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California State Senate

SENATOR
ELOISE GÓMEZ REYES
TWENTY-NINTH SENATE DISTRICT



COMMITTEES:
EDUCATION
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
HOUSING
JUDICIARY
LEGISLATIVE ETHICS
RULES

SB 316 (Reyes): High School Voter Registration Act

SUMMARY

SB 316 bill would provide all High School students in California the opportunity and resources needed to pre-register to vote and register to vote, by the end of their eleventh grade.

BACKGROUND

In California, 16 and 17-year-olds are eligible to pre-register to vote. On the day of their 18th birthday, the State of California automatically turns their pre-registration into an active registration.

The Secretary of State's 2023 Annual Report notes that approximately 1.1 million students had pre-registered to vote since the service began in 2016. Out of the 1.1 million, nearly 870,000 of these students have since turned 18 and are now registered to vote. However, between the years 2018-2021, the number of pre-registration forms submitted declined by 27% every year.

Although this pre-registration tool is available, its engagement and usage has not reached its full potential. Only 11% of 16 and 17-year-olds are pre-registered to vote in California.

Younger voters historically have low voter turnout rates. In the 2022 election, there were 5.1 million registered voters under 35 in California, and only 1.3 million voted.

Changing the process of becoming a registered voter to be more accessible can help increase voter turnout rates for years to come.

THIS BILL

SB 316 would require school districts to ensure that each of their students receive information on how to properly pre-register to vote and register to vote at least once before the end of their eleventh grade. This bill would also require that a paper copy of a voter registration form be provided to each student, upon request, as part of the adopted course of study.

This bill would authorize schools to contract with a third-party nonprofit organization, with demonstrated experience providing nonpartisan youth civic engagement, to implement any of these requirements.

High School voter registration is a greatly untapped resource that can be used to increase participation in our elections. This bill would provide the infrastructure to help strengthen our democracy.

SUPPORT

Inland Congregations United for Change (co-sponsor)

Power California Action (co-sponsor)

Inland Empire United

California Environmental Voters

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California State PTA
Californians for Justice
Los Angeles County of Education
Public Advocates
California Chamber of Commerce
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights
(CHIRLA)
League of Women Voters of California

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