



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

**Kevin Mullin**

DISTRICT 22



## ACA 2: Primary Voting for 17-year-olds

### **PURPOSE**

This measure would authorize a United States citizen who is 17 years of age, is a resident of this State, and will be at least 18 years of age at the time of the next general election to vote in that general election and in any intervening primary or special election that occurs after the person registers to vote. This would increase voter turnout and facilitate voter registration.

### **EXISTING LAW**

The California Constitution authorizes any person who is a United States citizen at least 18 years of age and a resident of the state to vote.

This measure would amend (underlined words) Section 2 of Article II of the California Constitution to read:

SEC. 2. (a) A United States citizen who is at least 18 years of age and a resident in this State may vote.

(b) A United States citizen who is 17 years of age, is a resident in this State, and will be at least 18 years of age at the time of the next general election may vote in any intervening primary or special election that occurs before the next general election.

### **BACKGROUND**

In the 2014 general election, while the overall turnout rate among eligible voters in California was just 42.2%, a dismal 5.2% of eligible 18-year-olds voted. Turnout is especially low in primary elections; the voter turnout in the June 2014 primary was just 25.1%.

### **OPPORTUNITY**

This measure allows first-time voters to take part in an entire election cycle, instead of just the general election. It makes logical sense that a voter who votes in the general election should also have a say in determining who will be on the ballot. According to FairVote, a national organization dedicated to increasing voter turnout, this policy will improve youth engagement in the political process by creating an ethos of participation from a younger age.

Studies indicate that voting is habit forming, and once a person votes, he or she is more likely to vote again. This means a person's first experience with voting is crucial, as it could affect a person's future voting habits.

### **NATIONWIDE TREND**

17-year-olds can vote in primaries or caucuses in nearly half of states. Many of these states have seen success from this policy; after Maryland implemented it, nearly 13,000 17-year-olds registered to vote in the 2008 primary (FairVote). In Illinois, after implementation, voter turnout for 17-year-olds rivaled that of those in their 40's (FairVote).

### **SUPPORT**

California Federation of Teachers  
Californians for Electoral Reform  
California Forward  
FairVote  
League of Women Voters of California

### **COAUTHORS**

Assemblymember Rich Gordon  
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