

Honorable members of SB 838 committee

Allowing 16-year olds to vote is a very bad idea. There are many studies that show it doesn't matter how smart a teenager is. It is a matter of brain development.

In fact, recent research has found that adult and teen brains work differently. Adults think with the prefrontal cortex, the brain's rational part, but teens process information with the amygdala, the emotional part. And it's the prefrontal cortex that responds to situations with good judgment and an awareness of long-term consequences.

The prefrontal cortex of your brain is the part where all your rational decisions are made. The neurons in the prefrontal cortex communicate with the neurons in the other regions of the brain through synapses, thus playing a major role in weighing choices, controlling emotional responses and impulses, and making judgments. In adults, this region of the brain is fully developed and connected to the rest of the brain, but to reach this stage, **it has to go through a long, drawn-out period of chaotic development that begins with puberty and stretches until the mid-20s.** *

The connections between the emotional part of the brain and the decision-making center are in development in teen brains. That's why when they've been under the influence of overwhelming emotional input, teens can't explain later what they were thinking. They weren't thinking as much as they were feeling.

Putting the science aside, why should teenagers who have no 'skin in the game' in terms of bearing the financial responsibility of their vote. Also, teenagers do not have the knowledge learned from the lessons of life experiences. How can one make informed decisions about important issues if they have not experienced the reality of being a self-sustaining adult? Some of these decisions which on face value seem good but could have many bad, unintended consequences in the future. Some issues appear good in the short term but if you cannot make rational decisions you cannot fathom negative long-term consequences.

Also, I am confused as to why there are bills proposed to change the age of teens purchasing guns from 18 to 21. If you were to follow the same logic as the idea proposed in SB 838 then you should move the age to purchase firearms to 16 as well. If a person is considered competent to make important decisions which affect fellow citizens life and liberty, then surely, they should be considered competent to own firearms as well as enter into contracts.

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*<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=understanding-the-teen-brain-1-3051>