



Luis Velasco
Senate Committee on Rules
RE: Support SJR 25

March 11th, 2021

Good afternoon Chair and Majority Leader Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Luis Velasco, I'm 16 years old, and I live in Beaverton. Today I'm here to voice my strong support for SJR 25.

The reasoning that it is the duty of the rational to restrict the incompetent has been used throughout the course of history. There was a time when people of color, women, the poor, and eighteen-year-olds were unable to vote. The excuses were the same as they are now. The young, the unaccomplished, the "incompetent" hold less worth than those "capable minds" that contrast them. However, social movements have led us to a nation where any citizen, eighteen or older, may vote. Now, as youth have an ever-growing role to play in the cultural landscape and the political movements of our time, it is time that we give them the respect that is due.

That said, the idea of lowering the voting age to sixteen is far from radical. Neuroscientists have stated that "cold cognition," the aspect of cognitive development that allows people to make the most rational and logically sound ideas, is fully developed by sixteen years of age. While most adults believe that sixteen-year-olds lack the intellectual maturity to vote, this is an absurd misrepresentation of a vast majority of the demographic. Being the state-lead of Vote 16 Oregon has given me an insight into young and gifted minds. Many of my peers are equally capable as their elders. If we, sixteen-year-olds, are psychologically and intellectually capable of voting reasonably, we must be given the right to do so. If we may drive a car, pay taxes, be tried as an adult, be affected both directly and indirectly by laws on a local and national scale, then we must be given the representation that is due to those of our capability. I am not incompetent, nor are my peers. We are a technologically literate generation, a generation of great minds and greater spirits.

The United States ranks 26th in the most advanced democracies in the world, objectively this is a great position to be in considering there are one hundred and ninety countries. However, when it's put into perspective, the 6 countries that have lowered the voting age to 16 ranks higher. This is not a coincidence. We need to do better. I welcome you to be apart of this important change for our democracy.

Please pass SJR 25.

Sincerely,
Luis Velasco