

Submitter: Barbara Kenny
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HJR20

To the House Committee on Rules

I am writing today in support of HJR-20, a measure to lower the voting age in Oregon from 18 to 16. I support this measure.

There are two major issues facing our country today that will predominately affect the quality of life of the youngest in our population: climate change and gun violence. Young people need more of a voice on these issues that are so relevant to their futures.

No one knows exactly at what temperature and on what date global temperatures will peak. But we do know that if we continue on our current path the younger generation will face a rapidly changing planet with natural disasters that are more fierce than those seen today (e.g. hurricanes, storms, forest fires), they will face the loss of natural features such as glaciers and polar ice caps, they will face a catastrophic rise in sea levels, they will face changes that will impact food production, and so forth.

Firearms are now the leading cause of death for children and teens (ages 1-19) in the U.S. and every year 18,000 children and teen are shot and killed or wounded. In addition, approximately 3 million more are exposed to gun violence, every year. Even if they personally haven't experienced a school shooting, young people have had to endure "shelter in place" drills, and they know "run, hide, fight." Young people need a stronger voice in these issues that are quite literally life and death for them. They ought to be able to choose how our government responds and develops policy around issues that impact their generation more than any other.

Cognitive studies have shown that by age sixteen individuals have gained the cognitive capabilities to engage in measured, reasoned decision-making as well as adults-- skills necessary to participate in the political process. So there is no reason to prohibit 16-18 year olds from voting, and there are many reasons to allow it.

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