



**FOX CHAPEL AREA
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

**Oral Testimony of
Julia L. Hazlet
Fox Chapel Area High School**

**Before the
State Government Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives**

**Legislative Hearing on H.B. 520,
"An Act Amending Title 25 (Elections) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated
Statutes"
May 9, 2008**

- I would like to thank the members of the State Committee for inviting me to speak with you again. My name is Julia Hazlet, and I am a senior at Fox Chapel Area High School. I will be honest with you; I spent a lot of time deliberating about what to tell you today, primarily because most of our arguments have already been made.
- The committee has heard about the states of Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, & Virginia¹ that have already passed legislation similar to House Bill 520. During the last hearing, the constitutionality of the bill was questioned. The existence of similar legislation in these states serves as the response to that question.
- Before these hearings, most members of this committee had not even considered the consequences of a fluctuating primary date. As we pointed out in Philadelphia, that consequence can be a body of disenfranchised voters.
- We have repeatedly emphasized that a date change should not be a source of excluding voters. If you qualify for the general election then you should qualify for the primary election. Every voter that can choose the President should be able to elect the representatives.
- The only negative comments that we have really heard, have not really addressed the issue of this bill, but simply served as a redirection. The issue is a simple one. If you are old enough to vote in the general election then you should be able to participate in the nomination process.
- As was mentioned in the last hearing, right now there is a great deal of momentum behind this bill, for it is still on the minds of citizens and politicians alike. To address this any other time would mean we abandon this and essentially try to proceed from ground zero. If we let impediments such as the vague reluctance to pass this bill until next session obscure the real issue, then I fear we have lost sight of this country's ideals.

¹ Bysiewicz, Susan, and James F. Spallone. "Let 17-Year-Olds Vote in Primaries." The Hartford Courant 11 Apr. 2007. 10 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.sots.ct.gov/releases/2007/04-11-07OpEdCourant17OldVoters.pdf>>.

- When it comes down to it, we have proven to you all the reasons why this bill should be passed and why it should be passed now. But every example, every statistic, every reason that we have used, pales in comparison to the individuals, and the stories that those numbers and words fail to represent. I can name at least five of my classmates who were not able to vote in the primary election this year. Every single one of them had held out hope that we would somehow manage to get this passed before April 22. They held out because they were hoping that they would be able to contribute and make their voice heard.
- Before I leave here today, I would like to remind this body of something that Madam Chair Josephs mentioned in the last hearing. Though she said it over a week ago, I could not help but remember it as I was writing my testimony. She told us that at most hearings, very few people attend, but the hearings for this bill have always had plenty of youth who are eager to show their support. This reality illustrates the sheer importance and relevance of this issue to a large number of citizens. Many youths and adults are following this bill, which is why I request that this committee consider the consequences of not pushing the bill forward. If this bill dies in committee, then there is going to be an entire body of voters that is going to think that their vote and their rights do not matter to this political system.
- I hope that through these hearings we have shown this committee that there are young voters that are not apathetic but on the contrary are enthusiastic-but mindful-of the political world around them. If this bill does not pass, or if the youth sense that their opinion does not matter, then this enthusiasm and optimism towards the future may very well be lost.