With teens more politically active, support grows for lowering the voting age to 16

By PBS NewsHour, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.21.18
Word Count 945
Level 1140L

In April 2018, a Washington, D.C., city councilman proposed lowering the voting age in local and federal elections from 18 to 16.

Charles Allen had attempted to pass his bill once before, in 2015. The bill died in committee. This time, he said, he thinks there is more support. Since the early 2010s, a handful of communities, mostly clustered in the suburbs of D.C., have already lowered the voting age to 16 for local elections, and other cities are considering similar legislation.

Across the country, young people are pressuring lawmakers and staging protests against gun violence. They are acting in response to the Parkland, Florida, school shooting. Now, the question of when teens ought to have an electoral voice has resurfaced.

Constitutional law expert Michael Morley said states have the power to decide who gets to vote in state and local elections. He explained that the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 in 1971, in response to young people fighting in the Vietnam War.
Who Has Lowered The Voting Age?

Brandon Klugman is the campaign coordinator at Vote16USA, an organization that lobbies for lowering the voting age. He said that four other cities currently have laws allowing 16- or 17-year-olds to vote. Three of them are in Maryland, while Berkeley, California, allows 16-year-olds to vote in school board elections only.

If 17-year-olds turn 18 before the general election, many states will let them vote in state and presidential primaries.

What Supporters Say

Allen has a long list of reasons he believes the voting age is too high. He thinks 16-year-olds should have a stake in laws that affect them, such as education policy. Research suggests that a strong predictor for voting habits is a record of previous voting. Student activists around the country have also demonstrated that many teenagers "have very well thought out positions and frankly, in many cases, they're leading the adults," Allen said.

For Allen, however, perhaps his greatest motivation is that many 16-year-olds are taxpayers because they have jobs. However, they cannot vote for their own elected representation.

Allen has re-introduced his bill at a time when students and teenagers are participating in advocacy, activism and even government itself.

The national voting rights advocacy group FairVote supports Allen's bill. "Sixteen- and 17-year-olds are affected by the same policies or even policies in a different way than older voters are," said Dave O'Brien, legal fellow at FairVote. "It seems only right that they should have some sort of input into it," he added.

What Critics Say

Some critics say 16-year-olds are not mature enough or do not have enough life experience to vote.

"The arguments for lowering the voting age to 18 don't entirely translate to lowering it to 16," Morley said, referring to the campaign to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1970. "You had the notion that 18 was already adulthood in several other contexts," such as facing the draft, establishing households and starting families. Morley, though, does not necessarily think those arguments apply to 16-year-olds. In most cases, they are still legally required to attend school and generally depend on parental support.

Allen does not see legal adulthood as relevant.

"I think that young people have a stake in election outcomes. At age 16 your relationship with the law changes dramatically, from being able to drive on city streets to having a job and paying taxes," he said.

"There are a lot of 16- and 17-year-olds who also walk around every day with adult responsibilities," Allen said. "Not only are they having jobs, they're a part of helping run a family. Some of them may even have kids of their own. When you think about what those responsibilities are, why shouldn't they have a voice in helping shape that?"

Why It Matters

This article is available at 5 reading levels at https://newsela.com.
Historically, political parties have struggled to get 18- to 24-year-olds to show up on Election Day. However, Allen thinks young people are demonstrating a willingness to get engaged. He pointed to Takoma Park, Maryland, as one example. A FairVote study of the 2013 election in Takoma Park showed that about 17 percent of 16- and 17-year-old voters cast a ballot in the local election, about double the 8.5 percent of 18-year-olds.

Neither Allen nor O'Brien sees the issue as favoring one political party over another, but Morley is not as convinced. Data shows that younger people tend to vote Democrat, so lowering the voting age could influence some elections.

What's Next?

Klugman at Vote16USA said many states are making a good effort to increase voter turnout among young people. Currently, 13 states and D.C. allow for voter pre-registration at age 16. A new law in California will pre-register 16 and 17-year-olds to vote when they get a driver's license. They will have to opt out if they do not want to register.

Klugman also said that state legislators in at least three other states — New York, Virginia and Minnesota — have introduced bills to lower the voting age in state and local elections, federal elections or both.

The next step for the D.C. bill is a hearing at the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, which Allen is in charge of.

If approved by a majority of the committee's five members, it would go to the full DC Council for its consideration, where a majority of eight out of 13 council members are on board.

It would then move to Mayor Muriel Bowser's desk for approval. Bowser's press secretary, LaToya Foster, said the mayor will support the bill.

By 2020, Allen hopes 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to vote in both local and federal races.
Quiz

1 Which of the following details is MOST important to the development of the central idea?
(A) Across the country, young people are pressuring lawmakers and staging protests against gun violence.
(B) He explained that the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 in 1971, in response to young people fighting in the Vietnam War.
(C) Brandon Klugman is the campaign coordinator at Vote16USA, an organization that lobbies for lowering the voting age.
(D) Historically, political parties have struggled to get 18- to 24-year-olds to show up on Election Day.

2 What is the relationship between the following sentences from the article?

In April 2018, a Washington, D.C., city councilman proposed lowering the voting age in local and federal elections from 18 to 16.

By 2020, Allen hopes 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to vote in both local and federal races.

(A) The second sentence presents a supporting detail for the main idea stated in the first sentence.
(B) The first sentence introduces the cause of the potential outcome presented in the second sentence.
(C) The second sentence summarizes the main idea of the article stated in the first sentence.
(D) The first sentence contradicts the claim made in the second sentence.

3 Which statement accurately characterizes the connection between a lowered voting age and voting, based on the ideas in the article?

(A) A lowered voting age is not likely to increase voter turnout of 18- to 24-year-olds, but it could potentially have a significant effect on lawmakers’ decisions.
(B) A lowered voting age is not likely to increase the number of 16- and 17-year-old voters, but overall voter turnout may increase.
(C) A lowered voting age will likely have a negative effect on major political parties and a positive effect on independent candidates.
(D) A lowered voting age will likely lead to increased voting by individuals over the course of their lifetimes and could potentially shift election outcomes.

4 Which of the following people quoted in the article would be MOST LIKELY to agree with the idea that 16-year-olds want to vote?

(A) Michael Morley
(B) Brandon Klugman
(C) Charles Allen
(D) LaToya Foster
Opinion: Lower the voting age to 16 for federal elections?

By A USA Today roundup on 04.17.19
Word Count 786
Level MAX

A young girl listens as women gather for a rally and march at Grant Park on October 13, 2018, in Chicago, Illinois, to inspire voter turnout ahead of midterm polls in the United States. Photo by: Kamil Krzaczynski/AFP/Getty Images

In the 1960s, the country asked itself that if young men can die in Vietnam, then shouldn't they be trusted with the right to vote? Similarly now, we must ask ourselves that if 16- and 17-year-olds can contribute to society through work, and face the criminal justice system as adults, isn’t it only reasonable to allow them the right of self-determination through voting?

In these teen years, many individuals begin to work and pay taxes. This is also when we grant the right to drive a car. On the flip side, about 250,000 youth are tried, sentenced or incarcerated as adults every year across the U.S. When they’re contributing to society or being held liable by society in these ways, they should also be able to weigh in on the future of our country and those responsible for the laws that affect them.

That’s why it was great to see freshman Representative Joe Neguse, a Democrat from Colorado, lead an effort that allows 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote ahead of their 18th birthday.
This policy has already worked in many states: 14 states (and Washington, D.C.) already allow teenagers to preregister to vote at 16, and nine allow it for 17-year-olds.

In California alone, since 2016, more than 200,000 teenagers preregistered before their 18th birthdays.

Congress only has the authority to lower the voting age for federal elections. That’s what sparked the 26th Amendment, which in 1971 lowered the voting age in every election to 18.

Freshman Representative Ayanna Pressley, a Democrat from Massachusetts, proposed lowering the voting age from 18 to 16 for federal elections. The proposal failed with only 126 votes but represented a turning point in the fight for enfranchisement. It had the support of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has championed such efforts at the local level in California for years.

Because voter turnout is habitual, it seems like a no-brainer to let people start voting at a younger age. If 16- and 17-year-olds can go to the polls with their parents or other adult figures, it could begin a lifetime of such civic engagement.

Lowering the voting age is a worthy endeavor. Let’s do it.

*David de la Fuente is a political analyst at Third Way, a center-left think tank.*

What Others Are Saying:

**Teens Are Unreliable**

Teens more often rely on the amygdala, the more emotional, primitive part of the brain. It isn't from gratuitous animus that car-rental agencies make it difficult for young drivers to rent a vehicle. Or that the Constitution establishes 25 as the minimum age to be a member of Congress. Of course, another reason that 16-year-olds are subject to so many restrictions that don't apply to grown-ups is that they don't know anything — or in any case, they don't know enough to be trusted to make sound decisions about liquor, firearms, joining the Marines and governing the United States. The ignorance of teens is practically a cliché.

*Jeff Jacoby is a politically conservative columnist for the Boston Globe.*

**Teens Don't Make Bad Choices Any More Than Adults Do**

Cold cognitive abilities are those we use when we are in a calm situation, when we are by ourselves and have time to deliberate and when the most important skill is the ability to reason logically with facts. Voting is a good example of this sort of situation. Studies of cold cognition have shown that the skills necessary to make informed decisions are firmly in place by 16. By that age, adolescents can gather and process information, weigh pros and cons, reason logically with facts and take time before making a decision. Teenagers may sometimes make bad choices, but statistically speaking, they do not make them any more often than adults do.

*Laurence Steinberg is a professor of psychology at Temple University and a contributor to The New York Times.*

**Young Voters Can Establish Patterns For A Lifetime**
In (America) people start voting at 18. That's the year that they often move off to college. They either have to cast ballots in a community with which they're unfamiliar, or pay attention to elections in a place where they no longer reside. That's a recipe for indifference. It would be much easier to encourage people to vote for the first time, and to establish voting patterns for a lifetime, when they're 16 and in high school. One objection is that young people will just vote like their parents. But researchers have found that people are always influenced by those close to them. People of all ages vote like their parents, or like their spouses or like their neighbors.

Noah Berlatsky is a writer and editor who writes about gender and culture.
Quiz

1. Which piece of evidence from the article conflicts with David de la Fuente’s point of view?
   (A) Of course, another reason that 16-year-olds are subject to so many restrictions that don’t apply to grown-ups is that they don’t know anything — or in any case, they don’t know enough to be trusted to make sound decisions about liquor, firearms, joining the Marines and governing the United States.
   (B) By that age, adolescents can gather and process information, weigh pros and cons, reason logically with facts and take time before making a decision.
   (C) It would be much easier to encourage people to vote for the first time, and to establish voting patterns for a lifetime, when they’re 16 and in high school.
   (D) One objection is that young people will just vote like their parents. But researchers have found that people are always influenced by those close to them. People of all ages vote like their parents, or like their spouses or like their neighbors.

2. Which answer choice BEST explains why David de la Fuente wrote the article’s introduction [paragraphs 1-8]?
   (A) to discuss the pros and cons of lowering the voting age to 16
   (B) to argue in favor of lowering the voting age to 16
   (C) to defend the decision to keep the voting age at 18
   (D) to explore reasons why the current voting age is 18

3. Read the section “Teens Are Unreliable.”

   What is the MOST LIKELY reason for Jeff Jacoby including information about the amygdala?
   (A) to provide a reason why teenagers should be trusted to engage in civic duties
   (B) to provide an example of a situation in which teenagers commonly make poor decisions
   (C) to support the argument that teenagers’ brains are just as developed as adults’ brains
   (D) to support the argument that teenagers are not old enough to make reasonable choices

4. Read the following sentences from the second paragraph of the article.

   *In these teen years, many individuals begin to work and pay taxes.*
   *This is also when we grant the right to drive a car.*

   How do the two sentences develop a key argument of David de la Fuente?
   (A) by describing reasons why the voting age was lowered in 1971
   (B) by questioning criminal justice system policies that allow teenagers to be tried as adults
   (C) by highlighting responsibilities that teenagers often have before they are even allowed to vote
   (D) by providing examples of rights for which lawmakers are considering changing the age requirements
Article of the Week-Multiple Articles Guidelines

Annotations (22 points)

1. You are still required to complete a total of 11 annotations. This is a minimum, not maximum.
2. You can split up the annotation across the various articles given to you or complete them on one article.
3. Make sure you number the paragraphs of the articles that you annotate as well as refer to the paragraphs in your annotations.

Questions (16 points)

1. You are still given four multiple-choice questions to answer in both of the articles.

Online Discussion (10 points)

1. It is suggested that you at least read all the articles provided to you for the week for the online discussion.
2. You may reference any or all of the articles in your online discussion.
3. First post due by the end of the day Wednesday and the second post due by Friday @ 3pm.

Reflection (20 points)

1. Due to there being multiple articles, you will make a works cited page on the next page after your reflection. Use the Google Doc provided for this assignment with works cited page labeled.
2. The reflection is still a total of three paragraphs for 20 points.
   - **Paragraph #1:** Write a summary of all the articles. What do they have in common? How are they different from each other? What are their central idea? DO NOT INCLUDE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE IN THIS PARAGRAPH! This should be an objective summary (no opinions). You may begin your summary in this manner: In this week’s articles of the week, *(central idea)* was discussed. This is a minimum of 6 sentences.
   - **Paragraph #2:** Write about your opinion on the topic as a whole. Do any of the articles agree with your opinion? Disagree? Also, use at least one piece of textual evidence that you either agree or disagree with and explain why. Don’t forget to use parenthetical citation: *(author last name paragraph #)* For example: *(Blumenthal 9)*. This is a minimum of 6 sentences.
   - **Paragraph #3:** First, summarize the online discussion topic(s). Next, identify any classmates by name who you interacted with or interacted with you and explain this interaction. Lastly, explain whether or not this online discussion confirmed or changed you viewpoint on the week’s topic. Remember to cite classmate’s responses using this format: *(Last name date)*. For example: *(Calvert 08/31/18)*. It is required that you cite at least one classmate’s comment and your reaction/opinion, whether they interacted with you or not. This paragraph is a minimum of 6 sentences.

*Remember: You always have the option to handwrite your reflection if necessary. Do not forget the works cited page as well.*
Use this checklist to make sure that you earn all the points for annotating the Article of the Week. This checklist does not need to be turned in. This checklist is for you, not me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlights and Annotation Checklist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary (6 points)</strong></td>
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<td>✗ Defined at least three vocab words and labeled with “V”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highlight unknown/essential terms</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Underline definitions and meanings (if explained in text) and/or</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Include the definition (that corresponds with part of speech used) and/or</td>
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<td>✗ Identify meanings of important acronyms</td>
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<th><strong>Inquiries and Summaries (8 points)</strong></th>
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<td>✗ Has four total (2 inquiries) “I” (2 summaries) “S”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highlight confusing or thought-provoking statements (MUST COMPLETE ALL)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Has at least two inquiries (questions) about the article that is either about something confusing or something you want to know more about</td>
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<td>✗ Has at least two summaries of important information the author presents from critical (important) paragraphs</td>
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<th><strong>Analysis (4 points)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highlight references to author’s background, bias, or assumptions (MUST COMPLETE TWO OF SIX)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Circle words that weaken or strengthen the author’s argument with an explanation of how the author’s word choices weaken or strengthen the author’s viewpoint. This includes statistics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Discuss the limitations of the author’s viewpoint (opinions, one-sided argument, limited evidence, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Elaborate on how the author’s life experiences influence the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Note persuasive techniques used by the author and how they may enhance the text. This includes rhetoric: logos, ethos, pathos</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Identify the theme or central message of the text and highlight evidence that supports it.</td>
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<td>✗ Identify the author’s tone/purpose regarding the subject and highlight textual evidence that supports it.</td>
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<th><strong>Reflections (4 points)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highlight prominent statements (MUST COMPLETE TWO OF FOUR)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Describe connections you made to the text → text to self → text to text → text to world</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Describe and explain a reaction to the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Describe how the subject matter evolved (from the past to today)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Discuss how the text has confirmed or altered your viewpoint concerning a subject</td>
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ETHOS
Is the credibility that a speaker or writer brings to the subject that he or she is communicating about.
We trust certain kinds of people more than others—because they have expertise, or because they are well informed about the subject at hand.

PATHOS
Is the use of emotion in debate or argument.
Appeals to pathos surround us, particularly in visual arguments such as advertisements and many online videos.

LOGOS
Is the appeal to reason, to the forcefulness of a well-thought out and well-structured position.
Some arguments make more logical sense than others, and many consider logos to be critical in the development and dissemination of ideas and values.