



CITY COUNCILMEMBER  
**RIGEL ROBINSON**  
 DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR  
 September 24, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson and Mayor Arreguin  
 Subject: Support for ACA - 8: Elections: Voter Qualifications

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution supporting ACA - 8, which would lower California's voting age to 17.

BACKGROUND

On February 11, 2019, Assemblymember Kevin Mullin introduced ACA - 8, which would give California residents who are 17 years of age the right to vote. This would help promote civic engagement among young people, and encourage students to take a more active role in democracy. Seventeen other states allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections if they will be 18 in the following general election, but California would be the first to give 17-year-olds a vote in federal elections.<sup>1</sup> ACA - 8 has received bipartisan support and has 35 co-authors.

17-year-olds deserve a say in government for several reasons. Most are seniors in high school, and if this bill is signed into law, would be the only voters who are currently students in the public education system. Public education is one of the most important issues in the State of California's jurisdiction, and the issue frequently comes up in ballot measures and candidate platforms. Additionally, many 17-year-olds work and pay taxes – more than one in four high school students have jobs.<sup>2</sup> Just like any other taxpayers, they deserve a say in how their dollars are spent. Furthermore, they rely heavily on government services such as public transportation and student loans, and should have input in how those services are run.

Another issue young people face in California is climate change. Youth will have to deal with the consequences of global warming their entire lives, and should have a voice in choosing the politicians that have to figure out how to combat it. Additionally, young people in the United States are faced with gun violence and have organized demonstrations on a national level to urge politicians to enact stricter gun laws.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/primary\\_voting\\_at\\_age\\_17](https://www.fairvote.org/primary_voting_at_age_17)

<sup>2</sup> <https://oklahoman.com/article/3748886/1-in-4-high-school-students-work-us-census-finds-including-many-in-oklahoma-to-support-families>

Students need to have a voice in electing the politicians that will make those important decisions.

17-year-olds would be informed voters. Every high school student in California takes a United States history class in their junior year and most take a government class in their senior year. Youth in California have also demonstrated their political awareness through demonstrations and activism, most recently around climate change and gun reform.

Currently, voter turnout among young people in California is low. Only 27.5 percent of eligible voters aged 18 to 24 voted in the 2018 midterm elections. Lowering the voting age would allow people to vote earlier in life, instilling a life-long habit of voting. Research shows that 17 is a more effective age to instill that habit than 18.<sup>3</sup> Lowering the voting age would increase overall voter turnout in the future and ensure that young people, who are disproportionately affected by many issues facing our state and country today, stay engaged.

The attached resolution states the City of Berkeley's endorsement of the bill and subsequent ballot measure. Copies of the resolution will be sent to Senator Nancy Skinner, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and Assemblymember Evan Low.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

#### CONTACT PERSON

Rawan Mohsen, Intern for Councilmember Rigel Robinson  
Rachel Alper, Intern for Councilmember Rigel Robinson

#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution
2. The State of California Constitution section to be changed, with suggested amendments detailed.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/28/the-surprising-consequence-of-lowering-the-voting-age/?noredirect=on>

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF ACA - 4

WHEREAS, many states currently allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections, but none allow it for general and federal elections; and

WHEREAS, Many 17-year-olds work, pay taxes, and use government services; and

WHEREAS, 17-year-olds would be informed voters, having taken United States history and government classes in high school; and

WHEREAS, voter turnout, both among young people and generally in California is low; and

WHEREAS, lowering the voting age would create a habit of voting, increasing voter turnout over time; and

WHEREAS, ACA - 8 would grant 17-year-olds the right to vote in California.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley hereby endorses and the ballot measure that will result from its passage; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley may be listed as a supporter of ACA - 4 said ballot measure by the official proponents of the measure; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution will be sent to Senator Nancy Skinner, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and Assemblymember Evan Low.

## **ASSEMBLY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

A resolution to propose to the people of the State of California an amendment to the Constitution of the State, by amending Section 2 of Article II thereof, relating to elections

**That Section 2 of Article II thereof is amended to read:**

**SEC. 2.** A United States citizen ~~18~~ *who is at least 17* years of age and resident in this State may vote.