

HOUSE BILL No. 6183

June 12, 2018, Introduced by Reps. Rabhi and Geiss and referred to the Committee on Elections and Ethics.

A bill to amend 1954 PA 116, entitled "Michigan election law," by amending sections 492, 495, and 510 (MCL 168.492, 168.495, and 168.510), section 492 as amended by 2010 PA 253 and section 495 as amended by 1995 PA 87; and to repeal acts and parts of acts.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

1 Sec. 492. Each person who has the following qualifications of
 2 an elector, or who will have those qualifications at the next
 3 election or primary election, is entitled to register as an elector
 4 in the township, city, or village in which he or she resides. The
 5 person ~~shall~~ **MUST** be a citizen of the United States; not less than
 6 ~~18~~ **16** years of age; a resident of ~~the~~ **THIS** state for not less than
 7 30 days; and a resident of the township, city, or village on or
 8 before the thirtieth day before the next regular or special

1 election or primary election. For purposes of registering to vote
2 and voting at an election or special election for the office of
3 judge of a municipal court that exercises jurisdiction over another
4 city ~~pursuant to~~ **UNDER** section 9928(3) of the revised judicature
5 act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.9928, a person who resides in the
6 other city over which municipal court jurisdiction is exercised is
7 considered a resident of the city in which the municipal court is
8 located.

9 Sec. 495. The registration affidavit ~~required under section~~
10 ~~493 shall~~ **MUST** contain all of the following:

11 (a) The name of the elector.

12 (b) The residence address of the elector, including the street
13 and number or rural route and box number and the apartment number,
14 if any.

15 (c) The birthplace and date of birth of the elector.

16 (d) The ~~driver's~~ **DRIVER** license or state personal
17 identification card number of the elector, if available.

18 (e) A statement that the elector is a citizen of the United
19 States.

20 (f) A statement that the elector is at the time of completing
21 the affidavit, or will be on the date of the next election, not
22 less than ~~18~~ **16** years of age.

23 (g) A statement that the elector has or will have lived in
24 this state not less than 30 days before the next election.

25 (h) A statement that the elector has or will have established
26 his or her residence in the township, city, or village in which the
27 elector is applying for registration not less than 30 days before

1 the next election.

2 (i) A statement that the elector is or will be a qualified
3 elector of the township, city, or village on the date of the next
4 election.

5 (j) A space in which the elector ~~shall~~**MUST** state the place of
6 the elector's last registration, if any.

7 Sec. 510. At least once a month, the county clerk shall
8 forward a list of the last known address and birth date of all
9 persons over ~~18~~**16** years of age who have died ~~within~~**IN** the county
10 to the clerk of each city or township ~~within~~**IN** the county. The
11 city or township clerk shall compare this list with the
12 registration records and cancel the registration of all deceased
13 electors.

14 Enacting section 1. Section 758a of the Michigan election law,
15 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.758a, is repealed.

LEAD Note: With the passage of this amendatory act, section 1
of article II of the state constitution of 1963 would be amended to
match the language of this bill and reduce the age of an elector to
16 years.

BRIEF SUMMARY:

House Bill 6183 would lower the voting age in the state of Michigan from 18 to 16. Though the state constitution of 1963 currently establishes the voting age at 21, the federal constitution overrides that provision by holding that all state governments must have their voting age be no greater than 18.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

This bill stems from the belief that preventing 16- and 17-year-olds from voting denies fully active members of our democratic society the basic civic privileges that accompany state citizenship. Except for their age, most 16- and 17-year-olds in Michigan would qualify as electors under the state constitution, meaning our current election laws discriminate against this group because of their age despite having the necessary civic knowledge, skills, and cognitive ability to vote responsibly. There is no significant difference between 18-year-olds and 16- or 17-year-olds in terms of civic knowledge and political interest.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Extending the right to vote to 16- and 17-year-olds is consistent with the fact that turning 16 has special significance in our culture. At age 16, citizens can drive, pay taxes, and for the first-time work without any restriction on hours. As our society places more responsibilities and expectations on citizens when they turn 16, we should also grant them more privileges, such as the right to vote and participate civilly. It's also a matter of fairness: when unable to vote until 18, some citizens won't have a chance to vote for their mayor until they are almost 22.

Response:

While our society does afford 16-year-olds the right to obtain a driver's license, get married, and even move out of their family's home and get a job, these are all decisions that only affect a person individually or those immediately around them. Alternatively, making a wrong or irrational choice while voting disadvantages the state as a whole.

For:

The change in legal voting age from 18 to 16 has worked in practice. Two Maryland cities have successfully extended municipal voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds. Several nations, including Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, and the United Kingdom have extended voting rights to 16-year-olds for national, regional, or local elections. Additionally, more than 15 states already allow 17-year-olds to vote in primaries to nominate candidates for president, Congress, and governor.

For:

Research by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement indicates that there is a "trickle up" effect on civic participation. When 16- and 17-year-olds engage in civics, conversations about politics and local issues are brought to the dinner table. Parents and family members are engaged in civic life through the 16- and 17-year-olds in their household, with a positive impact on voter turnout for people of all ages.

For:

Evidence in Austria from the National Center for Biotechnology Information confirms that extending voting rights to people after they turn 16 promotes higher turnout for first-time voters and over time. Austria's experience also shows that 16- and 17-year-olds are ready to contribute sound decision making and quality participation in democracy.

Against:

Many opponents of this bill simply believe that 17-year-olds are simply too young to be involved in local and national politics, and most of them simply will not know who they are voting for and why. Many 16-year-olds do not have the basic political knowledge that should be necessary for them to be an informed voter, such as who their state's U.S. Senators are or how to amend the Constitution. Two more years of education and civic experience will help them learn more about how government works and what candidates will be best for their respective municipalities, state, or country.

Against:

Many opponents worry about the mental development of 16-year-olds. Researchers generally agree that the brain is still developing until the mid-20s, with moral reasoning and abstract thought coming later in the cycle than previously thought. At 16, a young person's cognitive development is still at a very early stage, rendering them largely incapable of making such important decisions.

