

Hello. My name is Brieana Viscomi. I am a seventeen year old senior at Pen Argyl Area High School. My eighteenth birthday falls on May 13. As a result, I represent just one of the thousands of young Pennsylvanians who will soon be eighteen and able to participate in the general election. But because I was seventeen years old at the time of the Pennsylvania primary I was ineligible to participate in its excitement this year. The fact that Mr. Rich Grucela has dedicated his time and effort to devise, sponsor, and back a bill that would allow 17-year olds to register and vote in the primary election in Pennsylvania so long as they are 18 by the time of that year's general election, is a sincere honor. I believe I speak for all those teens that would be influenced by Mr. Grucela's proposed bill when I say "thank you" for your consistent support.

Today, with the intense media coverage surrounding the presidential competition, and with the competition within the Democratic Party being more heated than ever, teens such as myself cannot help but get excited about the 2008 election. We find ourselves sitting in front of our TV's, watching not the next episode of *American Idol* or any of our other favorite TV shows, but rather the news. Realizing that we will be able to exercise a voice in the general election when the time comes, I, along with many others, have taken a deeper interest in political affairs. We find ourselves coming to class discussing not what we are going to do this upcoming weekend, but rather politics. Instead of talking about the score of last night's Yankees' game, we find ourselves analyzing the presidential candidates' proposed solutions to fix Social Security and Medicare. We have become thirsty to know how each candidate plans on making the expenses of post-secondary education more affordable. This significant amount of attention students such as I have devoted toward this year's presidential election can clearly be made evident to any spectator who would sit it on my A.P. European History Class. Although it's not exactly part of the class's curriculum, students in my history class always seem able (and, unfortunately for my history teacher, more-than willing) to weasel their strong political opinions and concerns into the historical topic at hand. Although it may

temporarily sever class unity, discussions and, dare I say debates, such as these, clearly serve as testimony to the deep-seated interests that America's youth has adopted in regards to political affairs.

This intense interest, I believe, stems from our desire to be well-informed and knowledgeable of the key issues that exist in America so that we can become active citizens capable of addressing and alleviating the problems that our country currently faces and will face in the future. We have recognized that it is only through such close attention and research of the candidates and their solutions to the many issues facing America today - be it the economy, relations abroad, healthcare, you name it-that we can truly become active members in society and make informed decisions that will benefit society as a whole. Participation in the Pennsylvania's primary would bring us one step closer to accomplishing this. To be able to not only elect a candidate from a candidate pool, but to also have a say in who would comprise the candidate pool, would create even a more heightened interest in political affairs, which can only benefit our society. It would create energy within and enthusiasm among those who will essentially be the future of the United States- America's youth. Just think of what a nation full of energized and enthusiastic young individuals would bring: a sincere passion for commitment to improvement. This bill would encourage even more of America's youth to take a vested interest in political affairs and get out there and exercise their voice and their privilege to vote. After all, as Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "the future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter." Once again, I thank Mr. Grucela for his persistent attempts to help put more of the future of the United States in the hands of the future leaders of America: its youth. I would also like to thank you all for the privilege and honor to speak to you today, and for allowing me to speak on behalf of my peers.