

What if sixteen-year-olds could vote?

Lower the Voting Age

Description:

Youth who are sixteen and older would gain the right to vote in school or municipal elections. This includes elections for mayor, city council, school board, and other local positions. Youth can work, drive, and pay taxes, yet they have practically no say in elections for roles that can greatly impact their life. Towns in Massachusetts cannot lower the voting age on their own because the state regulates elections. Therefore, the legislature must approve either a law to lower the voting age state-wide or a law allowing municipalities (towns and cities) to individually lower the voting age.

Examples:

- Several cities in Maryland such as Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park, and Takoma Park have local ordinances that allow people over the age of sixteen to vote in municipal elections.
- The Vermont legislature approved a petition from the city of Brattleboro to allow youth over the age of sixteen to vote in municipal elections.





Lower the Voting Age (Continued)

Pros	Cons
Student power: The power to vote means elected officials have more of a reason to listen to youth voice because youth may vote to remove lawmakers if they do not feel heard by them.	Student power: Many people may choose not to vote or may be in political minorities, which limits the impact of voting.
Inclusion: All youth over the age of sixteen, who otherwise meet voting requirements, may vote.	Inclusion: Groups who have been historically excluded from voting could have their voting power limited or restricted.
Likelihood of passing: A policy that gives towns and cities the option to choose to lower the voting age may be easier to pass than one which requires them to.	Likelihood of passing: Many elected officials, who would be needed to approve a lower voting age, do not want youth to vote. Massachusetts lawmakers have not approved a lower voting age several times in the past.

If we chose Lower the Voting Age, we would want to make sure that:

- A law is written that allows towns and cities to choose to allow youth over the age of sixteen to vote.