

To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Taylor Harding, West Linn High School
RE: Vote Yes on HB 2988
Date: 5/22/13

Madame Chair and Committee Members,

Good afternoon. My name is Taylor Harding and I am here with my fellow West Linn High School students to speak on behalf of HB 2988. As my peers have previously mentioned, young voters are the least engaged when it comes to elections, and consequently are unable to affect change in policy areas that are important to them. The current Motor Voter registration age of 17 increases the opportunity for young people to register, but it would be much more effective if the age was lowered to 16.

While all of these statements provide a valid reason as to why the registration age should be lowered, there is still a significant reason that has yet to be discussed. *We're excited to vote.* There are many young people in Oregon who are enthusiastic and ready to begin participating in elections and politics, so why can't they register when they're 16?

There was an election yesterday, and unfortunately I was unable to participate in it. I'm counting down the days until I can turn this card in, cast my ballot, and let my voice be heard. If you give us, Oregon's young people, the opportunity to register when we're 16, we will most certainly take advantage of it.

There are predictions that Oregon's voter turnout rate will be below 25% in yesterday's election. While there are a lot of contributing factors to this disappointing number, giving sixteen year olds the opportunity to register and prepare to vote when they turn eighteen could increase the turnout rate. Just because we're young does not mean that we aren't critical members of society, nor does it mean we can't affect change. Give us the opportunity to get involved, and we will.

There was an editorial in The Oregonian a few days ago that brought up the question of whether or not democracy is dead. People are supposed to vote. That's what makes a democracy a democracy. It's no secret that a lot of people don't, but we can change that. Let us keep democracy alive and true. Let 16 year olds register to vote.

Thank you.