



Alaska Association of Student Governments

Resolution #9

Lowering the Minimum Voting Age for Local Elections to 16 in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Submitted by: Career Tech Student Government

October 11, 2023

Be it Resolved by the Alaska Association of Student Governments that:

- 1. Whereas,** voter turnout in America, while on the increase, still lags far behind other countries^{1,2};
- 2. Whereas,** this trend is worsened in local elections, where voting rates fall far lower than even federal and state elections^{3,4,5};
- 3. Whereas,** in the most recent election held in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, only a total of 40.58% of registered voters cast a vote⁶;
- 4. Whereas,** in the most recent special election held in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, a record low turnout of 10% of registered voters cast a vote^{7,8};
- 5. Whereas,** high voter turnout is the key to a successful democracy^{9,10};
- 6. Whereas,** voting in one election increases one's chance to vote in another by 13%¹¹;
- 7. Whereas,** the influence of past voting, or forming a voting “habit”, exceeds the effects of both age and education when it comes to the likelihood of future voting¹²;
- 8. Whereas,** half of the polling locations installed in the city of Wasilla are found in schools¹³;
- 9. Whereas,** polling locations in schools provide students with an opportunity to vote for the first time in a structured, familiar environment they already visit daily;
- 10. Whereas,** 16-to 17-year-old high school students have access to resources, in the form of civics classes and social studies teachers, that can help alleviate the confusion and difficulties of first time voting;
- 11. Whereas,** research shows 16-year-old voters are just as politically interested and willing to participate in politics as 18-year-old voters¹⁴;

12. **Whereas**, research shows 16-year-old voters are not inferior in their ability to make quality voting choices, nor inferior in their political knowledge¹⁴;
13. **Whereas**, cold cognition, or the ability to make logical and informed decisions not influenced by emotion, is fully developed by the age of 16-years-old¹⁵;
14. **Whereas**, at the age of 16, youth can be taxed, work a job, drive a car, and shoulder the responsibilities of a civilian and voting adult;
15. **Whereas**, decisions made by their school district have a major impact on a student's education and quality of life;
16. **Whereas**, as the largest stakeholders in their education, it is fair to reason students should get a say in who maintains their schooling and curriculum;
17. **Whereas**, four cities in Maryland and two cities in California have lowered their voting ages to 16 for either local or school board elections¹⁶.
18. **Whereas**, many other countries, such as Austria and Argentina, have voting ages set to 16 in all elections¹⁶.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Alaska Association of Student Governments supports the lowering of the minimum voting age to 16 years of age in Matanuska-Susitna Borough local elections.

Action Statement: If passed by the General Assembly of AASG, this resolution will be presented to the current members of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly.

Sources:

1. DeSilver, Drew. "Turnout in U.S. Has Soared in Recent Elections but by Some Measures Still Trails That of Many Other Countries." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 1 Nov. 2022, www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/11/01/turnout-in-u-s-has-soared-in-recent-elections-but-by-some-measures-still-trails-that-of-many-other-countries/.
2. "By International Standards, U.S. Voter Turnout Is Low." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 1 May 2015, www.pewresearch.org/chart/voter-turnout-around-the-world/.
3. Maciag, Mike. "Voter Turnout Plummeting in Local Elections." *Governing*, Governing, 14 June 2021, www.governing.com/archive/gov-voter-turnout-municipal-elections.html.
4. "Who Votes for Mayor?: A Project of Portland State University and the Knight Foundation." *Who Votes For Mayor? | A Project of Portland State University and the Knight Foundation*, whovotesformayor.org/. Accessed 11 Oct. 2023.
5. Daniel J. Hopkins. "Declining Turnout in Big-City Elections: A Growing Problem for Democratic Accountability." *Manhattan Institute*, 3 Mar. 2023, manhattan.institute/article/declining-turnout-in-big-city-elections-a-growing-problem-for-democratic-accountability.
6. *Matanuska-Susitna Borough Regular Election November 8, 2022 Official ...*, matsugov.us/docs/general/22767/November-8,-2022,-Regular-Election.pdf. Accessed 11 Oct. 2023.

7. *Matanuska-Susitna Borough Special Election - Matsugov.U.s*, matsugov.us/docs/general/22589/Election_Results.pdf. Accessed 11 Oct. 2023.
8. Schreck, Carly. “Low Voter Turnout Recorded for Mat-Su Special Election.” *Https://Www.Alaskasnewssource.Com*, 14 July 2022, www.alaskasnewssource.com/2022/07/14/low-voter-turnout-recorded-mat-su-special-election/.
9. “Voter Turnout.” *Voter Turnout | MIT Election Lab*, electionlab.mit.edu/research/voter-turnout. Accessed 11 Oct. 2023.
10. adnan_oct_27. “The Importance of High Voter Turnout.” *McCain Institute*, 23 Aug. 2022, www.mccaininstitute.org/resources/blog/the-importance-of-high-voter-turnout/.
11. Denny, Kevin, and Orla Doyle. “Does voting history matter? analysing persistence in turnout.” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2009, pp. 17–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00355.x>.
12. Gerber, Alan S., et al. “Voting may be habit-forming: Evidence from a randomized field experiment.” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2003, pp. 540–550, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5907.00038>.
13. “Voters.” *Division of Elections*, www.elections.alaska.gov/election-polls/?city=Wasilla#is81213. Accessed 11 Oct. 2023.
14. Wagner, Markus, et al. “Voting at 16: Turnout and the quality of vote choice.” *Electoral Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2012, pp. 372–383, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2012.01.007>.
15. Steinberg, Laurence, et al. “Are adolescents less mature than adults?: Minors’ access to abortion, the juvenile death penalty, and the alleged apa ‘Flip-flop.’” *American Psychologist*, vol. 64, no. 7, 2009, pp. 583–594, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014763>.
16. Mohammadi, Nikos. “Voting Age Status Report - Nyra.” *NYRA - Live Free, Start Young*, 20 Apr. 2023, www.youthrights.org/issues/voting-age/voting-age-status-report/#info.

The resolution passes with noted opposition

Passed by the Fall 2023 General Assembly of AASG hosted by West Valley High School

Danika Hamm

AASG Vice President, Danika Hamm

Kathleen A. Navarre

AASG Executive Director, Kathleen Navarre