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Rockville, MD



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SUNDAY, MARCH 19
2:00 PM

Join the Cantors Perlman for "Music Throughout the
Generations—from Beatles to the Borscht Belt."

\$18/PERSON | \$36/IMMEDIATE FAMILY MAXIMUM

PURCHASE TICKETS ONLINE
www.bnaiisraelcong.org/event/perlmanconcert

https://www.thesentinel.com/communities/lowering-the-voting-age-helps-increase-engagement/article_e0029d80-ad67-11ed-b25d-fb97581028fc.html

Lowering the voting age helps increase engagement

Written by Saliha Garcia, Common Cause Maryland youth research intern for the Sentinel.
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On a daily basis, we are faced with political discourse on topics ranging from racial justice, to climate change, reproductive rights, and gun violence. These are issues that many of us are familiar with, and we each have strong opinions about what our government can do to ensure a more equitable, representative, and inclusive democracy. However, one topic that has gone unhighlighted for many years now is lowering the voting age. Not many people understand what lowering the voting age means in the short or long term, because most candidates focus on the aforementioned political hot topics and leave this idea behind.

As a youth research intern for Common Cause Maryland, I have had the opportunity to truly dive into the impact that lowering the voting age could have. My research has allowed me to get a grasp on not only the fears and reservations around it, but its potential benefits as well. The proposal to lower the voting age to 16 in Rockville could change our democracy and the lives of young people in Maryland. Though it is rarely discussed, enfranchisement for 16 year olds is a proposal with a long history, and the initiative in the making in Rockville could change the discourse about representation nationwide.

The two main arguments against this idea are that young people are not mature enough to vote, and that young people do not care about politics and therefore will not utilize the ability to vote. But in fact, research has shown that many of these arguments have little basis: other countries that have already implemented a lower voting age have seen increased voter turnout, increased political participation and civic engagement amongst young people, and an increased interest in politics.

And those aren't the only positive results. Further research has shown that giving young people the opportunity to have a voice in decisions that affect them reaffirms feelings of being represented. The act of voting has proven to be a pivotal learning experience for many, and scholarly journals have indicated that starting the habit of voting while young is essential in creating a lifelong habit that people continue to have through adulthood. Being able to vote helps instill this habit, and allows for young to apply the many things that they have learned through their education.



The research provides facts and numbers to support this proposal, but conversations with young people can affirm this idea too. This past year, through my role at Common Cause Maryland, I had the opportunity to interview a 16-year voter named Michael from Riverdale Park.

Michael noted that though many of his peers are politically informed, “they all kind of accepted that they had to wait [to vote].” But Michael knew that other countries had lowered their voting age requirements, and he wanted to vote. “Obviously I did not adopt that attitude.” So when he did get the chance to vote in the Riverdale Park town election in May 2021, it felt like a triumph. “I felt like I had this privilege and it was my responsibility to go out and cast my vote,” said Michael.

Though the idea may seem foreign at first, in reality, we’ve done it here in the U.S. just a few decades ago. Lowering the federal voting age was Common Cause’s first accomplishment as an organization. In 1971, we led the campaign that won the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, allowing 18 year-olds to vote.

Lowering the voting age is a simpler task than one would think, and the benefits are clear and appealing. By having meaningful conversations with friends and families about this, or by voicing your support for this initiative to the Rockville Charter Review Commission, we can easily make this a reality in the near future.