistance to the current administration, with hundreds of students walking out on Inauguration Day and thousands participating in the March For Our Lives protests to make their voices heard; and

WHEREAS, frustrated with the inaction of the U.S. Government to address the crisis of human-made climate change, young people in SF and around the country are increasingly organizing to make their support for green policy and environmental justice known; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco hosts a vibrant community of youth advocates, youth organizers, and youth philanthropists who play critical roles in advising local nonprofits and city departments on matters pertaining to the youth of San Francisco and policy affecting them; and
WHEREAS, these youth leaders play a key role in the formation and revision of the city’s youth policy but remain disenfranchised despite being recognized by the city and local nonprofits as community leaders; and

WHEREAS, Staff from the San Francisco Department of Elections was on hand at the Young Voters Forum to register new voters and recruit young people to work the polls on Election Day, these youth poll workers make up ⅓ of the total amount of poll workers each election in San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, Research consistently indicates 16-17 year-olds make voting decisions based on reasoned consideration of their own and larger interests in a fashion similar to older voters;[17] and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors added Rule 2.12.1[18] to the Board of Supervisors’ Rules of Order in 2014, providing more opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in public meetings; and

WHEREAS, Many states are enacting laws designed to severely limit communities of color and young people’s voting rights, rolling back gains won through a proud history of struggle on behalf of African Americans and groups of young, multiracial activists; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco has an opportunity to take bold action to reverse these trends and stand for the political enfranchisement of young people; and

WHEREAS, As stated in Section 4.124 of the San Francisco City Charter, the Youth Commission is charged with identifying and proposing solutions to meet the unmet needs and concerns of San Francisco youth; and

WHEREAS, The Youth Commission believes that young people’s ability to engage in electoral processes that directly impact them is an unmet need; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to lower San Francisco’s city and school district voting age eligibility to 16 years of age or older; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to urge San Francisco’s elected state representatives—State Senator Scott Wiener, Assembly members Philip Y. Ting and David Chiu—to prepare
legislation that would provide for a state constitutional amendment to reduce the voting age to sixteen for all state elections; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the Board of Supervisors to pass a resolution in support of Assembly Constitutional Amendment 8 (ACA-8) and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to prepare a charter amendment to relevant sections of the San Francisco Charter allowing citizens, and possibly non-citizens, of 16 years of age and older to vote and register in municipal and school district elections held in the City and County of San Francisco.

Bahlam Vigil, Chair, 2018-19 Youth Commission
Adopted on May 6, 2019


[7] San Francisco Youth Commission Resolution 1617-AL-05 “[Resolution Urging the Board of Supervisors to Support Assembly Constitutional Amendment 10, Allowing 17 year Olds to Vote in State Elections],” adopted April 17, 2017

[8] San Francisco Youth Commission Resolution 1313—02 “Resolution Urging the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and Youth-Serving Commissions to Support the Creation of a Youth Voice Policy,” adopted March 3, 2014

[9] San Francisco Youth Commission Resolution 0405—AL013 “Resolution Urging the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to Recommend to State Legislators That They Allow Local Choice, For Which City or County Could Permit Persons 16 years of Age or Older to Vote In City or County Elections,” adopted June 6, 2005


no. 4 (2012). Accessed December 29, 2014 at:


[14] Hart and Atkins, see supra note 2


