

★ ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF PROPOSITION 18 ★

Proposition 18 will allow those who will be 18 years of age by the time of the general election to participate in the primary election of that year if they are 17 at the time of the primary. This important election reform will not only allow first-time voters to participate in the full election cycle, but also has the potential to boost youth participation in our elections.

We need youth voices to be represented at the ballot box. Allowing some 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections if, and only if, they will be 18 by the time of the general election is a simple way to amplify the voices of young voters throughout California and will lead to a more inclusive election process for our state overall.

California is behind the curve when it comes to this issue. Nearly half of states in the U.S. already allow 17-year-olds to participate in primaries and caucuses. If an individual plans to participate in the general election as a first-time voter, it is only reasonable that they be afforded the opportunity to shape the choices that appear on the general election ballot by participating in the primary. Proposition 18 links this 17-year-old participation to the age of majority by requiring that the individual be 18 by the time of the general election.

According to research conducted by the California Civic Engagement Project, in the 2020 primary election in California, youth voters (those aged between 18 and 24) made up 14.5% of the population eligible to vote, however only about 6% of those who actually voted in the election. Youth are extremely underrepresented in our electoral process despite the fact that they are heavily impacted by the policies created by those elected.

Not only does research indicate that the youth population has the lowest turnout levels out of any age demographic, but studies also show that voting is habit-forming—once an individual votes in an election, they are more likely to do so again. Early involvement in the electoral process for first-time voters should be a high priority for this reason.

Proposition 18 is an opportunity to empower California's youngest voters and encourage them to become life-long participants in the most fundamental act of democracy. Please support Proposition 18.

KEVIN MULLIN, Assemblymember
CA Assembly District 22

EVAN LOW, Assemblymember
CA Assembly District 28

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★ REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF PROPOSITION 18 ★

The statement that “nearly half” of the states allow 17-year-olds to vote in the primary is dishonest. ONLY 18 ALLOW IT, and their primaries are different from California's. Because of Propositions 13 and 218, Californians have the right to vote on tax proposals, which are often on the primary ballot. 17-year-olds have virtually no experience with earning a living and paying taxes. Real life experience is vital for voting. The suggestion that it is “only logical” that 17-year-olds should vote in the Primary if they are going to vote in the General is bad reasoning.

Since California's primary has been moved to early March, Proposition 18 would give high-school minors JUST BARELY 17 the right to vote simply because they will turn 18 EIGHT MONTHS LATER.

17-year-olds are minors, for several reasons:

- Science affirms that the reasoning and logic portion of their brains is NOT BIOLOGICALLY FULLY DEVELOPED.

- They are a captive audience (5+ hours per day, 5 days per week) to teachers on whom they depend for present and future success, making them very VULNERABLE TO ONE-SIDED INFLUENCE.
- They have NO REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE. Most have not had to work to support themselves, nor make their own way to pay for taxes, rent, food, etc. They have no frame of reference to make the vital decisions voters make for themselves and all other members of society when they vote.

17-year-olds may be eager to vote, but they are not yet ready. VOTE NO on PROPOSITION 18.

RUTH WEISS, Vice President
Election Integrity Project of California

JON COUPAL, President
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

LARRY SAND, Retired Teacher

★ ARGUMENT AGAINST PROPOSITION 18 ★

Vote NO on Proposition 18

“Many tax increases and bond debt measures are decided on primary and special election ballots. That’s why only adults should vote.”—*Jon Coupal, President, Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association*

17-YEAR-OLDS ARE NOT LEGALLY ADULTS

Both the federal and California governments have set the age of legal responsibility at 18. In California, an individual *even one day younger* than 18 may not enter into a legal contract, or even use a tanning salon. *Seventeen-year-olds cannot even participate in a school field trip* without a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian.

California law puts extra rules and restrictions on driver licenses of 16- and 17-year-olds because of concerns about *maturity and judgment*. The license restrictions disappear *exactly* on the 18th birthday, *not before*.

California law reflects the scientific evidence that age-related brain development is connected to the ability to reason, analyze and comprehend cause-and-effect. The agreed-upon age of reason, both statewide and nationally, is 18.

17-YEAR-OLDS ARE CAPTIVE AUDIENCES IN SCHOOL

Voters deserve to hear *all sides of an issue* to make an *informed* choice. Most 17-year-olds are still in high school, dependent on teachers for grades and important recommendation letters vital to their future. They are *a captive audience* five days a week, with a strong incentive to do whatever teachers and counselors recommend.

California’s primary ballot often includes *school tax and bond measures* for voter approval. Unlike adult voters, 17-year-olds who are still in high school

are likely to hear only one side of these issues. For example, in 2019, the Los Angeles Unified School District engaged in an “informational” campaign to pass a proposed tax increase, Measure EE, in a special election. Schools posted huge banners on campus, handed out flyers and literature for students to take home, and even distributed sample social media posts in an effort to influence students and their families.

If 17-year-olds are allowed to vote in primary and special elections, perhaps even filling out a mail-in ballot right in the classroom, these students could *provide the margin to approve new debt and taxes that will greatly burden their parents and all taxpayers*.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IS OPEN TO ALL; VOTING IS DIFFERENT

Everyone has the right to express an opinion, advocate on issues, organize like-minded people and volunteer on campaigns. The right to vote, however, is reserved for citizens who are state residents, who are not felons in prison, and who are at least 18 years of age on Election Day.

Voting is a serious responsibility. In California elections, voters decide who will hold the power to make and enforce laws, whether to approve new debt that taxpayers will have to pay, whether to raise taxes, and many other complex issues.

Important decisions must be made by voters who are legally adults, not by high school minors.

VOTE NO on Proposition 18.

- RUTH WEISS**, Co-founder
Election Integrity Project California
- JON COUPAL**, President
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
- LARRY SAND**, Retired Teacher

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17-year-olds already work and pay taxes, and they can enlist in the military. If young people at this age are volunteering to put their lives on the line for our country and contributing financially to society, they should be able to participate in a full election cycle the year they turn 18. Prop. 18 allows 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections if they are 18 by the general election.

Figuring out how to vote, where to vote, and what is on the ballot is a difficult first-time process. Giving young people time to learn this the year they turn 18 ensures a successful first voting experience. Expanding young people’s opportunity to become civically engaged ensures that our future generations will adopt voting habits early on and take them as they go to college, join the military, or join the workforce.

In the March 2020 primary, which saw the most votes in a California presidential primary ever, only

38% of eligible voters cast a ballot. We have a civic engagement problem, and we need to establish a culture of voting for future generations sooner rather than later. Voting in one election can increase the probability of voting in the next election by over 25%. Issues like the climate crisis, student debt, healthcare, and our economic future will impact young people the most, and it is our responsibility to provide them adequate opportunities to create lifelong voting habits. A vote for Prop. 18 is a vote for our democracy.

- MARY CREASMAN**, Chief Executive Officer
California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV)
- SENATOR RICHARD D. ROTH**, Major General
USAF (Retired)
- SENATOR THOMAS J. UMBERG**, Colonel
U.S. Army (Retired)