

TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: May 2, 2025

RE: LD 1446: RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Lower the Voting Age to 16 Years of Age

Dear Senator Hickman and Representative Supica,

My name is Carolyn Kinney. I am a resident of North Belgrade, and a sophomore at the University of Maine at Farmington, earning my degree in Political Science and Biology (pre-medical track) with a minor in Legal Studies. I am here today as a member of LWVME's Youth Council. This program helps young people to explore how Maine's government works and build their civic leadership skills. I am here today to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1446.

When I was 16, my AP Government classroom was visited by a League of Women Voters of Maine Representative who spoke about registering to vote. I remember being confused as to why I was preparing to register for something that I was two years away from eligibility for participation. At this age, I was already nearing the end of getting my license and working a part time job coaching gymnastics – yet deemed too young to participate in the country I paid taxes to.

In celebration of Election Day 2024, I organized an "Election Buffet" with an arrangement of various foods and corresponding civic engagement puns (i.e. croissants: "Don't Be Flakey, Go Partak-ey."). During this time, I spoke with and registered over 150 individuals on my college's campus to vote – ranging from students to faculty and community members. At first glance, I was under the impression that those who planned to vote were already registered. I assumed incorrectly: this was not only the first election for many, but a majority were not registered due to their confusion over how. Such confusion cultivated their hesitation to participate. I firmly believe that if the voting age was lowered, there would be less turmoil for individuals – young and old – in the process of voting.

Upon turning 18, youth are faced with: college, joining the military, the pressure to figure out their life paths, etc. Learning how to participate in a democracy they are part of should not be a worry amidst this monumental time. Lowering the voting age to 16 would tie into the already "adult-like" responsibilities granted at such age and has been shown by research to foster participation habits at the polls. If it were not for my Election Buffet event, those 150 people would not have had the confidence to vote, unlike if they were acclimated while in high school.

The voices of youth are being called upon more than ever. They are ready, eager, and more than competent enough to take on voting at 16. The research behind it, provided by the League, says so; allow them the opportunity to become further civically engaged – whether that be through school board elections or state elections. At 16, youth are stepping up to fill a vital role in the country that they are not yet allowed to have a voice in. It is imperative that Maine sets aside the prejudices of incompetence for 16 year olds and honor them for their contributions.