

The assertion that the voting age was set at 18 for a reason is not a convincing argument. It's true that the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 in the 1970s, but that decision was made because of the Vietnam War and the fact that 18-year-olds were being drafted to fight but couldn't vote. There's no reason to think that 16-year-olds are inherently less capable of voting than 18-year-olds.

The suggestion that 16-year-olds are more susceptible to peer pressure or parental influence than older voters is a bit insulting. Are you suggesting that all 16-year-olds lack the ability to think for themselves? It's important to trust our young people and give them the opportunity to engage in the democratic process. About 20 countries and 3 US cities have already taken the step forward and implemented this legislation. There has been absolutely no evidence or report to suggest that this happens in those places. AND the Scottish Independence Referendum surveyed 16 and 17-year-olds who were active voters and their parents and found that they are making their own independent decisions on who to vote for and are tuning out the lies and status quo and the lobbying efforts of government officials and their parents. Secondly, the argument about potential coercion and manipulation is a bit hypocritical. If we're really concerned about outside influence on our elections, shouldn't we also be looking at the influence of big money in politics? It's no secret that wealthy donors and corporations have a significant impact on elections and policy decisions.

And as for the concerns about lowering age limits for other things like military service, alcohol consumption, gun purchases, smoking, and age of consent, those are separate issues that have nothing to do with the question at hand. (FYI 17-year-olds can enlist in the military. A lot of the opposition doesn't know that and include it on their testimony because they haven't done their research) We're talking about voting here, not drinking or serving in the military. It's a classic deflection tactic to bring up unrelated issues in an attempt to muddy the waters. Just because we lower the voting age doesn't mean we have to lower the age for everything else.

The suggestion that we need to protect the integrity of our elections is ironic coming from someone who likely supports voter suppression measures like strict voter ID laws and limiting early voting. If you're truly concerned about the integrity of our elections, you should be working to expand voting rights and make it easier for all eligible citizens to vote.

I must respectfully disagree with the idiotic argument that we should "let children be children" and not involve them in the democratic process. This is an incredibly condescending attitude that assumes that young people are not capable of understanding the issues and making informed decisions. Secondly, a lot of children don't get to be children because the fucking old farts in government don't want to take a fucking stand to issues like climate chaos and shootings, which BTW are literally killing hundreds and thousands on Americans every mother fucking year! They don't have the right to be children because of the way the government has acted. I've talked to Devon Lawson-McCourt, the Legislative Advocate for this bill. He's talked about this. That's why he's been working in politics since 5th grade. That's why he has worked on 27 political campaigns!

The reality is that young people are often more politically engaged and informed than we give them credit for. Many 16 and 17-year-olds are already paying attention to the news and discussing political issues in their classes and communities. They have a stake in the decisions that are being made and deserve to have a say in them.

Moreover, the idea that we should shelter young people from the democratic process is not supported by the facts. In countries like Austria, Argentina, and Brazil, 16-year-olds are already allowed to vote and studies have shown that they are just as capable of making informed decisions as older voters. In fact, some studies have shown that young voters may be more likely to vote on issues related to education, the environment, and social justice.

The idea that we should "let children be children" and exclude them from the democratic process is both condescending and unsupported by the facts. We should trust our young people and give them the opportunity to participate in our democracy from an earlier age.

Pass HJR 20 and refer it to the people.