

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

- - - - -  
FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2008  
- - - - -

IN RE: HOUSE BILL 520 - YOUTH VOTE

BEFORE: HON. BABETTE JOSEPHS, (D)CHAIRLADY  
HON. MICHAEL O'BRIEN, MEMBER  
HON. LAWRENCE CURRY, MEMBER  
HON. THOMAS BLACKWELL, MEMBER

ALSO PRESENT:

HON. FRANK DERMODY  
HON. RICHARD T. GRUCELA  
RODNEY OLIVER, MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
KRISTIN KOHAN, MINORITY RESEARCH ANALYST  
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Held at The National Constitution  
Center, 5th and Arch Streets, Philadelphia,  
Pennsylvania, commencing at 10:00 a.m., on the above  
date, before Virginia Mack, Professional Court Reporter  
and Notary Public.  
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I'm very happy to  
4 see everybody here. I welcome everybody here. This is  
5 a great crowd. It's wonderful to see all of the young  
6 people and their students and principals.

7 I'm going to start at my right and ask  
8 all of the members of the panel to introduce themselves,  
9 including the staff members, and then I'm going to ask  
10 Representative Mike O'Brien, whose district this is, to  
11 say a few words and, after that, I'm going to say just a  
12 few more words and then we will start with  
13 Representative Richard Grucela as our first witness.

14 Mr. Dermody, if you will just say your  
15 name where you're from and a couple of words, I'd  
16 appreciate it.

17 REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: Thank you,  
18 Madam Chairman.

19 My name is Frank Dermody, I'm from  
20 Allegheny County. I'm honored today to have some  
21 students from the Fox Chapel Area School District here  
22 testifying along with their teachers and staff and  
23 principals.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BLACKWELL: I'm

1 Representative Tom Blackwell from 190th District here in  
2 West Philadelphia and a little bit of North  
3 Philadelphia.

4 MS. KOHAN: Good morning, my name is  
5 Kristin Kohan and I'm Minority Research Analyst for the  
6 House State Government Committee.

7 MR. OLIVER: Good morning, my name is  
8 Rodney Oliver. I'm the Executive Director of the House  
9 State Government Committee on the Majority side.

10 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I didn't say my  
11 name. My name is Babette Josephs. I'm the Chair of  
12 this Committee. I'm delighted, again, I say I'm  
13 delighted.

14 REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: I'm Lawrence  
15 Curry, 154 District, Eastern Montgomery County.

16 REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Good morning,  
17 I'm Representative Mike O'Brien. I would like to  
18 welcome you to the 175th legislative district and it  
19 seems so right and so proper that we should have this  
20 hearing here today in the shadow of the Pennsylvania  
21 State House, which you probably know better as  
22 Independence Hall, in the shadow of the great speaker  
23 Benjamin Franklin, whose seat I'm honored to occupy for  
24 a short time, and it's just one of the ironies of

1 history, I Michael O'Brien, hold this legislative seat  
2 and another O'Brien holds his speakership. It seems so  
3 right that we take up this matter here today because  
4 here in these few blocks in franchisement of the  
5 citizens took place where we moved from subject to  
6 citizen.

7                   I thank Represent Grucela and  
8 Representative Dermody for their leadership on this and  
9 truly look forward to the informative session this  
10 morning. Thank you for joining us here in the 175th.

11                   (Applause)

12                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I don't think that  
13 the first person who held Mr. O'Brien's seat was half as  
14 eloquent.

15                   I want to say a word about a project, a  
16 wonderful project, that the students from Fox Chapel  
17 know about and are part of and that students all over  
18 the state and all over Philadelphia know about, it's  
19 called Student Voices. It encourages young people to  
20 get involved, to pick an issue, to participate, to  
21 involve other young people, to involve their families,  
22 their friends, adults that they know.

23                   I was supplied with a prop. It's a  
24 voter registration form. I have to tell you, I do many,

1 many, many things in my job, which I have been doing for  
2 24 years now, but the thing that gives me the most joy  
3 is when I hand somebody a voter registration card and I  
4 empower that person in a way that people all over the  
5 world are struggling, losing their lives to do. That's  
6 the best part of my job. And I thank Susan Stranahan  
7 (ph) who is the Student Voice person. I want her to  
8 raise her hand.

9                   Afterwards or during our breaks, anybody  
10 who is interested, I encourage, strenuously, to see her  
11 and learn about this wonderful program.

12                   I commend Representative Grucela,  
13 Representative Dermody for this bill, for their  
14 leadership.

15                   And Representative Grucela, if you'll  
16 introduce yourself and proceed. Welcome and thank you.

17                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
18 Madam Chairman Josephs, Members of the State Government  
19 Committee of the House of Representatives, colleagues,  
20 good morning to all here, especially the students and  
21 their adult advisors that are with them.

22                   What a beautiful setting and a beautiful  
23 day in Philadelphia to be at this tribute to a great  
24 time in American history.

1                   For those who may not know, and my  
2 special thanks to my good friend, from the western part  
3 of the state, Frank Dermody, Representative Dermody,  
4 through his initiative, and now as one of the leaders of  
5 the Democratic Caucus of the House of Representative,  
6 has helped to bring this bill to a little more attention  
7 as well as the students from Fox Chapel High School.

8                   As many of you know, my colleagues know  
9 and for those who may not know, prior to my election to  
10 the House of Representatives, I taught American  
11 Government at Eastern Area High School in North Hampton  
12 County. I am in North Hampton and my District is 137th  
13 Legislative District, and for 30 years and three months  
14 I was in the classrooms at Eastern Area High School  
15 teaching seniors developmentally a course in American  
16 Government. During that time, I would do a unit on  
17 voting and at that time one of the things that I would  
18 talk about was the uniqueness of the State of Nebraska  
19 and how Nebraska, at that time, permitted 17-years-old  
20 to vote.

21                   The 26th Amendment, of course, allowed  
22 the 18-year-olds to vote, which I would have been  
23 invoked when I was a senior in high school, but I was  
24 told I had to wait to be 21 before I could vote, but the

1 26th Amendment, of course, gave the 18-year-olds a right  
2 to vote, but I have found at that time Nebraska did  
3 allow 17-year-olds to vote, so when I was elected to the  
4 House of Representatives, I always had that in mind and  
5 I believe this is the third session that I have  
6 introduced this Bill.

7                   Currently it is House Bill 520, which  
8 will allow a 17-year-old to register and vote in the  
9 primary election. My initial bill that I wanted to do,  
10 my initial reasoning was to allow anyone who would be 18  
11 in the calendar year from January 1st to December 31st  
12 to vote. However, for some reason, the Pennsylvania  
13 Constitution and, I think, the Election Code, doesn't  
14 allow it. Our attorney told me, I could only write the  
15 Bill and if you were going to be 18 between January and  
16 the November election, the first Tuesday after the first  
17 Monday in November, then the Bill would be legally  
18 legitimate. So that is basically the way the Bill was  
19 written.

20                   So, essentially, what we are allowing  
21 is, and I emphasize this is not a mandate, this is just  
22 allowing a person who would be 18 in the November  
23 election to vote in the primary at which time they may  
24 not be 18.



1           I don't want to try to make it like  
2 whose on first, but to try to keep it simple, to use  
3 myself as an example, my birthday is April 27th, the  
4 primary this year is on April 22nd. If I were right  
5 now, in my senior year of high school, I would be like  
6 many of these young students from Fox Chapel, I  
7 obviously had a lot of interest in American government  
8 and politics, I would not be able to vote in a primary,  
9 and especially this particular year, from my point  
10 regarding the democrats, that would be somewhat  
11 discouraging for me because I would be turning 18, five  
12 days after the primary, on April 27th.

13           Under my Bill it will become law. I  
14 would be eligible to vote. So essentially, we're  
15 allowing, again, those individuals who are going to be  
16 eligible to vote. I emphasize eligible. This is not a  
17 mandate. We're not taking the students by the ear and  
18 telling them they have to register to vote. They will  
19 just have the same opportunity as any American to  
20 register and vote.

21           I also believe it's very relevant in our  
22 senior year. Many schools across the Commonwealth are  
23 teaching American government civics mostly in the senior  
24 year, if not the junior year. So I think you're at a

1 time when you're teaching, as an American Government  
2 Teacher, this kind of concept or this part of our  
3 American history or American constitution where the  
4 students could actually put into play and make it  
5 relevant, make it become part of what you are actually  
6 trying to teach them, and in talking about all of the  
7 interests and all of the issues and topics that go with  
8 it. So I believe the Bill is extremely relevant for  
9 that reason.

10                   And secondly, I also believe that there  
11 is nothing like energizing the young people. Those of  
12 us who run for election know that where ever you have  
13 young people involved in your campaign, they energize an  
14 election. It's just true. If you have been through it  
15 like I have been through it a couple of times, having  
16 these young people around you and interested and they're  
17 the future. When I taught at Eastern we use to have a  
18 little saying that "kids are people too." If you get  
19 them involved in a campaign or if you get them involved  
20 in issues that are relevant not only to the  
21 Commonwealth, but the country, it's just part of what we  
22 actually should be doing.

23                   So I thank you, Madam Chairlady, I thank  
24 the members of the Committee, I thank Representative

1 Dermody, I thank the students from Fox Chapel and it's  
2 nice to have some of the western part of the State,  
3 myself being from the eastern part of the State, to join  
4 hands across the Commonwealth to maybe make this law.

5           Again, I thank you for the opportunity  
6 to be before you this morning and certainly will answer  
7 any questions you may have at this time.

8           CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Thank you. I also  
9 just want to say, before I call on anybody, that we also  
10 have students from the southeast here. We have students  
11 from Masterman High School, which is not quite my  
12 district, but I'm also going to claim it because the  
13 state representative who represents it is not here, so  
14 I'm going to claim it.

15           We also have students from Cheltenham  
16 High School which is outside of Philadelphia. Welcome  
17 to all of those high school students and all high school  
18 students everywhere.

19           Mr. O'Brien.

20           REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Thank you,  
21 Madam Chair.

22           So clarifying a question, Representative  
23 Grucela, your intent is to allow those who want to vote  
24 in November to join in the nominating process in the

1 spring?

2 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: That's correct.

3 REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: That's it.

4 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Thank you.

5 Mr. Grucela, if you would like to join  
6 us as a member of the panel, you are very welcome to do  
7 that. Thank you for your testimony and especially for  
8 keeping within your time slot.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: I was waiting  
10 for the bell to ring.

11 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Well, I spoke to  
12 some of the students a little bit before and I said to  
13 them, I use to be a teacher in the Philadelphia School  
14 District -- you know that, Representative -- and I'm  
15 just like a teacher still. I'm going to keep this  
16 moving. You get together, students, the three things  
17 you want to tell us and please do it in 20 minutes  
18 because the bell will ring and I will ask you to let the  
19 next student speak.

20 The second one, Secretary Weaver, The  
21 Deputy Secretary for Administration, Pennsylvania  
22 Department of State. Please introduce yourself and the  
23 people who are with you. Thank you for being here.

24 MR. WEAVER: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

1                   With me today is, from the Department of  
2 State, Merredith Biggica and Molly O'Leary, Director of  
3 Legislative Affairs.

4                   It is certainly my pleasure to be back  
5 before this Committee again. This is my third time in  
6 three years on very important issues that you folks deal  
7 with. It is certainly an honor and a privilege.

8                   House Bill 520, as previously submitted,  
9 does amend the Election Code, proposes the Amendment to  
10 the Election Code, allowing for individuals who will be  
11 at least 18 years of age on the day of the next general  
12 election or before that, to cast a vote in the primary  
13 election. Now, it should be said that the individual  
14 must meet eligibility requirements set forth in the  
15 current writings of law. They must be enrolled in a  
16 particular district, enrolled in a political party and  
17 certainly must achieve that age before the general  
18 election.

19                   In my testimony today I will try to give  
20 you an understanding of the Governor's position and also  
21 a couple of issues for consideration. Let me start out  
22 by saying that Governor Rendell advocates very strongly  
23 for involvement in the electoral process and he does in  
24 fact support the concept of this bill. Citizens who

1 have the right to vote in the general election, we  
2 believe, should be able to participate in the nomination  
3 selection process.

4           As all of you know, as elected  
5 officials, a candidate of a major political party first  
6 seeks election in a primary and then if successful on to  
7 the general election. Thus, being able to vote in the  
8 primary certainly enfranchises young voters early in the  
9 electoral process and enables them to have a greater  
10 voice in selecting their candidates.

11           As of 2006 -- we don't quite have 2007  
12 figures yet -- as of 2006, the Department of Health did  
13 estimate that there were approximately 184,349  
14 17-year-olds in Pennsylvania. The Department of State  
15 estimates that reducing the voting age, under this Bill,  
16 would add approximately 100,000 to 120,000 electors to  
17 the rolls which would have been in that year 2006.

18           Changing the age would require amending  
19 Section 1, on the voter registration form, pertaining to  
20 age, and that can easily be accomplished with very  
21 little or no fiscal impact. There would be a need, of  
22 course, when there is a processing of the registration  
23 form, to make sure elector's officials are appropriately  
24 screening the voter registration forms so that the birth

1 date, in fact, does occur prior to the general election  
2 date in that particular year.

3           To date, there are 11 states that permit  
4 17-years-olds to vote in the primary election if turning  
5 18 before the general election. Those states include,  
6 and are contiguous to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland,  
7 Virginia and West Virginia. There are a number of other  
8 states currently considering similar amendments to their  
9 constitution, and some of those states include Arizona,  
10 Connecticut, Illinois and the State of Washington.

11           There is some discussion as to whether  
12 or not the Pennsylvania legislature can enact laws  
13 affording the opportunity to participate to 17-year-olds  
14 without adopting Constitutional amendments. In general,  
15 Constitutions in the free democracy are written in an  
16 inclusive manner to promote and advance the rights of  
17 the citizens. Article VII Section 1 of the Pennsylvania  
18 Constitution provides: "Every citizen 21 years of age,  
19 shall be entitled to vote in all elections subject,  
20 however, to such laws requiring and regulating the  
21 registration of electors as the General Assembly may  
22 enact." As previously mentioned, the 26th Amendment to  
23 the United States Constitution lowered that to age 18 in  
24 Pennsylvania.

1           The Department of State believes the  
2 plain reading of the Pennsylvania Constitution does not  
3 prohibit the legislature from enacting this legislation.  
4 However, the legislature should examine this issue and  
5 make a definitive determination. Should a determination  
6 be made that a Constitutional amendment is required, the  
7 legislative leaders should keep in mind the approximate  
8 cost of that process is approximately \$2 million.

9           Also the legislation is unclear as to  
10 the issue of 17-year-olds registered as independents.  
11 Independents are not eligible to vote in the primary,  
12 obviously, because they are not enrolled as a member of  
13 a political party and the issue of voting on ballot  
14 questions and ballot referendum are a criteria in this  
15 legislation. This particular legislation might want to  
16 addresses that as well.

17           The right to vote, the Rendell  
18 Administration believes, it is a cornerstone of our  
19 democracy. Encouraging participation in the election  
20 process is fundamental to our nation and we strongly  
21 believe the Government should, in fact, should encourage  
22 everything that we could do to encourage and expand  
23 participation in that process. This proposal will  
24 hopefully get and keep young people interested and



1 involved in the electoral process.

2                   And again, the Governor certainly  
3 supports the concept of this Bill. I will be glad to  
4 entertain any questions.

5                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I'm going to ask for  
6 questions, but I want to thank you not only for your  
7 testimony, but also for bringing the word that the  
8 Governor is interested in this legislation and giving us  
9 the sign posts to look for which we will follow your  
10 advice and we would will look for them.

11                   Any questions?

12                   I also have to tell people that  
13 everybody's testimony is at the table to my left, your  
14 right. It is a little difficult to hear. If you have  
15 not heard any, pick up the testimony.

16                   Representative Grucela.

17                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
18 Madam Chairlady. Thank you, first of all, Secretary  
19 Weaver. I appreciate your testimony and I'm glad to  
20 hear the governor is on board. It's the first I heard  
21 of it, so I'm happy to have and welcome his support of  
22 the legislation.

23                   I did receive a question about the  
24 ballot questions and have I no problem with that and

1 certainly either myself will amend the bill or I will  
2 have any of my colleagues who want to submit the  
3 amendment. Why not allow them to vote on ballot  
4 questions, which is also just as relevant. Many times  
5 when I was teaching, at a particular time, the ballot  
6 questions are usually overlooked, and I will try to  
7 emphasize to students how we use the ballots, not only  
8 to elect public officials, but also to help decide many  
9 issues.

10                   If we're going to allow them to vote in  
11 the primary, there is no reason why they shouldn't vote  
12 on the ballot issues as well, give them the total voting  
13 privilege.

14                   I'm not quite clear about the  
15 independent because you pick a party when you register  
16 on the form, so I'm not quite -- I guess, unless you  
17 mean if a 17-year-old register as an independent that  
18 they are not allowed to vote on the question; would that  
19 be correct?

20                   MR. WEAVER: That would be correct. The  
21 concern is if they choose not to enroll in a political  
22 party, I think if they check off no party affiliation  
23 comment as Independent, that will not give them the  
24 opportunity to select a party ballot in the primary.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: I see the  
2 connection there. I have no problem with that. I will  
3 also say I understand the Constitutional convention, I  
4 understand the cost. There is some discussion about the  
5 Constitutional convention, since I have been in  
6 Harrisburg. I personally believe it ought to be  
7 limited, if that's what it would take. Although, I like  
8 the ruling that it doesn't take a Constitutional  
9 convention. If it took that, I have no problem  
10 supporting that because I support the process also.

11                   MR. WEAVER: Well, now amendments can  
12 also be possibly achieved by passing two separate  
13 sessions in the State legislature and then going on the  
14 ballot for voters, which is also a process for  
15 Pennsylvania to amend the Constitution.

16                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: I understand  
17 that. It's a cumbersome process, as we all know. We  
18 have sent the Constitutional amendment over to the  
19 Senate right now, for the property tax issue. It is a  
20 -- and it should be. It shouldn't be easy to amend the  
21 Constitution but that is a cumbersome process. Again, I  
22 have no problem with that.

23                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I was reminded, and  
24 quite rightly, by Representative Curry, that the

1 students from Cheltenham High School are from his  
2 district. So he welcomes you and I welcome you to Mike  
3 O'Brien's district.

4                   And I believe Representative Dermody has  
5 a question.

6                   REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: Thank you,  
7 Madam Chair.

8                   Just very briefly, Secretary, if we are  
9 able to lay your concern with regard to the  
10 Constitutional issue and do our own research, do you  
11 think the Governor would be supportive of this to sign  
12 the bill?

13                   MR. WEAVER: I think there is clear  
14 research done that shows to the definitive course. Our  
15 attorney, at the Department of State, did extensive  
16 research, of course, as a joint matter, we couldn't find  
17 a case that was on point that would allow us this to be  
18 done. We believe, as we read the Constitution or the  
19 attorneys start to reread the Constitution on the  
20 surface, it would allow it but because of that there  
21 should be some additional research.

22                   We're also thinking it would require  
23 some language with regards to Independents that makes it  
24 clear.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: Yes. I think  
2 that's going to have to be addressed because there will  
3 be some individuals who are not affiliated with a  
4 particular party and they still have a right to -- any  
5 elector now has a right to get a separate ballot that  
6 has just the ballot questions on it as opposed to  
7 candidates of a specific party. So that would probably  
8 have to be clearly spelled out in legislation.

9                   REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: Thank you,  
10 Madam Chair.

11                  CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Are there other  
12 questions?

13                  I wanted to make a short comment. If we  
14 are required to amend our Constitution, which is a long  
15 process, as we commented, should be a long process, I  
16 would look to Student Voices, to FairVote, to Student  
17 Government to start involving high school students when  
18 they are freshmen so by the time they get to be seniors  
19 they'll be able to vote and make this into a long-term  
20 four-year high school project for teenagers. Sounds  
21 good to me.

22                  Anymore questions from the panel?

23                  Secretary Weaver, thank you so much for  
24 being here. We appreciate the good work you brought and

1 the ladies as well.

2 MR. WEAVER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

3 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: We have a panel  
4 coming up next, three students, from Fox Chapel, came  
5 all the way here on a bus yesterday, have been  
6 sight-seeing in Southeastern Pennsylvania and  
7 Philadelphia. I'm delighted to have you here.

8 Please introduce yourself.

9 MS. HAZLET: I'm Julia Hazlet, I'm a  
10 Senior at Fox Chapel Area High School.

11 MS. KLEIN: I'm Jennifer Klein and I'm a  
12 government teacher at Fox Chapel Area High School.

13 MR. SECOSKY: I'm Luke Secosky and I'm  
14 also a senior at Fox Chapel Area High School.

15 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Welcome, and how  
16 ever you would like to arrange yourselves, please  
17 proceed.

18 MS. HAZLET: Thank you. Madam Chair and  
19 Members of the Committee, on behalf of my classmates and  
20 myself, I would like to thank you for providing us with  
21 this opportunity to come here today. I would also like  
22 to give a special thank you to Representative Dermody,  
23 who we all owe a lot of gratitude. And I also would  
24 like to thank Representative Grucela for being so

1 enthusiastic to work with us.

2                   As I said, my name is Julia Hazlet and  
3 I'm a senior at Fox Chapel Area High School, in  
4 Pittsburgh, PA. I'm here to testify in support of House  
5 Bill No. 520.

6                   Robert Kennedy once said, it is a  
7 revolutionary world in which we all live and it is the  
8 young people who must take the lead. The Pennsylvania  
9 primary election date has been the subject of many  
10 discussions lately. Even though Pennsylvania is the 6th  
11 most populous state in the nation, historically,  
12 Pennsylvanians have had little influence upon the  
13 selection of the final Presidential nominees. While we  
14 enthusiastically give our support to the need to  
15 increase Pennsylvania's impact upon the selection of  
16 nominees, we feel very strongly that the fluctuating  
17 date of the primary election should not be a source of  
18 disenfranchisement.

19                   A lot of confusion, especially in  
20 regards to voter registration, can arise from that  
21 fluctuation as well. When registering to vote, for the  
22 first time, applicants are required to indicate that  
23 they will be 18 by or on the next election. The problem  
24 is how can you be sure? For example, my birthday is

1 March 30th, and the primaries for 2008 are set for April  
2 22nd. Knowing this, I registered to vote and received  
3 my voter ID card. However, on the state's website,  
4 there was a parenthetical notation next to the scheduled  
5 primary date, it was listed as: April 22nd, considering  
6 February 12th or March 4th.

7                   If the date did change, I would suddenly  
8 be unable to vote. Would my voter ID card be  
9 consequently invalid? To whom do I speak to answer my  
10 questions? Can I still vote because I previously  
11 qualified? Do I have to re-submit my application?

12                   How disheartening it would be; you have  
13 finally gone through the registration process, the  
14 sudden delight you feel when your card finally arrives  
15 knowing that now you can vote and then, come election  
16 day, because of a flaw in the system, you may be  
17 ultimately denied.

18                   My point is unnecessary confusion could  
19 be eliminated by using the date of the general election  
20 to determine voter eligibility for the primary election.  
21 At least nine other states including Indiana, Kentucky,  
22 Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina,  
23 Ohio and Virginia have passed similar legislation to  
24 House Bill 520. North Carolina allowed their



1 17-year-olds, who will be 18 by the General election, to  
2 vote shortly after the 26th Amendment was passed in  
3 1971.

4                   When we called the Board of Elections  
5 Office for North Carolina, the gentleman with whom we  
6 spoke was surprised that other states did not have this  
7 enacted. When asked, he informed us that they had never  
8 had any problems occur from allowing qualified  
9 17-year-olds to vote in the primary.

10                   We feel that it simply makes sense that  
11 if you are going to vote for President, you should also  
12 be a part of that nomination process. Using the general  
13 election as the qualification date for both general and  
14 primary elections will simplify the voting process  
15 tremendously.

16                   Objections concerning the ability of  
17 17-year-olds casting an informed vote have arisen. It  
18 would be inequitable to take an unfavorable  
19 characteristic of the entire population and apply it  
20 only to one segment. Harris Interactive was sponsored  
21 by the American Bar Association to conduct a study of  
22 the civic knowledge of Americans ages 18 and older. The  
23 study found the following: The majority of Americans  
24 could use a civics refresher course.

1                   Just over half of Americans could  
2 correctly identify the three branches of government.  
3 More than 1 in 5 believe that the three branches of  
4 government are Republican, Democrat and Independent  
5 branches. A full 16 percent of the respondents believe  
6 the three branches of government are local, state and  
7 federal.

8                   Less than half of Americans can  
9 correctly identify the meaning of the concept of  
10 separation of powers. However, almost 2/3 report being  
11 very or somewhat familiar with the separation of powers  
12 principle.

13                   Nearly 3 in 10 reported they believe the  
14 judiciary advises the President and Congress about the  
15 legality of an action they intend to take in the future.  
16 So what does this really mean? Reconsider now about the  
17 question about the checks and balances concept. 82  
18 percent felt that the concept was important even though  
19 more than half of them missed the question. What it  
20 comes down to is this; there are uninformed voters in  
21 every age group. There are eligible voters in every age  
22 group who are not registered. There are registered  
23 voters in every age group who have not voted.

24                   Fortunately, there are well-informed

1 registered voters in every age group, including 18- to  
2 24-year-olds, my own age group, that do or want to vote.

3           Admittedly, the 18- to 24-year-old  
4 segment did have the lowest voter turn out in 2004, but  
5 one also has to consider that 81 percent of those that  
6 were registered did vote.

7           Segueing into the next element of  
8 concern, a myth persists that "the youth don't vote  
9 anyway, so this shouldn't matter." Well, the U.S.  
10 Census Bureau stated the following increases in voter  
11 registration and voting rate for the 18- to 24-year-old  
12 age group: While young adults had the lowest voting and  
13 registration rates in 2004, they had the largest  
14 increase in both rates since the 2000 presidential  
15 election compared with all other age groups. The  
16 registration rate for 18- to 24-year-old citizens  
17 increased 7 percentage points and the voting rate  
18 increased 11 percentage points between the 2000 and 2004  
19 elections.

20           By affixing the qualification to vote in  
21 the primary election to the date of the General  
22 election, House Bill 520 addresses an unconsidered  
23 disenfranchising consequence of a floating primary date.  
24 House Bill 520 is in harmony with the spirit expressed

1 in the Pennsylvania Election Reform Task Force's final  
2 report to Governor Rendell's Executive Order 2004-11  
3 assuring that the Commonwealth election system provides  
4 the greatest level of participation and access.

5           In summation, we feel the date changes  
6 should not be a source of disenfranchisement. It makes  
7 sense if you are qualified to vote for president, you  
8 should also be qualified to elect your party's nominee  
9 for that position. There are many outside factors that  
10 contribute to the low turn-out rates of 18- to  
11 24-year-olds. One should not erroneously conclude that  
12 this is because we are uninformed and or apathetic.

13           A lot of confusion arises from a  
14 fluctuating primary date, including, but not limited to  
15 the voter registration process. Having a single  
16 qualification date for both elections will simplify the  
17 voting process and eliminate some of that confusion.

18           Sandra Meucci once said, rather than  
19 standing or speaking for our youth, we need to stand  
20 with youth speaking for themselves. Today I ask you to  
21 stand with us, with House Bill 520 and with all the  
22 youth that are finally awakening the passion to assume  
23 the leadership roles of this revolutionary world in  
24 which we all live by participating today in the

1 legislative and political processes that influence and  
2 impact our daily lives.

3                   Madam Chairman, Members of the  
4 Committee, thank you again for your time and attention  
5 and for affording me the opportunity to testify in  
6 support of House Bill 520.

7                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Thank you so much.

8                   MS. HAZLET: Thank you.

9                   (Applause)

10                  MR. SECOSKY: Madam Chairman, Members of  
11 the Committee, good morning and thank you for providing  
12 me the opportunity to be here today.

13                  My name is Luke Secosky. I'm another  
14 senior in Fox Chapel Area High School in Pittsburgh,  
15 Pennsylvania. I'm pleased to appear before you today in  
16 support of House Bill 520, which will allow individuals  
17 who will be at least 18 years of age on the next general  
18 or municipal election to register to vote in the  
19 corresponding primary.

20                  Despite never having voted in an  
21 election before or, for that matter, even being eligible  
22 to vote in one, 2008 marks the second year in which I am  
23 volunteering for a political campaign. A lot of people  
24 find this hard to believe, as many people unfairly

1 assume young people are apathetic and indifferent when  
2 it comes to political affairs. Indeed, when canvassing  
3 neighborhoods for potential voters this past Sunday, I  
4 was asked, on more than one occasion, "Are you doing  
5 this for school credit?" Unfortunately, for my report  
6 card, there is no grade-based incentive for me to give  
7 of my time. The only reason I volunteer is because,  
8 simply put, I care enough to become involved.

9                   Though it may seem odd to some that I  
10 prefer CNN to ESPN and Washington Week to Best Week  
11 Ever, I am not alone in my views. Nearly everyone in my  
12 high school has an opinion about the impending  
13 presidential election. Whether it be either the  
14 increased media attention on the candidates or just the  
15 fact that the next president will likely signal a new  
16 era in American government, it is impossible to ignore  
17 the political vibe that resonates inside the classrooms  
18 and hallways of my school.

19                   Every day, the first ten minutes of my  
20 statistics class are invariably spent discussing current  
21 events. We talk about the presidential candidates, the  
22 war in Iraq, and government mandated standardized  
23 testing. There is no denying that politics is very  
24 important to young people. We are informed, intelligent

1 citizens who place a very high standard on civic  
2 participation. Why, then, should some of us be denied  
3 the right to vote in primary elections?

4           The burgeoning youth political movement  
5 is not something to be ignored. Our growing involvement  
6 in the democratic process illustrates that we are a  
7 voting bloc to be recognized and respected. States have  
8 seen record numbers of young voters in this year's  
9 primaries, and that trend will likely continue in  
10 Pennsylvania. If we can capitalize on the enthusiasm of  
11 the 2008 election by extending the right to vote in  
12 primary elections to those old enough to participate in  
13 the general contests, we can seize a group of voters for  
14 life.

15           According to a report in the American  
16 Journal of Political Science, an individual's voting in  
17 the 1998 election raised the probability of him voting  
18 in the subsequent 1999 election by 46.7 percentage  
19 points. In a year in which there have been record  
20 amounts of voters in well over half of all primary  
21 contests, attracting new voters will have a significant  
22 impact on the future. Giving the vote to young people  
23 in this presidential election year will increase turnout  
24 in every election hereafter.

1           I am thankful that many of my friends  
2 care enough about politics to get involved with various  
3 campaigns as I have done. At the very same time, I am  
4 saddened that, due to current statutes regarding  
5 elections, some of them will not get a chance to vote in  
6 the primary election for the candidate they have worked  
7 tirelessly for. They are going above and beyond the  
8 expected civic duty, yet they are denied their most  
9 basic right for their volunteer work, the right to vote.  
10 While they ought to be commended for their volunteer  
11 work, they deserve the right to choose the candidate  
12 they wish to appear on the general election ballot.

13           And with less than six weeks to go until  
14 the Pennsylvania primary election, it becomes more  
15 obvious, with each passing day, the difference a change  
16 in election law would make.

17           Today, on behalf of all young  
18 Pennsylvanians, I ask for our state to follow in the  
19 footsteps of nearly a dozen states so far that already  
20 permit individuals who will be at least 18 years of age  
21 by the general election to register and vote in the  
22 corresponding primary. I believe that our founding  
23 fathers who set forth, in this very city, the basic  
24 precepts of our American government, would agree that



1 each and every citizen ought to be able to choose and  
2 elect the officials who represent him or her. And that,  
3 ladies and gentlemen, is all we're asking, fair and just  
4 participation in Pennsylvania's democratic system.

5                   Thank you to both the Committee as well  
6 as Representative Frank Dermody, to whom we owe a great  
7 deal of thanks for this opportunity to testify.

8                   (Applause)

9                   MS. KLEIN: Good morning. Thank you for  
10 allowing me to speak with you today on this most  
11 appropriate setting for today's hearing.

12                   When the Constitution was written, many  
13 in this room would have been left out of the voting  
14 electorate. Any of us who are women, minorities or aged  
15 18 to 21 years old, would have been denied the right to  
16 be active voting citizens. Yet, that Constitution,  
17 which did not originally establish universal voting  
18 rights, did allow us to amend the text, and we have done  
19 so 27 times.

20                   Also in that great document some things  
21 were left up to the states to handle election-wise. So  
22 far at least nine states have changed their election  
23 laws to allow 17-year-olds to participate in the primary  
24 process.

1                   So I say to you today, are  
2 Pennsylvania's 17-year-olds less qualified to vote than  
3 those 17-year-olds in Ohio? Clearly not. We are a  
4 state that takes great pride in high educational  
5 standards. I would venture to say that Pennsylvania's  
6 17-year-olds are just as intelligent and just as  
7 responsible as their peers in those other nine states.

8                   Having been a public school teacher for  
9 the last 15 years, I can honestly say these students  
10 deserve to be active voting members of our society.  
11 This school year alone I have had the privilege of  
12 working with ninety 17 and 18 year olds. All 90 of  
13 those students are worthy and deserving of being  
14 enfranchised. Unlike the media stereotype, 17-year-olds  
15 are not apathetic, they're not consumed with video  
16 games. They watch debates, follow political news, even  
17 take the time to research and compare sources of  
18 information.

19                   Many have actively lobbied for causes,  
20 many have attended local civic meetings and at least  
21 seven of the students here today are participating in  
22 campaigns. High school students today take multiple  
23 college level courses, are active in extra-curricular  
24 activities and work part time jobs. These students,

1 plus students like them across Pennsylvania, are seeking  
2 the same rights as their peers in Ohio and Maryland.

3           Let us not for one minute compare their  
4 quest today with radical youth who seek to lower the  
5 drinking age or legalize drugs. What these students  
6 seek to pursue is actively liberty and the ability to  
7 carry out their civic duty. Let us not stand in their  
8 way.

9           Despite what many assume to be the law,  
10 the United States Constitution does not deny 17 year  
11 olds the right to vote. The 26th Amendment to the  
12 United States Constitution only states that the right of  
13 citizens who are eighteen years of age or older, shall  
14 not be denied by the United States or by any State on  
15 account of age.

16           Since the Constitution does not forbid  
17 this change and since we know our youth to be just as  
18 deserving as those in neighboring states, I fully  
19 support House Bill 520. But let me give you yet another  
20 reason to support the Bill.

21           Voting is a habit. As the saying goes,  
22 good habits start young. As a civic educator, creating  
23 lifelong active voters is a goal I take very seriously.  
24 Every year, my students register to vote, we study the

1 candidates for public office, and we talk about the  
2 voting machines they will be using on election day.  
3 While some students can take these lessons directly to  
4 the polls, others have to wait until the general  
5 election to cast their first vote.

6                   Understandably, even with the passing of  
7 House Bill 520, some students will still not make the  
8 cut-off to participate in the primary, but many more  
9 will. Statistics show that once someone votes, the  
10 likelihood that he or she will vote in the next election  
11 is much greater. I believe we should start this process  
12 and habit as soon as we can for the feeling of  
13 fulfilling one's civic duty will help solidify that  
14 lifelong habit.

15                   Before I conclude, I want to personally  
16 tell you how proud I am of my students and of the  
17 students across Pennsylvania who have joined together  
18 and have taken part in the political process. The  
19 lesson they are learning here today goes beyond any text  
20 book knowledge, the lesson right here in this somewhat  
21 loud room, is that it only takes a few dedicated people  
22 who are willing to work hard and anything is possible.

23                   Over the last 250 years, the great city  
24 of Philadelphia has seen such dedicated groups of people

1 who are looking to institute a positive change in their  
2 government. Let us uphold their legacy and continue to  
3 change government when it is needed. My most sincere  
4 thanks to the State Government Committee for inviting us  
5 here today and my most sincere thank you to the  
6 students, who are very passionate, of Fox Chapel Area  
7 High School. They really are the greatest students.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause)

10 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Before we go to  
11 questions, since we have heard from a teacher from Fox  
12 Chapel, I know that there are principals here, other  
13 teachers, administrators. I would like all of them to  
14 rise, from whatever high school you have come from and  
15 let us give all of them a round of applause for being  
16 such an inspiration to their students.

17 (Applause)

18 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Are there any  
19 questions from the panel?

20 I can only say, and I am sure that I --  
21 sorry Representative Grucela.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
23 Madam Chair, I didn't mean to interrupt you, you can  
24 continue.

1 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: No, that's fine.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: I just have one  
3 question I think I know the answer to. First of all, it  
4 was deja'vu for me. You guys bring back memories, good  
5 memories. My question is relevant to the question about  
6 -- I would ask the students, no offense teach, I would  
7 ask the students about the Independents and the idea of  
8 being allowed to vote on ballot questions; how do you  
9 feel about that?

10 MR. SECOSKY: I feel, Representative  
11 Grucela, there is no validity in that statement, that if  
12 you will be eligible to vote in the primary elections,  
13 thus you should be eligible to make decisions on certain  
14 ballot questions as well as.

15 As for the Independent voters,  
16 regardless of age, the registration as an Independent  
17 does not enable you to vote in a party primary. So I  
18 agree that maybe some wording would have to be changed  
19 in House Bill 520 to clarify the point that young  
20 people, if they're going to be 18 by the general  
21 municipal election, provided they register with one of  
22 the parties in which you would be eligible to vote in  
23 the primary, would then be eligible to vote in the  
24 primary, so I agree the wording is a little fuzzy for

1 the Independent voters. Definitely I can see where you  
2 are coming from.

3                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Anything to  
4 add?

5                   MS. HAZLET: Not really. I think Luke  
6 covered most of it. I agree with what he is saying.  
7 Just to point out Independents even, if you've been  
8 register for ten years you can't vote in the  
9 Pennsylvania primary. And the wording is a little bit  
10 fuzzy, but I'm sure that it can be worked out in a very  
11 clear and understandable way.

12                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you.

13                   Just a final comment. Again, to the  
14 three of you, the only question -- and what an  
15 outstanding job you've done -- if it is going to go to  
16 the House floor, I won't plagiarize, I will use this, I  
17 will tell you that. Some of this stuff is dynamite. I  
18 will give you the credit so there will be no plagiarism  
19 involved, but the only question I will pick up from the  
20 radio station, I will ask, which the two of you sort of  
21 addressed about apathy, but they asked me pretty much  
22 about maturity and I just told them, besides teaching, I  
23 started at the local level and had governmental  
24 experience before I got to Harrisburg and I simply said,

1 look, I served with individuals in public office in  
2 their 30s, 40s and 50s that were immature. So don't  
3 tell me they don't wake up until an age group.

4 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Not present company.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
6 again. What a great job.

7 MS. HAZLET: Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Representative  
9 Curry.

10 REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Thank you, Madam  
11 Chairman.

12 Luke, I would like to ask you what  
13 difference would be made in this upcoming primary if we  
14 had changed the election law, say, last year?

15 MR. SECOSKY: I think that if you had  
16 changed the election law last year, you would see more  
17 turnout among young people. By attracting the young  
18 people to vote in this election, by attracting them for  
19 the primary, which would be so -- which, like I said,  
20 has shown record turnout in nearly 2/3 of the state so  
21 far, I think you would be able to attract so many more  
22 young voters had this been into effect last year, but  
23 even now, maybe to a lesser extent, capitalizing on the  
24 excitement of the 2008 election, both primary and



1 general, I think passing it would definitely have more  
2 participation.

3           I think maybe what you're going towards  
4 is specific candidates might have benefitted from this.  
5 I think from presidential candidates all the way down to  
6 local, there are certain candidates who could benefit  
7 from this change. But overall, I think rather than  
8 making this a partisan issue I think mainly it would  
9 increase voter participation by young people and that is  
10 mainly what we're after.

11           REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Of course, if you  
12 added more you would have more, I understand that. The  
13 question is what quality in the election would change?  
14 What quality in the outcome would change?

15           SECOSKY: The quality in the outcome of  
16 the primary elections --

17           MS. HAZLET: Do you mind if I answer?

18           REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Sure.

19           MS. HAZLET: I think the quality will  
20 definitely be increased. This election is very heated  
21 and a very much discussed election and you're pulling a  
22 lot of people with opinions about it, and really, to  
23 have a good discussion about it -- I find that a lot of  
24 people are taking time to research the issues so they

1 can relevantly argue what's going on.

2           I also think that, had this  
3 hypothetically been passed last year, the voters that --  
4 personally in my community, the voters that would go out  
5 and make use of this would be those who are staying  
6 informed because those are the voters that are going to  
7 take the time to find out if they vote and if they're  
8 taking that time, in all likelihood, I think it's a fair  
9 assumption to say they're also staying updated on  
10 candidates or issues.

11           I don't think that the outcome, whether  
12 it was better or worse, I think it ultimately would be  
13 better. It could not be worse to allow an informed  
14 updated 17-year-old because, in all reality, the kids  
15 who -- it wouldn't effect those who probably aren't  
16 staying up-to-date because they probably wouldn't know  
17 this existed. So that being said --

18           MR. SECOSKY: Just again going back to  
19 what she said, the quality of the elections. I think  
20 that the main difference that would result from this  
21 change in election would be the quality of the general  
22 electorate would be greatly improved. I think that  
23 young people -- seniors citizens traditionally turnout  
24 to vote in higher numbers than young people. I think if

1 we can give the vote to 17-years-olds, the 17-year-olds  
2 that do care and are involved, will become involved and  
3 will vote and their participation in the voting process  
4 will make the entire voting bloc, every voter in  
5 Pennsylvania will be benefitted by this change.

6 REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Thank you both.

7 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Representative  
8 Dermody.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: I don't have a  
10 question, just a comment. I want to say thank you to  
11 all the students from Fox Chapel Area High School.

12 And this issue, I never even thought  
13 about it before it came to my office. I want to thank  
14 you for opening my eyes. You did a great job today.  
15 Thank you so much.

16 MS. HAZLET: Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I want to make a  
18 little bit of explanation to Ms. Hazlet's testimony when  
19 she talked about going to the website and seeing in  
20 parenthesis we were considering February 12th, March 4th  
21 and what confusion that would cause. We did move out of  
22 this Committee and pass through the House a bill that  
23 would have moved the election to February 12th, and I  
24 assume that that is why it was on the website. And I



1 non-profit, non-partisan organization that gets students  
2 involved and ready to be educated, engaged citizens.  
3 Students from kindergarten through high school learn  
4 about democracy through a combination of classroom  
5 activities, an authentic voting experience and family  
6 dialogue. Students also explore the right to vote, the  
7 political process and active citizenship.

8           The culminating activity and highlight  
9 of Kids Voting in our region is the opportunity for  
10 young people to accompany their parent to an actual  
11 official polling location and cast their own ballot for  
12 the same candidates that appear on the adult slate on an  
13 authentic ballot form. The results are scanned,  
14 tabulated and published the following day in the  
15 Intelligencer and Bucks County Courier Times, daily  
16 newspapers in our region.

17           Kids Voting Southeast Pennsylvania is an  
18 affiliate of Kids Voting USA and includes Bucks and  
19 Eastern Montgomery Counties. We are one of 52  
20 affiliates in 29 states nationwide. There are two  
21 affiliates in Pennsylvania: Kids Voting Southeast  
22 Pennsylvania and Kids Voting Chester County. Kids  
23 Voting USA touches 4.3 million students in 10,600  
24 schools across the country. Kids Voting reaches across

1 all boundaries, geographic, ethnic, cultural and  
2 demographics to encourage everyone to participate in the  
3 political process.

4                   In the 2004 presidential election year  
5 1.5 million students cast a ballot at an official  
6 polling location or with an online voting system. Over  
7 39,00 students voted in Kids Voting Bucks/Montgomery  
8 elections.

9                   The idea of Kids Voting began in 1988  
10 when three Arizona businessmen traveled to Costa Rica on  
11 a fishing trip. During their visit, they learned that  
12 the country's voter turnout was typically around 90  
13 percent. The high turnout was attributed to the  
14 tradition of children accompanying their parents to the  
15 polls. The men were intrigued by the idea, but also  
16 recognized a missing link to education. They launched a  
17 school-based project in a Phoenix suburb that has since  
18 grown into the national Kids Voting USA network.

19                   Kids Voting now has its headquarters in  
20 Silver Springs, Maryland. The program is delivered to  
21 communities across the country through a network of  
22 state and local affiliates. These community-based,  
23 independent organizations bring together committed  
24 individuals including school administrations and

1 teachers, election officials, business leaders, parents,  
2 the media and community volunteers. Volunteers at every  
3 level and in every aspect of the program are in the life  
4 blood of Kids Voting.

5 Kids Voting Southeast Pennsylvania is  
6 managed by a volunteer board that includes newspaper  
7 publishers, county election officials, an attorney, a  
8 member of the League of Women Voters, business leaders,  
9 the CEO of the United Way of Bucks County, school  
10 administrators and teachers. I am the sole part time  
11 paid volunteer.

12 Similar to the national organization,  
13 Kids Voting Southeast Pennsylvania had modest  
14 beginnings. In 2000 it started as a pilot program in  
15 the Central Bucks School District. Its early success  
16 led to neighboring school districts adopting the program  
17 in succeeding years. By the year 2006 Kids Voting had  
18 expanded to six school districts. It is our goal in  
19 2008 to expand Kids Voting to all 13 school districts in  
20 Bucks County and three school districts in Eastern  
21 Montgomery County. It has been our experience that once  
22 a school district and community adopt Kids Voting it  
23 continues in following years.

24 The challenge in establishing a Kids

1 Voting presence in a community is finding an  
2 enthusiastic volunteer who is able to effectively  
3 network with school, staff, parents and volunteers.  
4 Kids Voting USA provides technical assistance and  
5 curricular materials to support the program. The  
6 funding for Kids Voting comes from contributions from  
7 local businesses and community organizations. We accept  
8 no funding from political parties or candidates for  
9 political office.

10                   The positive results of Kids Voting  
11 emerge in several ways. Research conducted by the  
12 University of Colorado and the University of Kansas has  
13 confirmed the impact of the Kids Voting program on  
14 voting patterns and civic participation. As students  
15 learn about the political process and participate in  
16 real-life voting experiences, they gain the skills and  
17 confidence to be active citizens as adults. Kids Voting  
18 encourages students to become involved in the democratic  
19 process and especially to realize the importance of  
20 voting when they turn 18 years old.

21                   In communities with a Kids Voting  
22 program, the voting rate for registered 18 year olds is  
23 14 percentage points higher than that of their  
24 non-participating peers, according to a study in Kansas.



1                   Parents are re-energized in the  
2 political process as their kids urge them to talk about  
3 issues and to be involved. For parents, having a  
4 student in the Kids Voting program not only increases  
5 the likelihood they will vote, it also increases their  
6 competence as voters as well. Many communities with  
7 Kids Voting affiliates see adult turnout increase by 3  
8 to 5 percent.

9                   The Kids Voting program promotes  
10 political involvement for students from all  
11 socioeconomic levels, but the program is especially  
12 effective for students from low-income households.  
13 These students, many of whom are not regularly exposed  
14 to current events, become actively and enthusiastically  
15 engaged in political discussions and civic learning.

16                   Kids Voting facilitates the civic  
17 bonding of school and family through the "boomerang  
18 effect." Students initiate political discussions at  
19 home, which influences parents to pay more attention to  
20 politics and then parents, in turn, encourage their  
21 children to participate more in civic learning at  
22 schools.

23                   By participating in Kids Voting,  
24 students learn the process and mechanics of voting;

1 however, the learning experiences go much deeper. The  
2 Civics Alive curriculum is the heart of the Kids Voting  
3 program. It is a comprehensive series of K through 12  
4 civics education classroom activities that teach  
5 students about the concepts of citizenship, civic  
6 responsibility, democracy and the importance of  
7 political participation.

8           The classroom activities make learning  
9 about politics and voting relevant and fun for students,  
10 and are designed to supplement other social studies  
11 curriculum currently in use. The curriculum supports  
12 and is consistent with Pennsylvania social studies  
13 standards. Classroom activities model democratic  
14 processes through cooperative learning structures, group  
15 problem solving, and active student-centered  
16 experiences. Activities are designed for use across all  
17 grade levels. Typical activities for younger students  
18 include role-playing, craft activities, and classroom  
19 elections. Older students may be involved in  
20 constructing policy options or holding formal debates.

21           The experience of Kids Voting locally  
22 and nationally has implications for your deliberations  
23 about House Bill 520. We currently establish age  
24 criteria for rights and privileges such as voting,

1 driving a car, drinking alcohol, obtaining a marriage  
2 license, etc. As we know, people young and old, make  
3 good and bad decisions about matters of vital importance  
4 to their lives. Through Kids Voting we have learned  
5 that young people can make informed and reasoned  
6 decisions when they are given the learning experiences  
7 and opportunities to practice skills that are critical  
8 to the issue facing them.

9                   Most parents and educators dedicate  
10 their lives to prepare young people for increased  
11 responsibility and independence. As students grow older  
12 they certainly are more likely to think and act  
13 responsibly and independently and make choices that do  
14 not simply mimic the opinions of parents and teachers.  
15 Voters are influenced by personal values, family voting  
16 patterns, friends, economic considerations, the  
17 personality of candidates, campaign material and the  
18 media when they enter the voting booth.

19                   Regardless of the age, when a person  
20 casts their first ballot, these same sources of  
21 influence will be present. It is the vision of Kids  
22 Voting that one day all citizens will be educated and  
23 engaged voters.

24                   Thank you very much.

1                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS:  If there are no  
2 questions, I do have a question.  I'm sitting here and  
3 I'm thinking, I have a 14-year-old grandson, I have a  
4 16-year-old grandson.  They live in Oregon, I want them  
5 to be working on a project like this.  For those adults,  
6 yourself, Dr. Coe, the people from Student Voices, is  
7 there a group in Oregon I can direct my grandchildren  
8 to?

9                   MR. COE:  I tell you what, I will check  
10 and I will look on the website of Kids Voting USA, and  
11 you can check too, to see if there is an affiliate in  
12 Oregon.  I have grandchildren in Washington State.  So I  
13 know the feeling of wanting to stay in touch with your  
14 grandchildren, no matter where they are.

15                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS:  Well, I think it  
16 would be a great project for them.  They are both very  
17 opinionated about politics, as they should be.  One of  
18 them is very left-wing, agrees with me on most things,  
19 the other is a little bit more conservative.  We have a  
20 lot of discussions.  It's very interesting.

21                   MR. COE:  Well, I have two sons who are  
22 now adults and I have the same experience of them being  
23 on both sides of the political spectrum.

24                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS:  Representative

1 Grucela.

2                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
3 Madam Chairman.

4                   I want to commend you on an outstanding  
5 program. I didn't know something like this existed. I  
6 really don't have a question. I just wanted to commend  
7 you on bringing my attention to a program like this.

8                   I just want to go back one second, the  
9 old teacher in me can't miss a teaching moment. When I  
10 read Julia's testimony about the shifting dates, I'm  
11 reminded of what I used to teach on two elections, the  
12 primary and the general, the kids would always be  
13 confused as heck about the Pennsylvania primary.

14                   The third Tuesday in May, except when we  
15 elect the president, it's the fourth Tuesday in April.  
16 To the students, though, it's: Why? You still hear the  
17 question why? When the Bill to move, which  
18 Representative Josephs mentioned, passed the House of  
19 Representatives and died in the Senate, when the Bill  
20 came up it was actually Representative Readshaw, who was  
21 also a rep from Pennsylvania's, Bill.

22                   I was willing to amend that bill with  
23 this bill as an amendment so actually it would have  
24 satisfied the point that Julia brought up, however,

1 sometimes when you want bills to move from the House you  
2 want to keep them, as they say, "clean." You don't want  
3 to muddy them up with other issues. Even though the  
4 issue was germane, I talked to Representative Readshaw  
5 and I just didn't amend it at the time in order to allow  
6 that bill to move clean to the Senate, because at that  
7 time there was a lot of discussion about Pennsylvania  
8 and becoming a player, which ironically we became  
9 anyway, but there was some intention to keep the bill  
10 clean and just talk about the date.

11           I wanted Julia and students to know that  
12 I actually was going to put that in there, but I held  
13 off because in the legislative process, you know your  
14 text books tells you a bill becomes a law in two phases,  
15 don't believe that. It's a really long process, but I  
16 just wanted to bring that up. Thank you.

17           CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Thank you. We are  
18 going to have two more students now from Masterman High  
19 School, Maricela Metraux -- if you will correct my  
20 pronunciation, please. Isabel Ricker, and there are  
21 more people. Will you please introduce yourselves and  
22 for the sake of the reporter, before you leave this  
23 area, please make sure that she knows the name of the  
24 folks who do not have name tags on signs. Please.

1 MS. RICKER: Good morning, my name is  
2 Isabel Ricker from Masterman High School.

3 MR. CARROLL: Good morning, my name is  
4 Christopher Carroll and I am a junior at Masterman High  
5 School.

6 MS. METRAUX: Hi, my name is Maricela  
7 Metraux and I'm a junior at Masterman High School.

8 MS. HOLT: Good morning, my name is  
9 Jenny Holt and I'm a senior at Masterman High School.

10 MS. RICKER: Madam Chair and Members of  
11 the Committee, good morning.

12 Thank you so much for giving me the  
13 opportunity to speak to you today on this important  
14 subject. Like many of my peers, the upcoming  
15 presidential contest will be the first election in which  
16 I will be eligible to vote. This election is probably  
17 the most energizing political event of my generation,  
18 and has sparked a great increase in my personal  
19 political awareness. I have always followed politics,  
20 but with this election, for the first time, I fell like  
21 I can make a difference, that my voice can be heard.

22 Since entering high school, I have been  
23 involved with numerous campaigns, including those of  
24 John Kerry, Bob Casey and Michael Nutter. I supported

1 all of these candidates, but was not as inspired or  
2 motivated as I am by this election and this is not due  
3 solely to the fact that I will be old enough to vote by  
4 November. The issues at stake in this election are  
5 critically important to me and to my generation. In  
6 many ways, I'm thinking specifically of the War in Iraq  
7 and global warming, the future of not only our country,  
8 but the entire world will be determined by the outcome  
9 of this one political contest.

10                   This year I am taking AP US Government.  
11 As part of this class, and in connection with the  
12 Student Voices program, we held mock presidential  
13 primaries for both parties, campaigning and staging a  
14 vote for the entire high school. During this intensive  
15 project, we studied closely all four candidates that we  
16 represented. The campaigns had to be entirely issue  
17 based, so we learned the candidates' positions on every  
18 issue in detail.

19                   Listening to NPR during the primary  
20 season, I heard many interviews with voters from around  
21 the country. Almost all seemed considerably less  
22 informed than I was, and most based their voting  
23 decision on one issue or the candidate's personality.  
24 Many high school seniors across Pennsylvania study



1 current events and politics extensively in school, and  
2 as a result are better informed about the candidates  
3 than many voting adults. The qualification for me being  
4 a part of the decision should not be age, but knowledge  
5 of the candidates and the electorate process.

6           As excited as I am to vote in the  
7 General election, I am a bit put off by the fact that I  
8 will not be able to choose which candidate of my party I  
9 will be voting for in November. In many cases, it is  
10 the primary that is the deciding election, rather than  
11 the General. In Philadelphia's Mayoral contest the  
12 chances of a Republican winning are so slim that few  
13 voters bother to participate in the General at all.

14           In the presidential election, the  
15 primary decisions do not determine general election  
16 results, but they do help establish the party platform  
17 and select delegates to the National Convention, who  
18 decide which candidate that party nominates.

19           Many young people have already developed  
20 party identification, and in November some will vote for  
21 whichever candidate their party selects, even if it is a  
22 lesser-of-two-evils vote. However, many will not.

23           The persistent problem of low voter  
24 turnout among the youngest age groups, 18-24 year olds,

1 is primarily due to the lack of political efficacy felt  
2 by this demographic. Politicians tend to cater far more  
3 to issues important to seniors, and understandably so,  
4 since this demographic has the highest voter turnout  
5 rate. However, ignoring young voters reinforces the  
6 perception of politics as a repetitive cycle of  
7 corruption, empty rhetoric, and corporate or  
8 interest-group dominated legislation.

9           I have heard from many of my peers the  
10 sentiment that their one vote will not make a  
11 difference. The idea that all candidates are the same,  
12 none keep their promises, and that our future will be  
13 determined by a group of politicians who we have no  
14 control over has disheartened more than a few of my  
15 peers. Being able to have our voices heard in the  
16 primary where issues, not party identification, are at  
17 stake, would do a lot to reverse this feeling among 17  
18 year olds who want to vote, but may feel disenfranchised  
19 by having such an important decision made for them.

20           Every other age group is fully  
21 represented in both primary and General elections, but  
22 the youngest voters, who will have to live with the  
23 consequences of the election the longest, are  
24 underrepresented in the elections that concern them

1 most.

2 MS. METRAUX: Good morning.

3 This October, I'll be lucky enough to be  
4 turning 18 and participating in my first presidential  
5 election. In anticipation of this, I've been paying  
6 close attention to each of the candidates, as well as  
7 the election process itself in order to make the most  
8 informed decision on my choice for president. During  
9 this process, I have learned a lot about our democratic  
10 system, not only about Election Day, but about the long  
11 road leading up to it. I've been extremely excited and  
12 interested in watching the primary process as it has  
13 been unfolding.

14 However, one of the things I have  
15 learned is that the choice in November is only partially  
16 mine. I have realized that the presidential candidate  
17 for each party will be selected for me, and because of  
18 my age, I will only be included in a fraction of the  
19 process. As the next generation of adults in America, I  
20 believe it is extremely important that the group of  
21 people whose birthdays fall in the six-month period  
22 between Pennsylvania's primary and the General election  
23 be included in the whole election process. As the youth  
24 of America, we deserve to have our age group

1 incorporated in selecting who we want as our president.

2           I realize that if this legislation is  
3 passed, it will not affect my ability to vote in this  
4 year's Pennsylvania primary. But generations of  
5 teenagers ahead of me should be able to take place in  
6 the entire election process, and should not miss out on  
7 this fundamental American experience because their  
8 birthday happens to fall a few months too late.

9           Perhaps if 17-year-olds were eligible to  
10 vote in the Pennsylvania primary, they would not only be  
11 fully included in the race for president, but also be  
12 captured by the excitement of the democratic process  
13 like I have. So I urge you to consider the fraction of  
14 voters who will get cheated out of the full election  
15 process and pass this legislation so that they might be  
16 able to vote in the Pennsylvania primary.

17           Thank you for your time.

18           MR. CARROLL: Madam Chair, Members of  
19 the Committee, good morning.

20           My name is Christopher Carroll and I am  
21 a student at the Masterman High School in Philadelphia.  
22 My friends know me as the "politic" kid. Ask me  
23 anything about elections and the chances are I could  
24 answer your question. As a young person extremely

1 interested in politics, I cannot wait until the day  
2 where I can register to vote. Whether it is in a  
3 mayoral primary, a gubernatorial race or a presidential  
4 election, I would love to have the opportunity to vote  
5 right now, but I realize that I can't.

6                   I have worked for Senator Bob Casey,  
7 Governor Ed Rendell, Mayor Michael Nutter and currently  
8 Pam Baker and a presidential democratic presidential  
9 candidate. I realize that I cannot register to vote  
10 because I am 17 year old because I do not feel as though  
11 I will be a true registered voter.

12                   Firstly, I fully believe in the  
13 democratic process of electing our officials. If I were  
14 given the opportunity to vote right now, I would, but I  
15 would not feel as though I would be a true registered  
16 voter.

17                   In my opinion, I should have the same  
18 rights as other voters when I get my voter registration  
19 card. Under this legislation, I would not be able to  
20 contribute to the candidate that I would be voting for  
21 because campaign financing laws limit donations to 18  
22 year olds.

23                   Another reason that I would not support  
24 this bill is with the issue of becoming a delegate.

1 Would this legislation allow me to go to Denver, for  
2 example, to become a delegate at my party's convention?  
3 Would I have to ask my mother to accompany me? Keep in  
4 mind that the presidential election is in November and  
5 the conventions are in the summer, making me 17 at the  
6 time of the convention.

7                   Another thing to keep in mind is the  
8 issue of primaries themselves. Would 17-year-olds be  
9 able to vote for a candidate running in a primary and  
10 other candidates that may be on that ballot who are not  
11 running in a primary? What about questions on the  
12 ballots? Would 17-year-olds be allowed to vote for  
13 questions pertaining to different logistical aspects of  
14 our government if they are only supposed to be voting in  
15 the primary?

16                   How can I not be responsible in donating  
17 money to a campaign yet be responsible enough to decide  
18 on a person who could possibly send me to war or take  
19 control of my rights? How can I be responsible enough  
20 to vote for a candidate yet not be responsible enough to  
21 represent one? I do not want to be a puppet for  
22 candidates. I do not want to only be a vote, I want to  
23 be a voter.

24                   In my opinion, the state legislature

1 should focus more on getting my peers, 18 to 25,  
2 actually out to the polls to vote. Young voters have  
3 one of the lowest turnouts of any age group in many  
4 polls and before adding to the problem, why not fix it?

5 Thank you.

6 MS. HOLT: Good morning, Madam Chair and  
7 Members of the Committee.

8 My name is Jenny Holt and I'm a senior  
9 at Masterman High School.

10 Growing up in America, we are taught  
11 from birth that our ability to make decisions, based on  
12 our vast and varied opinions, is our greatest freedom.  
13 Children spend hours in school learning about the  
14 privileges of democracy and the honor that will be  
15 bestowed upon them when they reach adulthood, the right  
16 to vote.

17 Unfortunately, in recent years, the  
18 magnitude of this right seems to have lost meaning for  
19 younger voters. This is the first election for which  
20 I'll be old enough to vote, however, I will still be 17  
21 during the Pennsylvania primary.

22 I am indescribably excited that I'll be  
23 able to help shape the future of America this November,  
24 but I'm equally concerned that without a vote in the

1 primary, the candidate of my choice might not be on the  
2 ballot.

3                   This presidential election is one of the  
4 most important and ground-breaking our nation has ever  
5 seen, but if future voters are unable to get their foot  
6 in the electoral door, by nominating a candidate in the  
7 primary, they are likely to never enter the voting booth  
8 at all.

9                   Don't let the fact that I'm not 18  
10 overshadow my knowledge of the political process;  
11 instead let it reflect the mindset of other students  
12 like me whose maturity and passion for government well  
13 outweigh their years. High school students that care  
14 about politics are fairly hard to come by, but those  
15 that are should not be denied what is arguably the most  
16 important of their unalienable rights, the right to  
17 change their country, the right to influence their  
18 future, the right to vote. Thank you.

19                   (Applause)

20                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Representative  
21 Grucela.

22                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
23 Madam Chairman.

24                   I have the same question, and I think



1 Christopher covered it, but you had me a little  
2 confused; you will make a great politician.

3                    Seriously, the same question I had for  
4 the other panel of students about, which apparently was  
5 an oversight in legislation which we can correct, and  
6 that is the idea about voting on initiative referendum  
7 recall ballot questions. Could you tell me again, all  
8 of you, how you feel about that? Do you believe you  
9 should have that right to vote on the ballot questions,  
10 as well as any amendments?

11                    Christopher.

12                    MR. CARROLL: Firstly, I'm totally not  
13 against this legislation. If the things that I  
14 mentioned in my speech were implemented into this  
15 legislation, I would absolutely be for it, but what  
16 concerns me is a lot of referendums on the ballots are  
17 pertaining to fiscal questions. So \$10 billion to build  
18 casinos on the Riverfront or something like that.

19                    I need to question if I can't give or  
20 contribute \$5 to the campaign, what does this mean? I  
21 mean, how could I vote a \$10 billion initiative to fund  
22 a casino on the Riverfront? My question is how can you  
23 say that I have the right to vote for a \$10 billion plan  
24 when I can't contribute \$5 to a political campaign?

1                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: So you're tying  
2 it to basically campaign financing as well?

3                   MR. CARROLL: Yes.

4                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Okay. I  
5 understand. Thank you.

6                   Ms. RICKER: Well, I would support  
7 letting any voters that are able to vote for candidates  
8 in the primary election vote on these ballot questions  
9 as well. And I understand that they would be 17 at the  
10 time of the voting but a few months -- personally I feel  
11 very well informed about politics and I feel like I  
12 would be able to make a very informed decision.

13                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Some of you, I  
14 noted, were juniors. All of you or --

15                   MS. RICKER: I'm a senior.

16                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Two juniors.

17                   Do you take American government as  
18 juniors or what is your curriculum, I guess is my  
19 question?

20                   MS. RICKER: In 11th grade we take  
21 American History and in 12th grade we take United States  
22 Government.

23                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you. If  
24 the others want to comment you can, if not, thank you.

1 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Representative  
2 Dermody.

3 REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: Thank you,  
4 Madam Chairman.

5 I think I might be showing my ignorance  
6 here. Chris, on the campaign contributions, you're  
7 talking about internet contributions, that type of  
8 thing?

9 MR. CARROLL: Yes.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: And the  
11 campaign finance laws -- federal campaign finance laws  
12 at the state level, how old do you have to be before you  
13 can contribute?

14 MR. CARROLL: 18.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: So even if we  
16 pass this law that you can vote in the primary when  
17 you're 17 you still won't be able to make a contribution  
18 until you're 18?

19 MR. CARROLL: Yes.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: I think I want  
21 to get into internet contributions also.

22 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Thank you very much  
23 for the students. I appreciate your testimony. I  
24 appreciate very much testimony that doesn't agree with

1 the prevailing sentiments. That's what all of this is  
2 about process, education, discussion and ultimately  
3 people exercising whatever right they have.

4 I want to take a 10-minute break for the  
5 reporter and I would like to speak during that break  
6 with some of the students. Before we break, I am  
7 reminded, for the four young people, we do need copies  
8 of your testimony. You can e-mail them to Mr. Oliver.  
9 He can make arrangements for you to do that in the  
10 break.

11 MS. RIKER: Thank you.

12 (Whereupon, a break was taken from 11:30  
13 a.m. until 11:48 a.m.)

14 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Ms. Young, whenever  
15 you're ready.

16 MS. YOUNG: Madam Chair, Members of the  
17 Committee, thank you for holding this hearing and  
18 providing me an opportunity to discuss voting rights for  
19 Pennsylvania's youth.

20 As stated, my name is Tara Young and I  
21 am a Fellow at FairVote. FairVote is a non-partisan,  
22 non-profit, pro-democracy organization based in  
23 Washington, DC. We support House Bill 520 that will  
24 allow those who will turn 18 years old by General

1 Election Day to vote in the preceding primary.

2           If this policy were in effect this year,  
3 an estimated 145,000 young people in Pennsylvania would  
4 have the opportunity to vote in next month's historic  
5 election. I agree with Time Magazine's article by Tim  
6 Bingaman; it is the year of the youth vote.

7           Nationally, young people make up about  
8 1/5 of the entire voting population, which are 44  
9 million young people, these voters will make a  
10 difference in an election. In that cover story, The  
11 Year of the Youth Vote, Time stated, 74 percent of 18-19  
12 years olds are paying attention to the 2008 presidential  
13 race, which is a 30 percent increase from 2004.

14           The proof is the numbers. Young people  
15 are inspired about voting and being heard in this  
16 election and elections to come. Penn State Professor,  
17 Eric Plutzer agrees. He notes, after the research,  
18 virtually all major works on turnout can conclude that  
19 voting teenagers is an acquired act. The turnout among  
20 18 to 29 year olds, during a midterm election, increased  
21 by more than 2 million voters in the 2006 compared to  
22 2002, according to Young Voter Strategies, the research  
23 arm for Rock the Vote.

24           In the 2004 Presidential Election, more

1 than 20 million 18 to 29 year olds voted, which was 4.3  
2 million more than in 2000. All signs indicate that the  
3 young adults who voted in these elections are much more  
4 likely to vote again this November.

5           In other words, more young adults have  
6 become voters in the past two elections, they have  
7 become habitual voters.

8           Looking to November, young voters are  
9 likely to turn out in increased numbers yet again.  
10 Given the increase, the House Bill 520 could create a  
11 new habit for this voting block to vote in the primary,  
12 which is equally important as the General election.  
13 Voting in the primary dictates the choice in the general  
14 election, and young people should have a voice in the  
15 choice.

16           More than having a voice, this Bill,  
17 allowing 17 year olds to vote in primary elections, is a  
18 matter of basic fairness and good elections practices.  
19 Everyone who is eligible to vote in the general election  
20 should be able to vote in the primary. Ensuring that  
21 all general election voters are able to vote in the  
22 preceding primary is also good for candidates and for  
23 the political system. More involvement and energy in  
24 the primary process means stronger general election

1 turnout and an opportunity for candidates to seek the  
2 broadest possible support.

3                   Right now 18 states or state parties  
4 allow everyone, who is registered and eligible to vote  
5 in the general election, to vote in their state's  
6 primary. States that ensure the voting rights of young  
7 people include Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon and  
8 Virginia to name a few.

9                   In Maryland, the state attorney general  
10 recently overturned a rule, which allowed eligible 17  
11 year olds to vote in primaries. After the  
12 investigation, FairVote and Maryland's Democratic and  
13 Republican parties requested the state's attorney  
14 general respectfully review the December 2006 decision,  
15 in light of the State party's first amendment freedom of  
16 association rights under *Tashjain vs. Connecticut*, 1986.  
17 The Maryland state attorney general reviewed the party's  
18 argument and the State Board of Elections restored 17  
19 year old's voting rights.

20                   This all started because a young woman  
21 from Maryland noticed the unfairness, and wanted the  
22 right to fully participate. Sarah Boltuck, who will be  
23 18 in July, told the Washington Post, I thought that was  
24 one of my rights as a citizen of Maryland, I had assumed

1 that I was registered and I would have no problem. But  
2 to her surprise there was, but Maryland made it right.

3           The young people here today, who  
4 expressed themselves so well, and the estimated 145,000  
5 high school seniors in your state, who may turn 18 after  
6 the Pennsylvania's primary, are requesting this  
7 honorable body to do the right thing and pass House Bill  
8 520. Every American has the right to be a full  
9 participant.

10           I respectfully encourage this committee  
11 to recommend this Bill for a vote and encourage your  
12 colleagues to pass House Bill 520. Again, when young  
13 people vote, democracy wins, if democracy wins, we all  
14 win. Thank you.

15           (Applause)

16           CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I'm so glad you  
17 didn't disappoint me, Representative. Representative  
18 Grucela.

19           REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
20 Madam Chair.

21           Just one question. There has been a  
22 different number of states presented this morning. I  
23 have heard 9, I've heard 11 and I've heard 18 now with  
24 your testimony. I just notice you say 18 states or



1 state parties.

2 MS. YOUNG: That is correct.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Is that the  
4 difference why?

5 MS. YOUNG: Exactly, that's the  
6 difference. Some states have moved their legislators to  
7 get things done, but other states have allowed their  
8 parties to make the decision. So if the democratic and  
9 republican parties agree to allow 17-year-olds to vote  
10 in their primary, they have the follow-through and have  
11 been allowed to do that. So that's why the number  
12 fluctuates.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: I'm not sure if  
14 you know the answer to this, you may; it may not be a  
15 fair question. Do you know whether that would be  
16 possible in Pennsylvania, number one; and would it be  
17 possible in Pennsylvania to do it expediently to  
18 actually make it for -- it would have to be really  
19 expedient to make these young people actually eligible  
20 in this primary.

21 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Ms. Young, before  
22 you answer, we have two more hearings on this topic on  
23 this Bill, we just didn't have the time to get into the  
24 State party issue in this hearing, but we will do that

1 in subsequent hearings.

2                   So Representative, if you don't mind  
3 holding your question, I'd appreciate that.

4                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Not at all,  
5 Madam Chair. That's all I have. Thank you.

6                   MS. YOUNG: And if I might add, Madam  
7 Chair, you said something earlier, you're grateful to  
8 the organizations that spoke before me. I also wanted  
9 to inform you that FairVote is doing a high school  
10 curriculum that will be in place soon and we are  
11 finishing up the final touches on that and we're going  
12 to start in the 9th grade.

13                  CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I mentioned Student  
14 Voices because we didn't have a witness speaking. I  
15 know there is more than one group. I am very happy to  
16 hear about yours. I don't mind which group of the two  
17 or any other group goes to Eugene Oregon, where my  
18 grandchildren are. I want them involved and I have  
19 another set of grandchildren in Albany, New York and I  
20 want them involved and any group who is going to do  
21 that, I'm in favor of. Thank you for making that  
22 remark. I'm appreciative.

23                  MS. YOUNG: Thank you.

24                  (Applause)

1 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: We have a panel of  
2 two students from Cheltenham High School and then we  
3 will have brief remarks from a third person.

4 Kayode Ogunsola and Jessica Seridikoff.

5 MS. SERIDIKOFF: Hi. My name is Jessica  
6 Seridikoff, I'm a senior at Cheltenham High School.

7 MR. OGUNSOLA: Hello. My name is Kayode  
8 Ogunsola and I would just like to thank Madam Chair,  
9 thank you and Representative Dermody, and all the other  
10 members of the Committee with providing us the  
11 opportunity to testify.

12 MS. SERIDIKOFF: I would also like to  
13 thank everyone for having us here to talk about this.  
14 It's been very interesting.

15 Unfortunately, I don't have a speech for  
16 you. I don't have statistics or numbers.

17 CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: This is not  
18 unfortunate. I have been asking people to speak from  
19 their hearts and I am very happy to see some witnesses  
20 who will speak from their hearts because ultimately I  
21 believe that's what persuades law-makers. They like to  
22 fall back on the statistics, but what we really want to  
23 know is what did people feel.

24 MS. SERIDIKOFF: Thank you.



1 passing this Bill. I think it continues on to providing  
2 students with the exposure that they need. I'm involved  
3 in the 26 Program, which is completely based on taking  
4 students, the one that I'm working on is focused on  
5 freshmen in my school and it teaches them how to be  
6 active citizens and it teaches them about advocacy and  
7 it shows them and give them the tools that they need in  
8 order to make the best decision when it does come time  
9 for them to vote.

10 I understand the concerns of giving  
11 such young people the opportunity to do this and I think  
12 that if we take a step back and say, yes, this is a  
13 really good thing, but we need to also improve their  
14 opportunity -- their exposure, the knowledge that they  
15 have, that is really what we need to focus on too. And  
16 I think that programs like the 26 Program and other ones  
17 that were mentioned earlier are really created to show  
18 that there are students out there who can make educated  
19 decisions if they only have a little bit of a push in  
20 the right direction.

21 (Applause)

22 MR. OGUNSOLA: Like Jessica, I don't  
23 have any prepared specific facts or figures for my  
24 argument, but what I can testify to is what I hear and

1 to what I see and to what I feel about my high school.

2                   I would just like to start by saying  
3 that the prevalent stereo-type that young people are too  
4 apathetic and unknowledgeable about political affairs of  
5 society is a complete absurdity and I completely  
6 disagree with it.

7                   Like Jessica said, the programs that  
8 were mentioned briefly in previous arguments are proof  
9 that our society has evolving educational standards and  
10 more civic education in schools that allow youth to stay  
11 connected to the political realm and to stay connected  
12 to government politics today.

13                   Modern communication and modern  
14 information trafficking allow students to stay involved  
15 in the political sphere and they allow students,  
16 17-year-olds, more specifically, to stay involved and to  
17 participate like the internet and like in the media to  
18 stay involved with it.

19                   I'm sorry this is very brief, but as I  
20 said especially in 2004 and especially in this campaign  
21 this year, campaigns like this have reinvigorated the  
22 youth of the country especially from what I have seen in  
23 the high schools.

24                   As I walk through the halls of

1 Cheltenham High School, you always hear people talking  
2 about the current political candidates. 8th period  
3 physics is always a discussion between me and my fellow  
4 class mates about who to vote for, what policies are  
5 great for the country and what policies don't work, and  
6 just who is better to run the country.

7           Especially this year, I find myself in a  
8 dilemma participating in the political realm like I  
9 never have before. I never thought I would find myself  
10 in a situation where I would rather turn to CNN rather  
11 than the NBA Sixers against the Pistons. I never  
12 thought that I would rather turn to Channel 5 than  
13 Channel 2.

14           Especially campaigns like this, I  
15 believe strongly that the youth of this country,  
16 especially Cheltenham High School, need a voice because  
17 they are feeling specifically energized by the campaign,  
18 and that is what I believe. Thank you.

19           CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Representative  
20 Grucela.

21           REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you,  
22 Madam Chairman.

23           I just ask the students the same  
24 question. I assume that you would also favor extending

1 it to the ballot questions?

2 MS. SERDIKOFF: Yes, I would definitely  
3 be in favor of that. I think it also falls into the  
4 category where there are going to be situations where  
5 the student may not understand everything on the ballot  
6 questions, but then there are also plenty of adults who  
7 don't understand them either.

8 I think if you make an effort to put the  
9 information out there to give them the opportunity to  
10 learn beforehand that it could really solve a lot of  
11 issues.

12 MR. OGUNSOLA: I would like to say, in  
13 my personal experience, from what I have seen at the  
14 high school, I feel that definitely students 17 and 18,  
15 juniors and seniors receive education at a high school  
16 that will prepare them to answer a ballot question that  
17 will be prepared for the next election. Even though,  
18 most of the questions may be fiscal and they may be  
19 about what policies their government, their local school  
20 district and everything, I feel that the civic education  
21 that is taught to the many of juniors and seniors,  
22 especially at Cheltenham High School, can prepare us to  
23 answer those questions and presidential candidates and  
24 other candidates.



1                   REPRESENTATIVE GRUCELA: Thank you.

2                   The point I'm going to make is you don't  
3 have to vote for everything on the ballot. You can go  
4 in and vote and if you don't understand the ballot  
5 question, you don't have to vote for it. You can skip  
6 it if you don't have the understanding and knowledge.  
7 Before the election, I would ask my students who were  
8 eligible, look here, are you going to vote tomorrow, are  
9 you going to vote next week, if you are why or why not?  
10 I remember a student once saying to me, I'm not going to  
11 vote, Mr. Grucela, because I look at all these  
12 candidates and I don't know half of them. I said, well  
13 you don't have to vote for everybody. And he didn't  
14 know that.

15                   There is an impression sometimes -- that  
16 may sound facetious -- but there is an impression  
17 sometimes, you have teachers who don't understand this,  
18 who think that you have to vote for everybody on the  
19 ballot and you don't have to. So if you don't understand  
20 the question, you don't have to vote.

21                   Again, like all the other students  
22 today, thank you. You guys went by great memories and  
23 your generation is -- we don't have to fear the future.  
24 You guys are -- I have said to others that believe that

1 your generation is apathetic or immature, they should  
2 see some of you today or visit our schools or if you  
3 ever been to an Eagle Scout ceremony, I don't know if  
4 any of you guys are Eagle Scouts, but every time I go to  
5 Eagle Scouts or listening to you guys this morning, I  
6 think about those people who try to criticize your  
7 generation.

8                   And you may energize the older people  
9 and as was mentioned by one of the students, anytime we  
10 can expand the electorate it's great for democracy and  
11 these people that are 30, 40, 50 that aren't voting, you  
12 may scare them to death. All of a sudden they see you  
13 guys going out to vote, they might get off their butts  
14 and vote too.

15                   Thank you for your testimony.

16                   (Applause)

17                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Mr. Dermody.

18                   REPRESENTATIVE DERMODY: Thank you,  
19 Madam Chairman. I want to thank you for your help in  
20 setting up this hearing and putting this all together  
21 for us because I think you have done a tremendous job.  
22 I want to thank all the students and the hard work they  
23 put in for us.

24                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: Thank you. I was

1 inspired by you, Mr. Dermody and Mr. Grucela.

2                   Again, may I ask the two of you to type  
3 up whatever you, more or less, said we'll direct you to  
4 e-mail. We would like to have what you have said in the  
5 record, but again, never apologize for speaking about  
6 your feelings or what you feel from your heart. That's  
7 what's important.

8                   We have one more person -- thank you so  
9 much -- who is not scheduled, Joanna Richman, Penn Cord.  
10 We have some of the Penn Cord material on the table.  
11 Thank you.

12                   MS. RICHMAN: Good morning to the Panel.  
13 Thank you for permitting my testimony.

14                   I was moved to testify today in support  
15 of the three schools that have been before you this  
16 morning as Penn Core partner schools.

17                   Penn Core is an academic support, The  
18 Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy. As  
19 you can see from the brochure you have been given, we  
20 are a union of educational, governmental and advocacy  
21 groups that work to improve civic learning for grades K  
22 through 12.

23                   Penn Cord wants to commend the students  
24 here today. Since the 2000 presidential election we, in

1 Pennsylvania and in the country as a whole, have seen a  
2 radical trend to increase participation on the part of  
3 18 to 29 year olds in the electorate process.

4                   According to The Center for Information  
5 and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 5.5  
6 million youth, so far this year, have voted in primaries  
7 and caucuses. In some states, like Ohio, voter turnout  
8 has increased by 10 percent since the 2000 presidential  
9 election.

10                   Penn Cord's own mission to reinvigorate  
11 student engagement in their school, community and  
12 government is a goal that we work to meet by advocating  
13 for improved civic learning as preparation for civic  
14 education.

15                   In 2003, Carnegie Corporation of New  
16 York published a Civic Mission of Schools report that  
17 youth were disengaged from civic life, particularly from  
18 politics. In response to that report, a report was done  
19 to encourage active citizenship by supporting  
20 initiatives in Pennsylvania's K through 12 schools.

21                   Here with us today we have students who  
22 are arguing for increased enfranchisement for voters who  
23 will be 18 years old in time for the November election  
24 but not for the Pennsylvania Primary.

1                   We applaud your work and we intend to  
2 support schools in offering those 17 year olds  
3 instruction in American government, law, democracy and  
4 history that will prepare them to become voters.

5                   Penn Cord supports partner schools  
6 through the providing of programs and funding of some of  
7 the initiatives to accomplish the mission.

8                   The younger the student is when they  
9 exercise their right to vote for the first time, the  
10 more likely they are to continue voting throughout their  
11 lifetime. By discouraging 17 year olds from voting in  
12 the PA State primary, I fear that those same 18 years  
13 olds will be discouraged from voting in the November  
14 election.

15                   Thank you very much for your time.

16                   CHAIRLADY JOSEPHS: I've been reminded  
17 that sometimes I don't adequately thank the last  
18 witness. It was sort of like the last witness was the  
19 third child in the family and never gets it's picture  
20 taken. I want to make sure that I thank you, Ms.  
21 Richman. I appreciate your testimony and I'm glad that  
22 we are here in the center of your activity at your  
23 office, it makes this site even more appropriate.

24                   Thank you.

1                   We are concluding the hearing. The  
2 hearing is adjourned.

3                   (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
4 was adjourned at 12:30 p.m., this date.)

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## C E R T I F I C A T E

1  
2 I hereby certify that the  
3  
4 proceedings and evidence are contained  
5  
6 fully and accurately in the  
7  
8 stenographic notes taken by me on the  
9  
10 hearing of the within cause and that  
11  
12 this is a correct transcript of the  
13  
14 same.

15 -----  
16 VIRGINIA JONES-ALLEYNE  
17 PROFESSIONAL COURT REPORTER  
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