[Lower San Francisco’s Legal Voting Age to 16 Years of Age]

Resolution requesting the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to place a Charter Amendment to lower the legal voting age in San Francisco Municipal and School District Elections on the November 2024 Election Ballot.

WHEREAS, Allowing 16 and 17 year-olds the right to vote would engage and empower a whole new generation of people in the democratic process and instill the value of civic engagement and voting in young people; and,

WHEREAS, Allowing 16 and 17 year-olds to vote would demonstrate the value of their voices, opinions, and lived experiences to the democratic process, and add a greater diversity of voices to the electorate; and,

WHEREAS, By age 16, youth have developed the intellectual maturity for measured, non-rushed, and sufficient decision-making skills (i.e. “cold cognition”) needed for making responsible voting choices, according to research published by the American Psychological Association\(^1\); and,

WHEREAS, According to the Pew Research Center\(^2\), Countries such as Argentina, Austria, and Germany, that have (at least partial) voting rights for 16 and 17 year-olds, all outrank the United States in voter turnout; and,

WHEREAS, Upon turning 16 or 17, young people are legally able to drive, work, pay taxes, be charged adult criminal charges, enlist in the military, and yet are denied the right to vote; and,

---


WHEREAS, Research shows that allowing young people to vote at earlier ages increases voter turnout in future elections and further stimulate interest in getting more involved in local government affairs; and,

WHEREAS, Research further shows that voting while still attending school encourages voting and electoral engagement to become a habit, and

WHEREAS, In 2005, resolutions adopted by both the San Francisco Youth Commission (Resolution No. 0405-013) and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (File No. 051215) supported expanding suffrage to citizens of 16 years and older in City and County of San Francisco elections; and,

WHEREAS, In 2016, the San Francisco Youth Commission adopted Resolution No. 1617-AL-05 which supported California Assembly Constitutional Amendment 10, proposing to reduce the minimum voting age in California elections to 17; and,

WHEREAS, In 2016, 9 out of 11 San Francisco Supervisors voted to put File No. 150267 (also known as “Vote16”) onto the ballot, which became Proposition F, but lost by the close margin of 2.1% in the 2016 election; and

WHEREAS, In 2019, the San Francisco Youth Commission adopted Resolution No. 1819-AL-1, urging the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to lower San Francisco’s legal voting age to 16 in municipal and school district elections, reaffirming the Youth Commission's support for Vote16; and,

WHEREAS, In 2020, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to put Vote16 on to the ballot, which became Proposition G, but lost by less than 1% in the 2020 election; and,

---


Commissioner(s): Hum, Barker Plummer

YOUTH COMMISSION

06/20/2023
WHEREAS, According to Section 4.124 of the San Francisco City Charter, the Youth Commission is tasked with identifying and proposing solutions to address the unmet needs and concerns of the youth of San Francisco, and

WHEREAS, The Youth Commission believes that young people's ability to engage in electoral processes that directly impact their livelihood is a unmet need; and

be it

RESOLVED, that the 2022-2023 Youth Commission reaffirms its commitment in advocating for the expansion of voting rights to youth aged 16-17 year olds in municipal and school district elections, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and 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.