VOTE16USA

YOUNG VOICES AT THE BALLOT BOX

ADVANCING EFFORTS TO LOWER THE VOTING AGE

A White Paper from Generation Citizen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Abraham Lincoln famously described in the Gettysburg Address, America's democracy is, ideally, a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Sadly, today, that description rings far from the truth. We have entered an era in which our government is widely dominated by special interests and career politicians, and in which citizen-centered politics seems to be a relic of the past.

A large part of this disconnect has prevailed because too many Americans do not participate in the most important act of a functioning democracy — voting. In the most recent 2014 midterm elections, only 36 percent of eligible voters participated, marking a 72-year low. Indeed, more than 25 percent of eligible voters are not even registered to vote. This is especially problematic amongst youth voters—only 19.9 percent of 18-29 year olds voted in the 2014 midterms, the lowest youth turnout rate ever recorded, and only 46.7 percent are registered to vote, the lowest rate in 40 years. Turnout in local elections is even worse.

We have a voter crisis in America that demands bold solutions. **One of these potential solutions is lowering the voting age in American elections to 16 years old.**

There are many layers to the rationale for considering such a shift. Strong citizen participation requires that voters be knowledgeable about the institutions that represent them, and America does not adequately educate its citizens—only one-third of Americans can name all three branches of government, and schools are failing to prioritize effective civics education as they focus on meeting accountability measures in other subjects.

With few Americans voting and a real and growing lack of civic knowledge, there is no way the government can be truly "for the people." This sentiment is reflected in the population's opinions of its elected officials. Congress has a 12 percent approval rating, and only 24 percent of the public trusts government to do the right thing, both historical lows.

As the increasingly diverse millennial generation begins to transition into leadership roles in society, now is a critical time to rejuvenate our democracy through new, bold ideas that spark excitement and participation in politics. Academic research and studies on voting habits and behavior indicate that lowering the voting age has the potential to reinvigorate our democracy and stimulate lasting increases in political participation.

We must seriously consider lowering the voting age in American elections to 16 because:

» Lowering the voting age can drive demand for better civic education in schools. The combination of a lower voting age and better civics education can create a virtuous cycle that dramatically boosts civic engagement.

» Lowering the voting age can increase voter turnout and strengthen our democracy in the long run, as voting is habitual and statistics show that age 16 is a better time than 18 to acquire the habit of voting.

» Local political decisions have great influence on the lives of 16- and 17-year-olds. They deserve to vote.

» Significant research shows that 16-and 17 year-olds have the cognitive ability to make their own political decisions. They are mature enough to vote.

The most reliable way for ordinary citizens to influence the government is through their votes, but those under 18 are unfairly excluded from the electorate. Letting 16- and 17-year-olds vote in municipal elections would force local politicians to listen to their voices and address their concerns.

If nothing else, campaigns to lower the voting age can spark conversations about the current state of our democracy and produce innovative ideas to revive it.

Takoma Park and Hyattsville, two cities in Maryland, have recently successfully lowered the voting age to 16 for their municipal elections, and other campaigns are underway across the country, most notably in San Francisco. The issue is also becoming more prominent on the national level, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi expressed her support for lowering the voting age in a July 2015 speech. Several European and Latin American countries have lowered the voting age to 16 in various settings, and statistics from Maryland and these other countries show that 16- and 17-year-olds do indeed vote at higher rates than older first-time voters.

> ***I AM ALL FOR [...] LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO HIGH SCHOOL AGE.***
>
> *Nancy Pelosi, July 16, 2015*

The most practical way to move this cause forward in the United States is to change voting laws on the municipal level, one city at a time. The legal feasibility of lowering the voting age in any given city depends on applicable state laws. A feasibility study by Generation Citizen has determined that cities have the legal authority to lower the voting age for their local elections in more than 10 states. The feasibility study also proposes a few potential state-level strategies for states where city-level campaigns are not currently legally feasible.

Next steps for this campaign begin with elevating youth voices on the issue, identifying, training, and supporting local leaders in cities where success is most viable, and further developing effective communication strategies to convince the American public of the merits for such an argument. The larger, long-term vision will involve supporting several city campaigns, launching state level efforts, and spurring a national conversation on the topic.

This paper expands on the points above, referring to the most relevant research on the topic. It presents a cohesive argument for lowering the voting age to 16 in municipal elections, addresses counterarguments, discusses the current landscape, explains the different legal pathways to success, and elaborates on suggested next steps to advance these efforts. ■

WHY SHOULD WE LOWER THE VOTING AGE TO 16?

Often, at first glance, lowering the voting age to 16 provokes incredulity from the public. Why should we lower the voting age if so many 18-year-olds do not even vote in the first place? And aren't 16-year-olds just kids?

A longer glance reveals that lowering the voting age offers an opportune and strategic way to strengthen our overall democracy. While further evaluation is needed to more comprehensively determine the potential effects of lowering the voting age, research does exist, from this country and others, to suggest that lowering the voting age can improve voter participation and overall civic engagement:

REASON #1: WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE AND RELEVANT CIVIC LEARNING

Lowering the voting age can drive demand for effective civics education in schools, reviving a discipline that has been pushed to the side as schools focus on achieving accountability metrics in other subjects.

Enfranchising 16- and 17-year-olds, even in a limited capacity, has the power to invigorate civics education in high schools. In all subjects, students learn best when the material presented is relevant

to their lives. But, for many students, it can be difficult to feel a connection between the political process described in textbooks and the issues that affect them every day. Civics class risks falling short by teaching young people how government works without any ability to actually participate in it. This disconnect may provide one of the reasons that Americans struggle at understanding how our government works. For example, only approximately one third of American adults can name the three branches of government, and a third can't even name a single branch.[1] Letting 16- and 17-year-olds vote will bring much-needed relevance to civics classes, which can help address this lack of civic knowledge amongst the public.



In addition to motivating students to engage with civics classes, lowering the voting age can lead schools to focus more attention on effective civics education. When students are able to vote in local elections before leaving high school, it becomes harder for districts to ignore this crucial discipline. The high school classroom is the ideal place to teach and engage young people about important local issues, and lowering the voting age can inspire schools to take advantage of this opportunity.

As we call for lowering the voting age in local elections, significant initiatives (including funding for civic learning in the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act and state mandates for a civics education class) are simultaneously underway to strengthen civics education nationwide. These efforts naturally go hand in hand with the push to lower the voting age, and in tandem they have the potential to create a virtuous cycle that dramatically boosts civic engagement. Lowering the voting age can catalyze demand for stronger civics education, which even further cultivates an engaged and active citizenry.

Research shows that people who attend high schools with a strong culture of civic engagement have higher turnout rates in their 30's, regardless of their individual opinions on the importance of voting.[2] Expanding voting to 16- and 17-year-olds can inspire both students and schools to renew their focus on civics, creating the potential for long-lasting, positive societal impact.

REASON #2: SIXTEEN- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS HAVE A STAKE IN THE GAME, AND POLITICIANS MUST PAY ATTENTION TO THEM

Youth are affected by local political issues, including education funding, school board decisions, employment initiatives, police programs, and public works projects. They work without limits on hours and pay taxes on their income, can drive in most states, and in some cases, are tried in adult courts. Fifty-eight percent of youth participate in volunteer activities, and many 16- and 17-year olds have been living in their communities for years and feel a deep connection to local issues.[3] They deserve the right to vote on issues that affect them on the local level.

The most reliable way for ordinary citizens to influence the government is through their votes, but those under 18 are unfairly excluded from the electorate. Allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in municipal elections would force local politicians to listen to their voices and address their concerns.

REASON #3: SIXTEEN- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS ARE READY TO VOTE

Furthermore, research shows that 16- and 17-year-olds are equivalent to 18-year-olds in their capacities to function as citizens and vote responsibly. On average, 16-year-olds possess the same level of civic knowledge as older young adults, and they also demonstrate equal levels of self-reported political skill and political efficacy. This does not mean that 16-year-olds have the same political acumen as 30- or 40-year-olds. But they do statistically have the same knowledge and skills as 21-year-olds.[4] Therefore, it seems that they have the knowledge and acumen necessary to vote. Additionally, their voting choices on the aggregate were not substantially different from young adults.

Research also demonstrates that 16- and 17-year-olds are both neurologically and socially mature enough to vote. Not only do they have requisite civic knowledge and skills, but they have the mental reasoning ability necessary to make informed choices.

It is important to note that this study did show that adolescents under the age of 16 seem to have less political acumen. Sixteen seems to be the specific age to which lowering the voting age makes sense according to their political acumen.

Additionally, a study on the quality of vote choices among Austrian 16- and 17-year-olds concluded that 16- and 17-year-olds' vote choices reflected their political preferences just as well as older voters' choices.[5] This evidence strongly indicates that 16- and 17-year-olds are as ready to vote as 18-year olds, and denying them that right is an arbitrary policy.

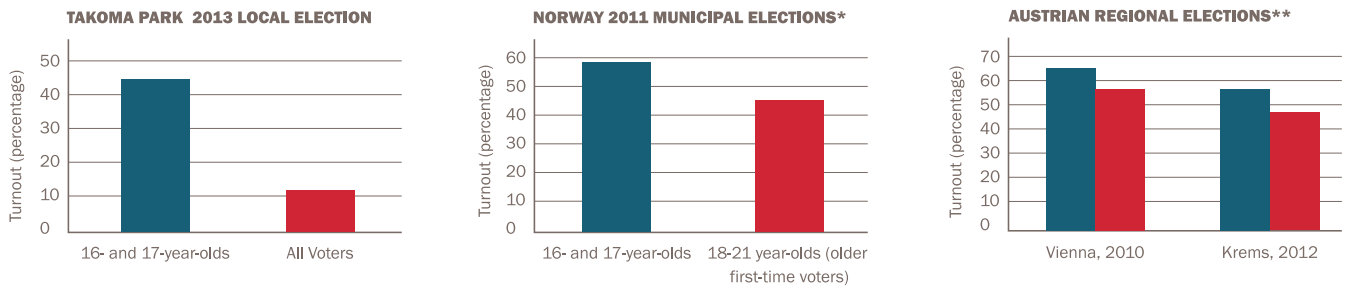
REASON #4: WE NEED TO MAKE VOTING A HABIT

Government performs best with strong participation from the public, and the best way citizens can participate in government is by voting. Lowering the voting age can lead to a long-term increase in voter turnout, bringing more citizens in touch with their government and pushing the government to better serve its people. Increased turnout is especially important in local elections, where turnout has been plummeting in recent years and some cities are struggling to get even 20 percent of voters to the polls.[6]

First and foremost, voting is a habit—a path-dependent process—and a person's first election is critical to establishing that habit.[7] Evidence from Takoma Park, Maryland, and European countries that have lowered the voting age supports the argument that the age of 16 is a better time to start the habit of voting than 18.

In Takoma Park, the turnout rate for 16- and 17-year-olds exceeded any other demographic in the city's 2013 elections.[8] Evidence from Europe is also favorable. Austria lowered its voting age to 16 for all of the country's elections in 2008, and turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds has been

AGE 16 IS A BETTER TIME TO START THE HABIT OF VOTING THAN AGE 18



*16- and 17-year-old data is for the 20 municipalities that lowered the voting age as a trial. 18-21 year-old data is for all municipalities in Norway.

**Although Austria lowered the voting age nationally, it is difficult to get reliable data on national turnout on age group due to data privacy laws. Data presented here, from regional elections, come from official electoral lists. See Zeglovits amnd Aichholzer, 2014.

higher than for older first time voters.[9] In the 2011 local elections in Norway, 21 municipalities used a voting age of 16 as a trial, and 16- and 17-year-old turnout was much higher than turnout among regular first-time voters (aged 18-21).[10]

Furthermore, research indicates that voting in one election can increase the probability that a person will vote in the next election by 25 percent, and shows that early voting experiences are an important determinant of future voting behavior.[11] Young people start forming voting habits when they reach the voting age and confront their first election.

While some Americans vote in the first election they are eligible for and become habitual voters, the majority of the electorate does not vote upon initial eligibility. Statistically, these individuals become habitual nonvoters for at least the next few elections, until they pick up the habit later in life. This helps explains why turnout for voters younger than 30 is worse than for any other age group.

Importantly, the overall voter turnout rate has dropped since the national voting age was lowered to 18 in 1971, through a constitutional amendment that was passed to align the voting age with the age for military service. The drop in turnout is not necessarily because people younger than 21 are less inclined to vote, but rather, because 18- and 19-year-olds are at a traditionally unstable point in life. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), the main reason why young people claim they do not vote is because they are too busy.[12] At the age of 18, this "busy" quotient, may be the highest, as people are adjusting to new responsibilities for the first time and may also struggle to determine the logistics of voting in a new location, without guidance from family or educators.

It is clear that since most 18-year-olds are in the midst of major life transitions, this age is a particularly problematic time to establish the habit of voting. Sixteen-year-olds, however, are in a much better position to confront their first elections.

Lowering the voting age to 16 for local elections would ensure that each new voter experiences at least one election while in high school (assuming two year election cycles in each locality). This allows them to establish the habit of voting in a stable environment. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds can absorb their parents' beliefs that voting is important, and schools can help students understand the logistics and establish voting as an accepted norm. If a person casts a ballot in the first election they are eligible for at age 16 or 17, it is statistically more likely that they will continue to participate in subsequent elections. The resulting higher turnout can lead to a more representative and higher performing government.

BY PARTICIPATING IN CITY ELECTIONS AT 16, YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO CONTINUE VOTING AT AGE 18 AND BEYOND.

Anna Bernick, 17, San Francisco

Research also shows that political participation is a social act, and citizens' social circles heavily influence turnout. Social networks based on high schools and family life are more likely to encourage voting than the brand-new networks 18-year-olds join after they leave the parental nest.

As researchers from Denmark claim, "Today when voters become eligible at 18 years of age, most young voters have had none or few participatory opportunities before leaving home. A younger voting age would create more opportunities for acquiring the habit of voting before leaving home."[13] Helping 16- and 17-year-olds establish this important habit is a key step to increasing long-term voter turnout, and thus creating a more effective and accountable government. Lowering the voting age has shown to be effective at increasing turnout among first-time voters, and research demonstrates that once someone casts their first ballot they are likely to continue the habit of voting for years to come. Lowering the voting age can effectively help young people create the habit of voting, and, in the long run, increase voter turnout.

REASON #5: DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS HURT YOUTH IN ELECTIONS: LOWERING THE VOTING AGE CAN REVERSE IT

Due to the country's shifting demographics, it is now more than ever important to increase the turnout rate among young voters. As the baby-boomers continue to age, older voters considerably outnumber younger voters in many communities, especially given consistently strong turnout among older voters and weak turnout among young voters. This can adversely impact youth on the local policy level, as survey data suggests that older voters show significantly less support for public education funding.[14]

Importantly, younger and older voters have shown equal levels of support for Social Security funding and other issues most relevant to senior citizens.[15] Enfranchising 16- and 17-year-olds can ensure young people's interests are represented on issues like school funding, without jeopardizing support for issues important to seniors. Lowering the voting age is not a ploy to add more young voters to the electorate. More importantly, as discussed above, it is a reform that can create habitual voters who, as they continue voting through their 20's, can increase the young voter turnout rate and advocate for the interests of youth in local elections.

WHY SIXTEEN (AND NOT SEVENTEEN)?

As efforts to lower the voting age in the U.S. have emerged in the past few years, most individuals and groups involved have advocated for lowering the age to 16, while some have targeted the age of 17. Takoma Park and Hyattsville successfully lowered their municipal voting ages to 16, and the effort in San Francisco is also focused on the age 16. The unsuccessful effort in Lowell targeted 17, but largely because organizers thought it was a more winnable proposition than 16. Peter Levine, the director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) penned an op-ed in Politico advocating for lowering the voting age to 17 as well,[16] but CIRCLE has also supported lowering the voting age to 16.

As these efforts grow and expand into a cohesive movement, it is important that relevant stakeholders utilize the same specific goal of lowering the voting age to 16 for municipal elections. Turning 16 is a significant milestone in our society; sixteen-year-olds can drive in most states, work and pay taxes on their income, and potentially be tried as an adult in court. Lowering the voting age to 16 also ensures that every high school student experiences one election before graduating (assuming two year cycles). ■

CHALLENGES TO LOWERING THE VOTING AGE

Like any new, bold idea, lowering the voting age faces an array of counterarguments, and these deserve adequate consideration. Ultimately, most counterarguments come down to claims surrounding the maturity and ability of 16- and 17-year olds. Youth is a nebulous concept, and, in reality, legal age-based distinctions in our society are arbitrary and based on what is deemed best for society at large, as judged at a certain point in time. Lowering the voting age to 16 is in the best interests of our democracy, and arguments against doing so are only myths. Some of the most relevant specific counterarguments are addressed as follows:

MYTH #1: 16-YEAR-OLDS ARE NOT MATURE ENOUGH TO VOTE

This gut reaction is misguided. It is true that research exists showing 16-year-olds' brains are

still developing and they do not perform as well as older adults in impulse-driven situations in which emotions run high. However, the decision-making process for voting does not fall into this impulse-driven category. Rather, it depends on "cold cognition," a thought out decision-making process in which 16-year-olds perform just as well as adults.[17] Research shows that 16-year-olds are indeed ready to vote.[18] We need to work to get past this initial gut reaction, especially since an initial, negative response usually does not even begin to consider how lowering the voting age can improve our democracy as a whole.

MYTH #2: SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLDS AREN'T REALLY ADULTS

Sixteen-year-olds play an important role in our society, and the age has special significance in our culture. Sixteen-year-olds can drive in most states, work without any restriction on hours, pay taxes, and in some cases be tried for crimes as adults. Also, high school students volunteer at twice the rate of adults, which shows a commitment to their communities that is deserving of a vote in local elections.[19] The legal definition linking adulthood to the age of 18 should not affect voter eligibility.

It is also important to emphasize that these efforts are to lower only the voting age to 16. All other legal age limits should be set in accordance to what is best for each individual issue. Our country has set the driving age, in most states, at 16, and the drinking age at 21. For this specific issue, the voting age should be 16.

MYTH #3: LOWERING THE VOTING AGE IS A PROGRESSIVE POWER GRAB TO CREATE MORE LIBERALS

The perception that young voters favor Democrats is often overstated—in a 2014 Pew survey, 50 percent of millennials self-identified as political independents,[20] and longitudinal polling data on political ideology shows that millennials are trending conservatively.[21] Accordingly, many political strategists believe the millennial generation is up for grabs.

Moreover, the effort to lower the voting age transcends party lines. The main goal of the effort is to invigorate our democracy by fostering active and engaged citizens. A more lively political discourse— in classrooms and in the broader public sphere—can stimulate ideas from across the political spectrum. The effort to lower the voting age is based on increasing participation in democracy, not promoting any one ideology.

MYTH #4: SIXTEEN- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS WILL JUST COPY THEIR PARENTS' VOTE

Data from the 2014 Scottish independence referendum suggests this claim is untrue. A survey conducted prior to the referendum found that over 40 percent of young people had different voting intentions than a parent interviewed.[22] This claim will need to be studied more in the United States, but given the data on youth political preferences, it seems that young people can demonstrate and express political beliefs independent from those of their parents. ■

> ***WE ARE BOTH READY AND DESERVING OF HAVING A VOICE IN THE DECISION MAKING THAT AFFECTS OUR DAILY LIVES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES.***
>
> *Jillian Wu, 16, San Francisco*

CURRENT LANDSCAPE IN THE UNITED STATES

Activists and organizations including the National Youth Rights Association have been actively promoting this issue around the country for over 15 years, and momentum for lowering the voting age is now reaching a critical level. Two cities in Maryland—Takoma Park and Hyattsville—successfully lowered their voting ages to 16 in the past two years, and significant efforts are currently underway in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Other recent campaigns, including ones in Lowell and Cambridge, MA, saw initial success before their efforts stalled.

MARYLAND

Takoma Park and Hyattsville successfully lowered the voting age in their cities to 16 for local elections in 2013 and 2015, respectively. Maryland's legal structure made it relatively simple for these cities to lower the voting age—the city councils only needed to vote in favor of a charter amendment and they could implement the change. In Takoma Park, the proposal was passed in the context of a larger effort to expand voting rights through several reforms, including same-day voter registration. In Hyattsville, the reform passed as a standalone measure. One council member proposed the idea, and a grassroots effort convinced other members of the proposal's merits. The Maryland-based organization FairVote, which studies and promotes a number of election reforms, supported the efforts in both cities. In Takoma Park's 2013 elections, the first after the change, 44 percent of registered 16- and 17-year-olds voted, the highest rate among any age group.[23] The successes in Maryland have served as inspiration for other efforts around the country.

CALIFORNIA

The most promising campaign currently underway is in San Francisco. The San Francisco Youth Commission, a body of 17 city residents between the ages of 12-23 that advises the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor on policies related to young people, adopted a resolution in 2015 encouraging the city to expand voting rights for local elections to 16- and 17-year-olds. Supervisor John Avalos proposed the measure as a charter amendment, and it will need the support of six of the city's 11 Supervisors before going in front of voters as a ballot measure. Avalos plans to have the Board of Supervisors vote on the measure in the spring of 2016.[24] If the board passes the measure, the proposed amendment will be on the ballot at the November 2016 elections. The Youth Commission has created a leadership structure and a framework for its organizing efforts for the coming months, and is now working to gain the support of Supervisors and the public.



COLORADO

Additionally, organizers in Colorado are in the beginning stages of launching a campaign to lower the voting age to 16 for school board elections statewide. They are designing a youth led campaign and aim to have a bill introduced in the state legislature in the coming months.

MASSACHUSETTS

Prior to the successes in Maryland and the positive momentum we see today, activists in Lowell, MA made meaningful progress before their effort stalled. In 2009, a group organized by the United Teen Equality Center convinced the Lowell city

council to vote in favor of drafting a home rule petition to send to the state legislature. Had the petition cleared the legislature, it would have allowed the city to hold a referendum, which, if successful, would have lowered the voting age for local elections to 17. The petition gained bipartisan support at the State House and passed in the Senate. It is still alive in the House, but momentum has stalled.

Some of the inspiration for Lowell's campaign came from Cambridge, MA, where high school students led an initiative to lower the voting age to 17 for municipal elections in 2002. Per Massachusetts law, the city council had to vote to send a home rule petition to the state legislature. The council voted in favor of the initiative 8-1, but the petition did not advance at the State House. The council continued to express its support in subsequent years, and once sent a petition to the state seeking to lower the voting age for only School Committee elections, but did not succeed on the state level.

2015 initiatives in the cities of Brattleboro, VT and North Andover, MA, were also unsuccessful. In both cases, proposals to lower the voting age were voted down at town meetings. The organizers in Brattleboro plan to bring up the issue again. In both cases, if the votes on the town level were successful, the measures would have required approval by the state legislature.

> ***I BELIEVE THAT VOTING SHOULD BE THE CENTERPIECE OF CIVIC EDUCATION.***
>
> *Oliver York, 16, San Francisco*

Various other individual state and local policymakers around the country have proposed or suggested lowering the voting age on either the state or city level in the past few years, but with little organizing to move the proposals forward. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi recently expressed support for lowering the voting age in a July 2015 speech at a convention hosted by Generation Progress, becoming the highest profile politician to publicly support the issue. Appendix C contains a list of other organizations and stakeholders supporting the effort. ■

CURRENT LANDSCAPE INTERNATIONALLY

The concept of 16- and 17-year-old voting has seen considerably more momentum internationally. Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, and Nicaragua all let 16-year-olds vote, and the voting age in Indonesia is 17. Austria lowered its voting age to 16 for all of the country's elections in 2008, and turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds has been higher than the previous average for first time voters.[25] Austria presents a particularly important case study; the voting age reform was accompanied by other measures intended to engage young citizens, including the elevation of the status of civic education in schools.[26] Austria's success shows the promise of a lower voting age combined with a renewed focus on civic education. This combination likely produces the best outcome in terms of civic engagement, as the two initiatives mutually reinforce each other. American cities considering lowering their voting ages should also examine areas for improvement in their schools' civic education programs.

In the 2011 local elections in Norway, 21 municipalities used a voting age of 16 as a trial, and 16- and 17-year-old turnout was much higher than turnout among regular first-time voters (aged 18-21).[27] Norway continued this trial in other municipalities in 2015.

More recently, the voting age was set at 16 for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds was approximately 75 percent, and a post-election survey found that 97 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds who voted said they would vote again in future elections, further evidence that a person's first election is habit forming.[28] Following that vote, the Scottish parliament decided this June to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in all of Scotland's elections going forward.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is considering

whether to lower the voting age to 16 for the 2017 EU referendum. The upper chamber of parliament has supported the proposal, while the lower chamber is opposed. See Appendix A for a complete list of countries with voting ages lower than 18.

Preliminary calculations by Generation Citizen have found that globally, 7.9 percent of all 17-year-olds are eligible to vote, and 4.1 percent of all 16 year-olds can vote. This is not a new idea – we are only looking to expand a good existing one. ■

LEGAL FEASIBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES

The legal feasibility of lowering the voting age in any given city depends on state laws, as each state has the authority to establish the requirements for voting in its state and local elections. These requirements are set out in either state Constitutions or statutes. Local governments have varying degrees of authority in determining voter eligibility for their municipal elections, depending on the degree of home rule municipalities are granted in their particular states.

An initial feasibility study by Generation Citizen has determined that city-level campaigns to lower the voting age for local elections seem to be currently feasible in more than 10 states. In these states, cites could lower the voting age for their local elections through city charter amendments. Proposed charter amendments must be passed by the city council and then approved by voters at the next election.[29] Since this is a legally untested area and some constitutional and statutory provisions are open to interpretation, actions to change the voting age in areas where it seems possible may be subject to legal challenges. See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion of the feasibility study, a 50 state map of legal feasibility in each state, and summaries of each state's applicable laws.

It should be noted that if advocates wish to lower the voting age for an entire state, either a state constitutional amendment or statutory change would be required, depending on the state. An amendment to the U.S. Constitution was required to lower the federal voting age from 21 to 18 in 1971. This change was motivated by a desire to align the voting age with the age for military service, in the context of the Vietnam War. ■

I HAVE MY OWN OPINIONS AND I WANT THEM TO BE HEARD.

Anna He, 16, San Francisco

NEXT STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS CAUSE

To push this cause forward in the United States, next steps must begin with elevating youth voices and identifying local leaders in cities where success is viable, based on our initial feasibility study. The larger, longer-term vision can take a few different tracks, with varying levels of ambition, depending on capacity. This section explains three next steps and presents a potential five-year vision.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS (TO COMPLETE WITHIN THE NEXT 1-2 YEARS):

1. Elevate Youth Voices

The push to lower the voting age must be led by those we aim to enfranchise, and the voices of youth must be at the center of the public discourse on this issue. Therefore, we must engage youth as both formal and informal spokespeople. Media attention and interview requests should be directed toward young people working on local campaigns, while informal online initiatives (videos, blog posts, social media contests, etc.) can let other young people add their voices to the conversation. Generation Citizen has formed a Youth Advisory Board comprised of young people working on voting age campaigns around the country to begin to elevate young voices on the issue.

2. In cities where success is legally feasible, identify local leaders and organizations and determine capacity to lead voting age campaigns

We must study the local landscape in each city where a campaign to lower the voting age is legally possible. The goal of this step is to identify individuals and organizations with the interest and capacity to organize a campaign. Likely targets include youth advocacy organizations, youth organizing coalitions, and groups that have led previous voter-friendly initiatives, such as 17-year-old primary voting or 16- and 17-year-old pre-registration.

3. Further develop the arguments, talking points, and communication strategies, and develop frameworks for local or state public education campaigns

Lowering the voting age to 16 for local elections is a relatively new idea on the political landscape, and public education campaigns are required to convince the public of the idea's merits and timeliness. Education campaigns must be tailored to the specific city or state of interest, but it may be possible to design an overall framework that can be modified for each location. It is important to first fully develop the best arguments, talking points, and communication strategies. We must take the research-supported arguments that have been developed and learn how to best package and communicate them to different constituencies.

For example, city council members may respond best to an argument focusing on strengthening the democracy and investing in long-term voter turnout, while students thinking about getting involved in an organizing capacity may respond best to an argument about rights and fairness. This work can be guided by the successful efforts in Maryland and the ongoing work in San Francisco. Further research or polling on communication strategies may be required.

FIVE-YEAR VISION:

Phase 1: Support 3-5 city campaigns to complete in the next five years

After identifying local leaders and developing communication strategies, the goal is to support

3-5 city campaigns that can achieve success in the next five years. This can be a combination of campaigns that are already underway, like in San Francisco, and new efforts in a diverse array of cities (geographic, political, demographic, etc.). It will be important to raise public awareness while gaining the support of key stakeholders in these cities. Stakeholder support is key to influencing city council votes and ballot referendums. Organizers can look to previous successful city-level campaigns to identify advocacy strategies that may be well suited for this initiative. Specifically, it will be important to learn from campaigns that successfully rallied support for citywide referendums, or ballot propositions, because this is the method that most cities will have to use to lower the voting age.

It is also critical that we engage young people in guiding these efforts, because those who are directly affected by a policy change can most powerfully communicate the need for it. Additionally, when students take leadership and ownership of these local campaigns, they can effectively demonstrate that 16- and 17-year-olds are indeed competent to vote. The process of involving youth in organizing for change is also directly in line with the initiative's goal—to increase political participation and engagement among young people.

National organizations like Generation Citizen can support local organizers and facilitate dialogue and collaboration between organizers in different states to ensure campaigns learn from each other and are up to date on best practices. It is critical that these first few campaigns start in areas where success is most practical, both legally and politically, because it is crucial to establish a precedent of success for lowering the voting age. Additionally, if the first few campaigns link their call for a lower voting age with a call to improve civics education in their cities, the precedent of combining those two initiatives could amplify the impact of future efforts.

Phase 2: With increased capacity and success of local campaigns, support at least one state level effort and spur a national conversation

Following the success of initial local campaigns, a more ambitious vision would also focus on at least one state level effort and a national conversation. Lowering the voting age has the potential to revitalize our democracy through increased voter turnout and civic engagement, but for that impact to be felt in a meaningful way, a critical number of 16- and 17-year-olds must gain the right to vote. We will identify the states that could most realistically change their voting age on the state level, and support campaigns to pursue this goal. This would involve larger-scale public education campaigns and the cultivation of state level stakeholders.

Stakeholders are also key to making this a national issue. A national public education campaign, combined with endorsements from national political and media figures, can lend credibility to the idea as it enters the public discourse. A national conversation on the issue can also help local initiatives to lower the voting age, since those efforts will have greater chances of success if the local elected officials and voters have already been introduced to the idea by a national public education campaign.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to gain support from unlikely allies at an early stage. Organizations interested in municipal authority, like the National League of Cities and analogous state level organizations, or labor unions and other groups who want young people to have strong voting habits for their own purposes, have the potential to be powerful allies. Unlikely partners like these can also help the cause avoid the liberal or progressive label and appeal to more moderate audiences, which is crucial to long-term success. ■

CONCLUSION

We have essentially reached bipartisan consensus that the American democracy is currently in crisis. The political process is dominated by special interests, the public does not understand how government works, and far too many citizens have tuned out of the process, staying home on Election Day. As the population ages and millennials become leaders in society, we desperately need bold ideas to spark engagement and participation in democracy. Lowering the voting age to 16 for local elections has the potential to stimulate increased civic engagement and political participation among young people, strengthening our democracy in a lasting way.

Lowering the voting age can increase voter turnout in the long run by making it easier for young people to establish the habit of voting, and 16- and 17-year-olds have indeed voted at higher rates than older first-time voters when they've been given the right to vote. Lowering the voting age can also catalyze much-needed improvements in civic education, and 16- and 17-year-olds have shown that they are ready to vote and have a stake in local issues.

Crucially, this issue transcends party lines. It is not the idea of one party, and it does not aim to benefit any political ideology. Rather, lowering the voting age is an effort to reinvigorate our democracy by fostering active and engaged citizens.

As the 2016 election cycle comes into full swing, the national political discourse is alive with discussion and debate on several important issues. However, the topic that is missing from the discussion is the dismal state of our democracy itself. This issue does not have one silver bullet policy solution, but lowering the voting age is a serious step in the right direction toward cultivating an engaged and active citizenry that can strengthen our nation for years to come. ■

WHEN THE YOUTH ARE EDUCATED, INFORMED, AND PASSIONATE, THEIR VOICES DESERVE TO BE HEARD. WE ARE BLESSED TO LIVE IN A DEMOCRACY, AND THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE DESERVE TO HAVE A SAY IN IT.

Mattan Berner-Kadish, who voted in Takoma Park as a 17-year-old after the city lowered its voting age in 2013

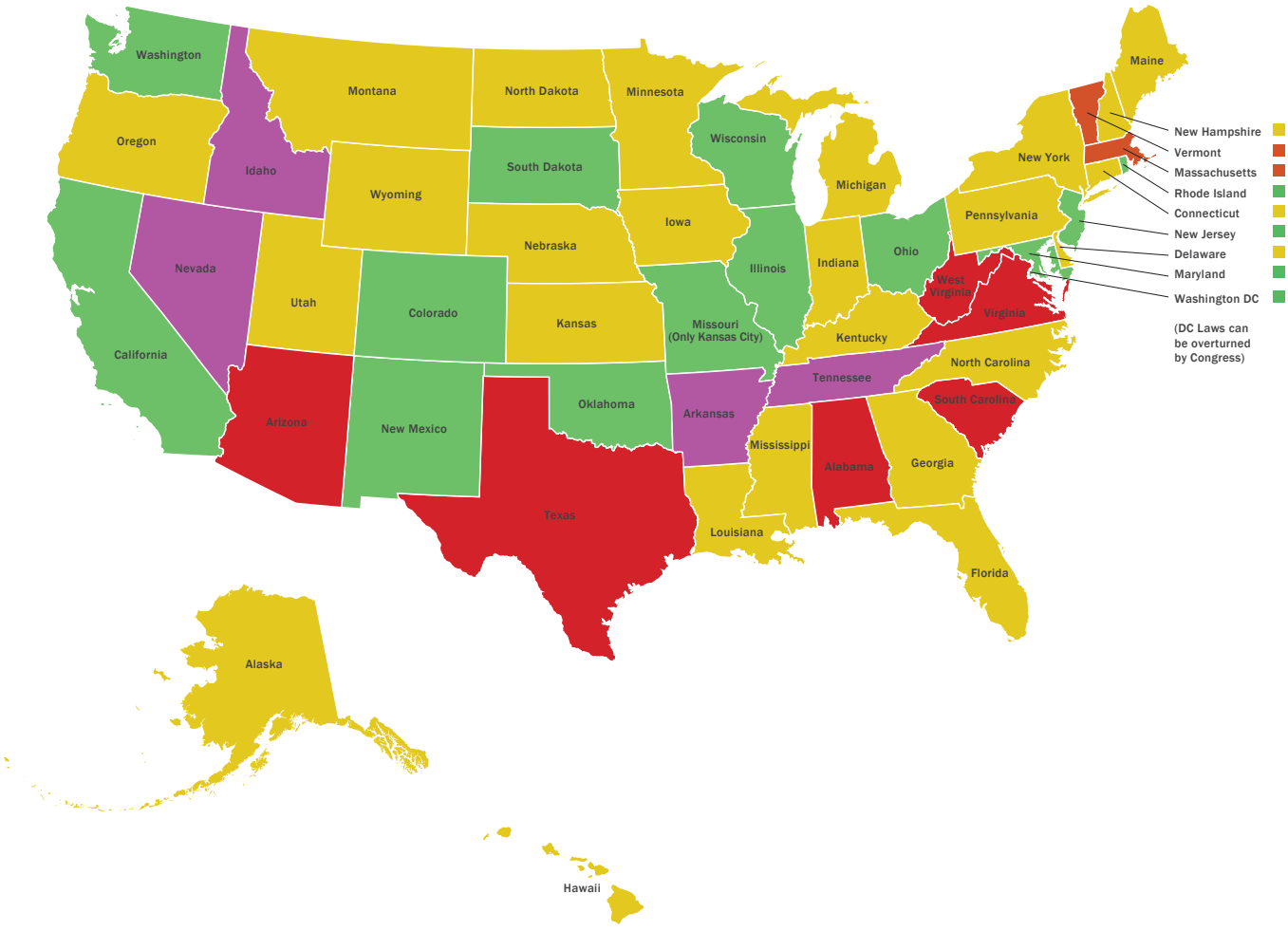
APPENDIX A

COUNTRIES WITH VOTING AGE LESS THAN 18

COUNTRY	VOTING AGE
Argentina	16 for all elections. Lowered from 18 to 16 in 2012.
Austria	16 for all elections. Lowered from 18 to 16 in 2008. Some municipalities let 16-year-olds vote in local elections before the national change.
Bosnia	16 if employed, otherwise 18.
Brazil	16- and 17-year-olds and those over 70 have the option of voting, while those 18-69 are legally required to vote.
Croatia	16 if employed, otherwise 18.
Cuba	16 for all elections.
East Timor	17 for all elections.
Ecuador	16- and 17-year-olds and those over 65 have the option of voting, while those 18-65 are legally required to vote.
Germany	16 for several states, 18 for national elections.
Guernsey (British Crown Dependency)	16 for all elections.
Hungary	16 if married, otherwise 18.
Indonesia	17 for all elections, and married persons regardless of age.
Isle of Man (British Crown Dependency)	16 for all elections.
Jersey (British Crown Dependency)	16 for all elections.
Malta	16 for Local Council elections, 18 for all other elections.
Nicaragua	16 for all elections.
Norway	Performed a pilot program with 16-year-old voting age for local elections in 20 municipalities in 2011; will continue the trial with 10 new municipalities this year.
Scotland	16 for all elections. The voting age was lowered to 16 for all Scottish elections in June 2015, following the success of a 16-year-old voting age in the 2014 independence referendum.
Serbia	16 if employed, otherwise 18.
Sudan	17 for all elections.

APPENDIX B

LEGAL FEASIBILITY OF CITY CAMPAIGNS TO LOWER THE VOTING AGE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS



Green: Cities can lower voting age, usually through charter amendments

Orange: Cities need approval from state legislature

Yellow: Need to change state law (city-specific enabling legislation may be a possibility)

Red: Need state constitutional amendment

Violet: Unclear or need more research

Nuances exist within each of these categories.
See state summaries for explanations of the legal situation in each state.

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

SUMMARY OF FEASIBILITY STUDY

Glossary & Overview Of Feasibility Study Methods

GLOSSARY

Constitution: Just like the U.S. Constitution is the "supreme law of the land" for the whole country, each state has its own Constitution that serves as a blueprint for the political and legal organization of the state. No state or local laws can conflict with the state Constitution.

Statute: Statutes are laws. Federal statutes apply to the whole country, while state statutes apply to one state. A compilation of all of a state's laws is sometimes referred to as the state statutory code, or just the state code. Phrases like "election code" refer to a group of laws regulating one topic, in this case elections.

Case law: Case law is legal precedent that is established by judicial decisions in court cases. It often clarifies or interprets statutory or constitutional laws.

Home rule: Home rule refers to the degree of authority that local units of government (i.e. municipalities, cities, counties, etc.) have to exercise powers of governance within their boundaries. Each state determines how much home rule power, if any, its municipalities have. In some states, municipalities have a wide degree of authority to pass laws and govern themselves as they see fit, as long as they obey the federal and state Constitution. In others states, municipalities have virtually no home rule authority. In order for a municipality to lower its voting age, it must have the appropriate home rule power to do so.

METHOD FOR DETERMINING LEGAL FEASIBILITY OF LOWERING THE VOTING AGE

Determining the legal feasibility of lowering the voting age in any given city starts with a two step process—first examining the state's voting age provisions, and then its home rule laws. Although we are interested in individual cities, the initial analysis takes place on the state level.

Step 1: Analysis of voting age provisions

First, we must look at both the state Constitution and the state election statutes for provisions regarding the voting age. The key is to determine, in both the Constitution and the statute, whether the voting age requirement is phrased as a grant or a restriction. The Ohio Constitution, for example, says "Every citizen of the United States, of the age of eighteen years [...] is entitled to vote at all elections." This phrase can be interpreted two ways: either (1) the right to vote is given exclusively to citizens over the age of 18, or (2) while those over 18 cannot be denied the right to vote, voting rights could be granted on a discretionary basis to those under 18.

To determine which of these interpretations is correct, further analysis is needed of case law in each state, although it is likely that many states do not have any case law on this subject. In the context of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which is also worded as a grant, at least one federal court has suggested that the more inclusive interpretation is correct, noting that the amendment "provides that the right to vote

cannot be denied on the basis of age to persons age eighteen or over, but it does not prohibit the states from setting a lower voting age."[30] However, this decision is not binding precedent over state courts.

The Ohio provision quoted above is an example of what we call a grant. The Arizona Constitution, on the other hand, gives an example of what we refer to as a restriction: "No person shall be entitled to vote at any general election [...] unless such person be a citizen of the United States of the age of eighteen years or over." This clearly prohibits those under 18 from voting.

If a state Constitution phrases the voting age as a restriction, the first step to lowering the voting age in cities in that state must be a state constitutional amendment to rephrase that provision. If a state statute phrases the voting age as a restriction, the state legislature must pass a new law to change the statute and make it more permissible of under-18 voting. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be a possible solution in this situation.

If both the state Constitution and state election statute phrase the voting age requirement as a grant, we can move on to an analysis of home rule. It is important to note, however, that the true meaning of the phrases we call grants is open for interpretation by individual state courts. If a municipality takes action to lower its voting age, this action could be challenged in court—and the state court may interpret the voting age provision as meaning that the right to vote is reserved exclusively to those over 18.

Step 2: Home rule analysis:

The second key to determining the legal feasibility of lowering the voting age in cities in any given state is establishing the degree of home rule, if any, municipalities are granted in that state. Home rule allows municipal flexibility in local affairs so far as is consistent with applicable state law, and it comes from the state Constitution, state statutes, or both. In some cases, a state will list exactly which subjects municipal governments can and cannot exercise control over. Other states with home rule are more vague in their descriptions of what powers local governments can exercise, leaving the issue open for interpretation. Lastly, there are instances in which municipalities can take action in a matter of local governance, but the action must be approved by the state legislature. This was the case in Massachusetts when Lowell and Cambridge tried to lower the voting age.

It may be necessary to consult with local experts to more conclusively determine the legal feasibility of a municipality lowering its voting age in some situations. Municipal actions in some areas where it seems legal may still be subject to court challenge over the interpretation of home rule statutes.

FEASIBLE STATES

In these states, our research indicates that cities can take action to lower the voting age for their local elections, usually through city charter amendments. A charter amendment must be proposed by one city council member, passed by the council, and then approved by a majority of voters as a ballot issue. Citizens can also bring a petition to propose a charter amendment in many cities, but this is not practical in most jurisdictions.

CALIFORNIA

Charter cities can change their local voting ages through charter amendments.

The California Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. California gives its charter cities (nearly every major city is a charter city) broad home rule authority. Elections are not specifically addressed, but municipalities "may make and enforce all ordinances and regulations in respect to municipal affairs" (Calif. Const. art. XI, § 5a) and case law supports the determination that elections are considered municipal affairs. This indicates that California charter cities may lower their local voting ages through city charter amendments, as San Francisco is pursuing now.

COLORADO

Charter cities can change their local voting ages through charter amendments.

The Colorado Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. The state Constitution provides a process for cities to adopt home rule charters, and gives charter cities the power to control "all matters pertaining to municipal elections" (Colo. Const. art. XX 20, § 6). Thus, home rule charter cities can lower the voting age for their local elections through charter amendments. All of Colorado's major cities are home rule charter cities.

ILLINOIS

Charter cities can change their local voting ages through charter amendments.

The Illinois Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. The state Constitution states that home rule units (counties and municipalities with populations over 25,000) "may exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to [their] government and affairs" except as expressly limited, and that home rule powers "shall be construed liberally" (Ill. Const. art. 7 § 6). Neither the constitution nor state statutes explicitly preempt municipalities from lowering their voting ages, so it seems that municipal units in Illinois can indeed lower the voting age for their local elections, through charter amendments.

MARYLAND

Cities can lower the voting age for local elections by city council vote, except for Baltimore.

The Maryland Constitution grants the right to vote to those over 18, and does not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. Further, the Maryland election code states that: "Except for the City of Baltimore, the provisions of this section do not apply to a municipal corporation in the State in which the municipal or charter elections are regulated by the public local laws of the State or the charter of the municipal corporation" (Md. Code § 2-202). This gives cities the ability to regulate their local elections, and is what allowed Takoma Park and Hyattsville to lower the voting age with just a city council vote.

MISSOURI

The city of Kansas City can lower the voting age for its local elections through either a charter amendment or a local ordinance.

The Missouri Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. The state has a specific statute that gives any city with a population over 400,000 the right to regulate its own elections (Mo. Rev. Stat. § 122.650.1). The only such city in Missouri is Kansas City. Other charter cities "shall have all powers which the general assembly of the state of Missouri has authority to confer upon any city, provided such powers are consistent with the constitution of this state" (Mo. Const. art. 6 § 19a), but it is unclear whether this provision grants authority over local elections. The existence of the statute specific to

cities over 400,000 suggests it does not. Kansas City's charter includes a provision stating that state election laws apply to all city elections, "except as provision is otherwise made by this Charter or ordinance" (Charter of Kansas City § 601). So, Kansas City can lower its voting age for local elections, but further research is needed to determine whether a charter amendment would be required or just an ordinance.

NEW JERSEY

Cities operating under optional plan municipal governments can change their local voting ages through charter amendments.

The Constitution grants the right to vote to those over 18 and does note explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting (NJ Const. art. 2, § 1.3) and the election code refers back to the Constitution (N.J. Rev. Stat. § 19:4-1). Regarding home rule, Title 40, section 40:69A-29 lists specific powers granted to optional plan municipal governments, and this list does not include the power to regulate elections. But, Title 40, section 40:69A-30 states that this list is not exhaustive, and the powers of municipalities should be construed liberally. This provision is written in a generous way, and appears to let cities do anything that is not in conflict with other state law. So, it appears that New Jersey cities operating under optional plan municipal governments can lower the voting age, as long as this action is not interpreted to conflict with state laws on the voting age.

NEW MEXICO

Charter cities can change their local voting ages through charter amendments.

The New Mexico Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. The state Constitution provides a process for cities to adopt home rule charters, and gives charter cities very broad authority (NM Const. art. 10, § 6). Further, the election code contains a section regulating municipal elections, but states that "The provisions of the Municipal Election Code shall not apply to home rule municipalities [...] unless the Municipal Election Code is adopted by reference by such municipality" (NMSA § 3-8-1). This indicates that the nine home rule charter cities in New Mexico can indeed lower the voting age in their local elections, through charter amendments.

OHIO

Charter cities can change their local voting ages through charter amendments, but may be especially subject to court challenge.

The Ohio Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. The state Constitution provides that "municipalities shall have authority to exercise all powers of local self-government" (Ohio Const. art. 18 § 3). The scope of "local self-government" is not defined, and has needed to be determined by the courts. Generally, if an issue is a matter of "general and statewide concern," it is outside the scope of home rule. There is no way to tell whether the voting age in local elections would be a matter of "general and statewide concern" or a "power of local self-government." It appears that a city in Ohio could attempt to change its voting age through a charter amendment, declaring that doing so is a "power of local self-government," and would then have to defend the action if it is challenged in court.

OKLAHOMA

Charter cities can change their local voting ages through charter amendments, which need to be approved by voters and the Governor.

Oklahoma's Constitution phrases the voting age provision as a grant, and the statute refers back to the Constitution. Regarding home rule, cities with populations greater than 2,000 are allowed to adopt home rule charters and amend them so long as they do not conflict with the state Constitution or statutes. Charter amendments must be approved by the city council, then approved by voters, then submitted to the Governor for approval (Okla. Const. § 18-3(a)). The Governor shall grant approval if the amendment "shall not be in conflict with the Constitution and laws of this State."

RHODE ISLAND

Cities can change their local voting laws through charter amendments.

The Rhode Island Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting

(R.I. Const. art. 2, § 1 and §17-1-3). The state Constitution also says that any city can amend its charter and "enact and amend local laws relating to its property, affairs and government not inconsistent with this constitution and laws enacted by the general assembly" (R.I. Const. art. 13, § 2). Since the voting age provisions in the Constitution and election code are phrased as grants, it can be argued that if a city were to lower its voting age, this would be "not inconsistent" with the state laws. So, cities in RI can amend their charters to allow for a lower voting age in local elections. For example, Providence's charter calls for elections to be conducted "pursuant to applicable provisions of state election law" (Providence Home Rule Charter § 202), but the charter can be amended if the city council passes a resolution that is then approved by voters.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Cities and counties can lower the voting age for their local elections through charter amendments.

The South Dakota state Constitution and election code both grant the right to vote to those 18 and older, and do not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting (S.D. Const. art. 7, § 2 and S.D. Codified Laws § 12-3-1). Any county or city in South Dakota can adopt a charter, and "A chartered governmental unit may exercise any legislative power or perform any function not denied by its charter, the Constitution or the general laws of the state" (S.D. Const. art. 9, § 2). A state statute lists the restrictions on power of home rule units, and this list does not include elections. Therefore, it seems that home rule units (cities or counties) in South Dakota can lower the voting age for their local elections through charter amendments. Charter amendments must be approved by voters.

WAHINGTON

First class cities have the ability to "provide for general and special elections," which likely, but not certainly, includes the ability to lower the voting age in local elections.

Washington's Constitution grants the right to vote to those above 18, and does not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting (Wash. Const. art. 6, § 1), and the state election code is silent on the matter. Further, first class cities in Washington have the power to "provide for general and special elections, for questions to be voted upon, and for the election of officers" (Wash. Rev. Code § 35.22.280), and the chapter containing that provision also has a provision providing for liberal construction of the statute (Wash. Rev. Code § 35.22.900). Given these laws, first class cities in Washington may be able to lower their voting ages through charter amendments. However, it could be argued that the ability to "provide for general and special elections" does not include the ability to change the voting age.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Washington, D.C.'s city council can pass a bill to lower the voting age in the city, but the U.S. Congress can overturn it.

Washington, D.C. is unique in this discussion. The city council can pass a bill to lower the voting age, but, like any other D.C. law, the U.S. Congress could pass a bill to overturn it.

WISCONSIN

Cities can lower the voting age for local elections through charter amendments, assuming a favorable interpretation of the home rule law.

The Wisconsin Constitution and election statute both grant the right to vote to those over 18 and do not explicitly deny the right to vote to those under 18 (Wis. Const. art. 3, § 1 and Wis. Stat. § 6.02). The Constitution gives cities power to "determine their local affairs and government, subject only to this Constitution and to such enactments of the legislature of statewide concern as with uniformity shall affect every city or every village" (Wis. Const. art. 11, § 3). It is possible that elections may be deemed a matter of "statewide concern." But, even if they are, a city may still be able to lower its local voting age, because the Wisconsin Supreme Court has held that "municipalities may enact ordinances in the same field and on the same subject covered by state legislation where such ordinances do not conflict with, but rather complement, the state legislation" (DeRosso Landfill Co. v. City of Oak Creek, 200 Wis. 2d 642, 651 (1996)).

CITIES NEED STATE LEGISLATURE'S APPROVAL

In Massachusetts and Vermont, cities must get the state legislature's approval in order to lower the voting age for local elections.

MASSACHUSETTS

Need state legislature's approval for home rule petitions.

The Massachusetts Constitution and election code phrase the voting age requirement as a grant. Cities in Massachusetts have the ability to adopt home rule charters, but to amend a charter to lower the voting age, cities must send home rule petitions, also referred to as special act charters, to the state legislature (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 43B). First, the city council must form a study committee, which recommends the home rule petition to the council. Then, if the city council votes in favor of the petition, it goes to the state legislature and is treated as a piece of legislation. If it passes the House and Senate and is signed by the Governor, the petition is returned to the city for implementation. Cities can write their petitions to make the proposal subject to approval by voters after being passed by the state legislature, but don't necessarily have to.

VERMONT

Need state legislature's approval for charter amendments.

The Vermont Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. Municipalities in Vermont do have the ability to amend their charters, but all charter amendments must be approved by the city's voters as well as the state's General Assembly (Vt. Stat. Ann. Tit. 17, § 2645). It is possible for a city to amend its charter through this process to lower the voting age, because the state's election code says that charter provisions shall apply over state law when they provide for election procedures different than those outlined in the state laws (Vt. Stat. Ann. Tit. 17,§ 2631).

NEED STATE LEGISLATION TO GIVE CITIES THE POWER TO LOWER THE VOTING AGE FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS

In these states, some aspect of state law prevents a city from taking action to lower its voting age. Legislation is needed on the state level, and it could take three different forms:

1. A bill to change the law that prevents cities from lowering their voting ages (usually the state voter qualification statute or home rule statute).

2. A bill that specifically gives all cities the ability to lower their local voting ages through city ordinances or charter amendments. This is known as statewide enabling legislation. It is likely a better strategy than the one above, since it leaves no room for interpretation and allows for a more direct argument.

3. A bill that gives one or more specific cities the ability to lower the voting age in their cities through ordinance or charter amendment. This is known as special legislation, or can be referred to as city-specific enabling legislation.

ALASKA

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Alaska's Constitution presents the voting age requirement for voting as a grant (Alaska Const. art. 5, § 1), but the statute that provides voter requirements for state elections is less clear (Alaska Stat. § 15.05.010). A strict reading of the statute may interpret it as a grant, but the way the statute is structured makes it seem like a restriction. Further, there is a specific statute about voter qualifications for municipal elections (Alaska Stat. § 29.26.050). It does not mention age but refers back to the state election statute, and uses more restrictive language, lending credence to the more restrictive interpretation of the state election statute. Alaska's Constitution provides broad power to home rule cities, but a statute prohibiting home rule cities from acting to supersede specific statutes includes the municipal voter qualification statute mentioned above (Alaska Stat. § 29.10.200). So, for a home rule city in Alaska to lower its voting age, the statute concerning restriction of home rule powers must be changed, and the general voter qualification statute may need to be changed as well. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

CONNECTICUT

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

The Connecticut Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. Additionally, Connecticut does grant home rule to its municipalities. However, the law specifically prohibits municipalities from taking action that affects "matters concerning qualification and admission of electors" (Conn. Gen. Stat. tit. 7, ch. 99, § 7-192a). It may be possible for one or more specific cities to seek enabling legislation, but this is unclear because Connecticut's Constitution contains a provision that limits the general assembly's ability to enact special legislation specific to a single city (Conn. Const. art. 10, § 1). Statewide enabling legislation may also be an option.

DELAWARE

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Delaware's Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant, and the statute does not mention it, so the question turns to home rule. Delaware does give its cities a degree home rule powers, but cities are specifically prohibited from amending a municipal charter to "change the qualifications of those entitled to vote at municipal elections" (Del. Code tit. 22, § 835). Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

FLORIDA

Voter qualification statute and home rule statute prevent cities from lowering local voting age.

The Florida Constitution does not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting, but the state's election code reads "A person may become a registered voter only if that person is at least 18 years of age" (italics added) (Fla. Stat. ch. 97). Florida municipalities have home rule, but cannot take action that is preempted by or in conflict with state law. The way the election code is written, it would almost certainly either preempt or conflict with a municipality's action to lower the voting age. Thus, it appears that the law would have to be changed to allow those over 18 to vote, while not specifically denying that right to those under 18. This may still leave enough ambiguity for a legal challenge—a more certain strategy would be to also change the home rule law to specifically state that municipalities have authority over their local elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

GEORGIA

Voter qualification statute and home rule statute prevent cities from lowering local voting age.

Georgia's Constitution grants the right to vote to those over 18 and does not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting. The Georgia code contains a statute listing voter qualifications that clearly restricts those under 18 from voting (Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-216). Further, while Georgia gives its municipalities some home rule powers, the home rule law lists specific powers that are reserved for the state, including "action affecting … the procedure for election or appointment of the members [of the municipal governing authority]" (Ga. Code Ann. §36-35-6). For municipalities in Georgia to lower their local voting ages, the state legislature would need to pass bills changing both the voter qualification law and the home rule law. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

HAWAII

State law prevents counties from lowering the voting age for local elections, but county-specific enabling legislation may be an option.

Hawaii's Constitution grants the right to vote to those 18 and older and does not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting (Haw. Const. art. 2, §1). The state statutes do not contain a provision on the voting age. But, regarding registration, the election code provides that "[a] person who registers as required by law shall be entitled to vote at any election provided that the person shall have attained the age of eighteen at the time of that election" (Haw. Rev. Stat. § 11-11). This language could be interpreted as to not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting, but this does not seem likely. In addition, Hawaii's election code contains a provision specifying that it applies to all elections held in the state, meaning county election procedures must yield to state law to the extent they conflict (Haw. Rev. Stat. § 11-3). Overall, it appears that Hawaii state law prevents counties from lowering the voting age for local elections, but county-specific enabling legislation may be an option.

INDIANA

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

The Indiana Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. The state has home rule, but it is extremely limited and specifically prohibits municipalities from conducting elections, or from regulating "conduct that is regulated by a state agency," which would include elections (Ind. Code § 38-1-3-9-7). Thus, advocacy efforts in Indiana would have to begin with changing the home rule law to allow municipalities to exercise control over local elections. Given the limited nature of the current law, this seems particularly unlikely. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

IOWA

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Iowa's Constitution phrases the voting age provision as a grant, but the election code phrases it as a restriction (Iowa Code § 48A.5). The state Constitution has an amendment granting municipal corporations "home rule power and authority, not inconsistent with the laws of the General Assembly, to determine their local affairs and government"

(Iowa Const. § 38A). However, the election code provides that "county commissioner of elections shall [...] conduct the election pursuant to the provisions of [the state election code]" (Iowa Code § 376.1). It appears that, if the voting age statute was changed to make it a grant rather than a restriction, a city could take action to lower its voting age. While the county commissioner would still conduct elections pursuant to the state laws, a lower voting age would no longer be contrary to those laws. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

KANSAS

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

The Kansas Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant, but the election code presents it as a clear restriction (Kan. Const. art 5, § 1 and Kan. Stat. Ann. § 25-2306). Fortunately, Kansas does have relatively broad home rule powers (Kan. Const. art. 12, § 5). If the law regarding the voting age were changed to phrase the requirement as a grant, like the state Constitution does, it appears that cities would be able to use their home rule power to lower the voting age for local elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

KENTUCKY

Open to interpretation, but home rule law likely prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Kentucky's Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant. The voter qualification statute refers back to the Constitution, but in a way that may possibly be construed to restrict voting to only those above 18 (Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 116.025). Kentucky grants home rule via a statute that says, "A city may exercise any power and perform any function within its boundaries [...] that is in furtherance of a public purpose of the city and not in conflict with a constitutional provision or statute" (Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. 82.082(1)). Additionally, cities do not have power where there is a "comprehensive scheme of legislation on the same general subject" (Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. 82.082(2)). Although the state election code does not specifically address municipal elections, it is certainly arguable that it is a "comprehensive scheme of legislation on the same general subject" as municipal elections. In sum, it would be possible for a city in Kentucky to take action to lower its voting age, declaring that doing so is "in furtherance of a public purpose of the city" and that the state election code does not represent a "comprehensive scheme of legislation on the same general subject" as municipal elections. But, these declarations are subject to court challenges, and it is possible a court would reject the city's claims, preventing it from lowering its voting age. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

LOUISIANA

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Louisiana's Constitution phrases the age requirement for voting as a grant, but a statute in the state's election code specifically states that "no one, under the age of eighteen years shall be permitted to vote in any election" (La. Stat. Ann. tit. 18 § 101). If that statute were changed, local governments (parishes and municipalities) with home rule charters may be able to lower the voting age in their local elections through charter amendments, because they can exercise any power that is "necessary, requisite, or proper for the management of its affairs, not denied by general law or inconsistent with this constitution" (la. Const. art. 6, § 5e). However, whether changing the local voting age falls under this description is subject to interpretation. In sum, advocacy in Louisiana must start with changing the statute that prohibits those under 18 from voting, and then it may be possible for local governments to take action. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

MAINE

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Maine's state Constitution phrases the voting age as a grant, but the state election code presents it as a restriction. Further, while Maine's Constitution provides for municipal home rule, the state election code specifically states that "The qualifications for voting in a municipal election conducted under this Title are governed solely by [the state election

code's voter qualification statute, which is phrased as a restriction]" (Me. Stat. title 30-A, § 2501). Therefore, in order for municipalities to lower their voting ages in Maine, the state election code must be changed to phrase the voter qualification provision as a grant. To eliminate ambiguity, the statute previously mentioned (§ 2501) could also be eliminated or changed to specifically state that the qualifications for voting in municipal elections are not governed by state laws. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

MICHIGAN

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age. Home rule law is open to interpretation, but may also prevent cities from lowering local voting age.

The Michigan Constitution phrases the voting age as a grant, but the election code says that to vote a person must be "not less than 18 years of age," which is a restriction (Mich. Comp. Laws ch. 168, § 492). Cities have a degree of home rule, but "No provision of any city or village charter shall conflict with or contravene the provisions of any general law of the state" and charter amendments must be submitted to the governor for approval (Mich. Comp. Laws § 117.36; 78.27). First, the voting age statute must be changed to phrase the age as a grant rather than a restriction. Even if this happens, it would be unclear whether a city could take action to lower its voting age, or if that would still conflict with or contravene the state law. To avoid this uncertainty, the home rule law would need to be changed to specifically give cities authority over elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

MINNESOTA

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age. More research is needed on home rule.

The Minnesota state Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant, but the state's election code phrases it as a restriction (Minn. Stat. § 201.014). There is a state statute regarding the applicability of state election law to municipal elections, but further analysis is needed to understand how this affects cities' ability to lower the voting age (Minn. Stat. § 205.02). Regardless, statewide or city-specific enabling legislation could be an option.

MISSISSIPPI

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

The Mississippi Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. However, the Mississippi home rule law specifically prohibits cities from changing "the requirements, practices or procedures for municipal elections," unless specifically authorized by another statute (Miss. Code Ann. § 21-17-5). Thus, the home rule law would have to be changed to allow municipalities to exercise home rule authority over local elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

MONTANA

Voter qualification statute and home rule statute prevent cities from lowering local voting age.

Montana's state Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant, but the state statute phrases it as a clear restriction (Mont. Code Ann. § 13-1-111). Further, while cities in Montana can adopt charters, they are still subject to state laws concerning elections, and charters "shall not contain provisions establishing election, initiative, and referendum procedures" (Mont. Code Ann. § 7-3-708). So, for a municipality in Montana to have the ability to lower its local voting age, both the state law on voter qualifications and the home rule law would need to be changed. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

NEBRASKA

Voter qualification statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Nebraska's Constitution presents the age requirement for voting as a grant, but the election code defines an elector as a citizen "who is at least eighteen years of age" (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 32-110). Cities with populations greater than 5,000 are allowed to adopt charters. City councils can propose charter amendments, which must be approved by referendum (Neb. Const. art. 11, § 4), but charters are still subject to the Constitution and state laws. Therefore, the statute defining an

"elector" must be changed before cities can take action to lower their voting ages through charter amendments. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

New Hampshire's Constitution phrases the voting age provision as a grant, and the statute simply refers to the Constitution (N.H. Const. art. 11 and N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 654:1). However, while New Hampshire's towns and cities have the ability to adopt charters, charters do not give towns or cities any additional powers other than to determine the organization of their local government (N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 49-C:15). Further, New Hampshire law provides for the qualifications of voters in municipal elections (N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 49-C:5). Additionally, in 2000, voters did not approve a proposed constitutional amendment that would have given cities and towns broad home rule powers. For a New Hampshire municipality to lower its voting age for local elections, the legislature would have to pass a bill specifically giving municipalities the authority to regulate local elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

NEW YORK

Voter qualification statute and home rule statute prevent cities from lowering local voting age.

The New York Constitution phrases the voting age as a grant, but the state election code phrases it as a restriction. Additionally, while New York provides home rule, it is limited, and municipalities do not have control over voter registration requirements. Therefore, advocacy efforts in New York must aim to change both the state law on the election age and the state law on home rule. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option. This would be similar to the city-specific law that allowed New York City to extend voting rights to non-citizens for school board elections from 1969-2002, when the mayor took control of the schools.

NORTH CAROLINA

Voter qualification statute and home rule statute prevent cities from lowering local voting age.

North Carolina's state Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant, but the state statute phrases it as a clear restriction (N.C. Gen. Stat. §163-55). North Carolina does not provide for home rule in its Constitution, and home rule authority has been given in a limited way through subject-specific statutes. No such statute exists concerning municipal elections, and the state election code contains sections governing municipal elections (N.C. Gen. Stat. ch. 163, art. 24). To lower the voting age in cities in North Carolina, advocates would have to pass a bill changing the voting age statute and specifically granting municipalities the authority to regulate local elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

NORTH DAKOTA

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

North Dakota's Constitution and election statutes grant the right to vote to those over 18 and do not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting. But, state statutes list the powers that are given to home rule cities and counties, and both cities and counties have the power to "provide for all matters pertaining to [city or county] elections, except as to qualifications of electors" (N.D. Cent. Code § 40-05.1-06 and § 11-09.1-05). So, for a city or county to lower the voting age in its local elections, these statutes would need to be changed. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

OREGON

Statute on state election law's applicability to local elections prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

Oregon's constitutional provision on the voting age is a bit ambiguous, but it can likely be interpreted as a grant (Or. Const. art. 2 § 2). The state election code does not contain a voter qualification provision. Cities in Oregon have some degree of home rule, but the state election code states that "any primary election, general election or special election held in this state shall be conducted under the provisions of this chapter, unless specifically provided otherwise in the statute laws of this state" (Or. Rev. Stat. § 254.016). It seems that this provision prevents cities from enacting their

own regulations related to elections, like lowering the voting age. In order to give cities in Oregon the power to lower their voting ages, either this statute or the home rule laws would need to be amended. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

PENNSYLVANIA

Home rule statute prevents cities from lowering local voting age.

The Pennsylvania Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting. Pennsylvania gives its municipalities a degree of home rule, but the state law specifically prohibits municipalities from exercising home rule authority over "the registration of electors and the conduct of elections" (Pa. Cons. Stat. tit. 53, § 2962). Advocacy efforts in Pennsylvania would need to begin with changing that state law to give municipalities more control over their local elections. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may also be an option.

UTAH

Cities have home rule powers, but the state law on voter registration likely prevents cities from lowering the voting age. There is a chance this law may be open to interpretation, but it would likely need to be changed to allow cities to lower the local voting age. City-specific enabling legislation may be an option.

The Utah Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting (Utah Const. art. 4, § 2; Utah Code § 20A-3-101 and § 20A-2-101). The Constitution also gives cities the ability to adopt charters for their local government. Cities with charters have "the authority to exercise all powers relating to municipal affairs, and to adopt and enforce within its limits, local police, sanitary and similar regulations not in conflict with the general law, and no enumeration of powers in this constitution or any law shall be deemed to limit or restrict the general grant of authority hereby conferred" (Utah Const. art. 11, § 5). However, state law conditions voting in elections—including municipal elections—on prior registration in accordance with the state law on registration requirements. The law on registration appears to require individuals to be 18 on the day of the election in order to vote (Utah Code § 20A-2-101). Thus, it appears that this registration law prevents a city from lowering its voting age, although the law is open to interpretation.

WYOMING

Statute on state election law's applicability to local elections prevents cities from lowering local voting age. Voter registration qualification statute may be preventive.

Wyoming's Constitution phrases the voting age requirement as a grant, but the state election code's provisions on qualifications to register to vote is unclear (Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 22-3-102). Regardless, the state election code does state that "a municipal election shall be governed by laws regulating statewide elections" (Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 22-23-101). So, for a city in Wyoming to lower its voting age, that provision would have to be changed to give cities control over the regulation of their elections, and the registration qualification statute may also need to be changed. Statewide or city-specific enabling legislation may be an option.

UNCLEAR OR MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED

The laws in these states are unclear, and more research is needed to determine the feasibility of municipalities lowering the voting age in local elections. In some cases, it may be impossible to truly determine the meaning of state laws until they are challenged in court.

ARKANSAS

Cities and counties may be able to lower the local voting age, if the voting age provision in the Constitution is interpreted favorably.

The Arkansas Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18 and do not explicitly deny the right to vote to those under 18. Further, the Arkansas code gives municipalities the power to "exercise all powers conferred by the state constitution and the General Assembly generally upon municipalities not contrary to this subchapter" (Ark. Code § 14-42-307), and a state constitutional amendment gives counties the power to "exercise local legislative authority not denied by the Constitution or by law" (Ark. Const. Amendment 55)." These provisions indicate that it may be possible for a city or county to lower its voting age, if the voting age provision in the Constitution is interpreted as to not prevent those under 18 from voting (Ark. Const. art. 3, § 1). However, the language used in the Constitution makes it likely that, while technically permissive, it would be interpreted to restrict voting to those over 18. It is ultimately unclear how a court would interpret this.

IDAHO

The election code appears to disqualify those under 18 from voting, but it is not entirely clear. City-specific enabling legislation may be an option.

The Idaho Constitution grants the right to vote to those over 18 and does note explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting (Idaho Const. art. 6, § 2). The Iowa election code, however, contains a provision titled "Disqualified Electors Not Permitted to Vote" (Idaho Code. Ann. § 34-403) This provision states that "no elector shall be permitted to vote if he is disqualified as provided in article 6, sections 2 and 3 of the state constitution." Article 2 says, among other things, that all citizens over the age of 18 are qualified to vote. Taken together, this could very well be interpreted as meaning that one who is not qualified to vote under article 2 is disqualified. In this case, the Disqualified Electors statute would need to be changed. Regarding home rule, the Constitution states that "Any county or incorporated city or town may make and enforce, within its limits, all such local police, sanitary and other regulations as are not in conflict with its charter or with the general laws" (Idaho Const. art. 12, § 2). This could likely be interpreted to give cities the ability to change the local voting age. City-specific enabling legislation could be an alternative to changing the Disqualified Electors statute.

NEVADA

Cities in Nevada may have the ability to lower the local voting age, but this is unclear. While one state law indicates that cities do have this power, another indicates they do not. Further research and analysis is needed.

The Nevada Constitution and election code grant the right to vote to those over 18, and do not explicitly prohibit those under 18 from voting (Nev. Const. art. 2, § 1 and Nev. Rev. Stat. § 293.485). Nevada gives incorporated cities certain, specifically listed powers, and authority over local elections is not listed (Nev. Rev. Stat. § 268.008). But, the state law about city elections says that "conduct of any city election is under the control of the governing body of the city, and it shall, by ordinance, provide for the holding of the election, appoint the necessary election officers and election boards and do all other things required to carry the election into effect" (Nev. Rev. Stat. § 293C.110). This provision could be interpreted to mean that the local voting age could be amended through an ordinance. But, the fact that Nevada law does specifically enumerate the general powers of incorporated cities indicates that that had the state intended to give cities the ability to change voting age requirements in its charter, this power would have been listed. This results in uncertainty. City-specific enabling legislation does not appear

to be an option in Nevada, since the Constitution specifically prohibits the legislature from enacting certain local and special laws that lack general applicability, including those regulating "elections of state, county, or township offices" (Nev. Const. art. 4, § 21).

TENNESSEE

More research is needed on home rule law.

Tennessee's Constitution grants the right to vote to those 18 and older and does not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting (Tenn. Const. art. 4, § 1). The state statutes do not contain a provision on the voting age. The Constitution gives any municipality the ability to become a home rule municipality, but it doesn't elaborate on powers granted (Tenn. Const. art. 11, § 9). Tennessee law on municipal government does list municipal powers in a fairly specific manner, and the only power relating to municipal elections is the ability for a city to change a local election date (Tenn. Code Ann. tit. 6, ch. 54). A list this specific might be taken to mean that any power not included was left out intentionally. But, there does not appear to be anything explicitly prohibiting a municipality from lowering the voting age. Further research on home rule in Tennessee is needed. It's worth mentioning that the Tennessee Supreme Court has written that "[t]he whole purpose of the Home Rule Amendment was to vest control of local affairs in local governments, or in the people, to the maximum permissible extent." Farris v. Blanton, 528 S.W.2d 549, 551 (Tenn. 1975).

STATE CONSTITUTION PREVENTS CITIES FROM LOWERING LOCAL VOTING AGE

In these states, an aspect of the state Constitution prevents cities from taking action to lower the voting age on the local level. Advocacy in these states would have to focus on a state constitutional amendment, which would be rather unlikely. In most states, constitutional amendments must be approved by two thirds of each House and by the state's voters.

ALABAMA

State Constitution does not provide for any degree of home rule.

Alabama's Constitution phrases the voting age provision as a grant, and the statute simply refers to the Constitution. However, Alabama does not give its municipalities any degree of home rule. The state legislature can pass "local acts" that apply to one municipality. Home rule would have to be provided through an amendment to the Constitution, which is unlikely. Individual cities could advocate for "local acts" allowing them to lower the voting ages, but these acts still have to be passed as constitutional amendments.

ARIZONA

State Constitution specifically prohibits voting by those under 18.

The Arizona Constitution and election code both clearly restrict voting to only those over 18 years of age (Ariz. Const. art. 7, § 2). Advocacy efforts in Arizona would have to start with an amendment to the state constitution, which is rather unlikely. A majority of each House must approve the amendment, and then it must be approved by the state's voters.

SOUTH CAROLINA

State Constitution prohibits municipalities from enacting provisions related to elections.

South Carolina's Constitution and election statutes grant the right to vote to those over 18 and do not specifically prohibit those under 18 from voting (S.C. Const. art. 2, § 4 and S.C. Code Ann. § 7-5-610). But, while the Constitution allows municipalities to adopt home rule charters, it specifically prohibits them from enacting provisions related to "election and suffrage qualifications" (S.C. Const. art. 8, § 14). City-specific enabling legislation may be a possibility, but this is unlikely due to the constitutional provision. Constitutional amendments must be approved by two-thirds of each House, and then approved by the state's voters.

TEXAS

State Constitution specifically prohibits voting by those under 18.

The Texas Constitution and election code both clearly restrict voting to only those over 18 years of age (Tex. Const. art. 6 § 1 and Tex. Election Code § 11.002). Advocacy efforts in Texas would have to start with an amendment to the state constitution, which is rather unlikely. Two-thirds of each House must approve of the amendment, and then it must be approved by the state's voters.

VIRGINIA

State Constitution specifically prohibits voting by those under 18, and does not provide for home rule.

The Virginia Constitution phrases its voting age provision as "Each voter shall be [...] eighteen years of age" (Va. Const. art. 2, § 1). This phrase clearly restricts voting to those over the age of 18, so advocacy efforts in Virginia would have to start with an amendment to the Constitution to change this provision. In addition, Virginia does not offer home rule to its municipalities, which makes lowering the voting age in cities in Virginia especially unlikely.

WEST VIRGINIA

State Constitution specifically prohibits voting by those under 18, and does not provide for home rule.

West Virginia's Constitution and election code both clearly restrict voting to only those over 18 years of age (W. Va. Const. art. 4, § 1 and W. Va. Code § 3-1-3). Advocacy efforts in West Virginia would have to start with an amendment to the state constitution, which is rather unlikely. Two-thirds of each House must approve of the amendment, and then it must be approved by the state's voters.

APPENDIX C

ORGANIZATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORTING THIS EFFORT

Several groups and individual leaders have supported efforts to lower the voting age. They include:

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)
- Conducts research on youth voting and civic engagement

FairVote
- Researches & promotes many election reforms
- Supported the successful efforts in Maryland

National Youth Rights Association
- Advocates for several youth rights issues, including lowering the voting age

San Francisco Youth Commission
- Leading the effort to lower the voting age in San Francisco

United Teen Equality Center (Lowell)
- Led the effort to lower the voting age in Lowell

Generation Citizen

Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing

Academics and researchers, including:
- Peter Levine, Tufts University
- Daniel Hart, Rutgers University
- James Youniss, Catholic University
- Robert Atkins, Rutgers University
- Conne Flanagan, University of Wisconsin
- Parissa Ballard, University of California- Berkeley
- Felton Earls, Harvard University
- William Damon, Stanford University

APPENDIX D

VOTE16USA YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Summary:

This Youth Advisory Board brings together young people from around the country who are currently working to lower the voting age in their respective cities, or who have been involved in previous local campaigns. Board members help guide Vote16USA efforts and ensure that young voices remain at the center of the campaign. This Board will grow and change as Vote16USA evolves and new campaigns emerge around the country.

Current Vote16USA Youth Advisory Board Roster:

Brandon Klugman, Vote16USA Campaign Coordinator
Mattan Berner-Kadish – Takoma Park, MD
Anna Bernick – San Francisco, CA
Juwan Blocker – Hyattsville, MD
Joshua Cardenas – San Francisco, CA
Noah David – San Francisco, CA
Anna He – San Francisco, CA
Joseph Jackson – Richmond, CA
Carline Kirksey-Almond – Lowell, MA
Susan Le – Lowell, MA
Hannah Sun – Denver, CO
Jill Wu – San Francisco, CA
Oliver York – San Francisco, CA

APPENDIX E

EXISTING RESEARCH

The body of research on lowering the voting age is limited, due in part to the prospective nature of the subject. However, the studies that do exist, focusing both on the United States and European countries, provide evidence for many of the central arguments for lowering the voting age in local elections. Below are summaries of many of the most relevant studies.

"American 16 and 17 Year Olds are Ready to Vote" – **Daniel Hart and Robert Atkins (2011)**
Hart and Atkins use survey data to show that American 16-year-olds have civic knowledge equal to 21 year olds, and comparable to older adults. Additionally, 16-year-olds are indistinguishable from 18-year-olds, and comparable to older adults, in other metrics of their capacity to function as citizens. The study also discusses demographic trends, and ultimately argues that 16- and 17-year-olds should be allowed to vote.

"Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time Voters" – **Yosef Bhatti and Kasper M. Hansen (2012)**
Bhatti and Hansen use a Danish government dataset of all eligible voters to study the effect of leaving home on young voter turnout. The study concludes that "the overall effect of leaving the nest on turnout is negative, although strongly conditional on the parental turnout." In addition, the authors discuss the strong influence of a citizen's social network on whether they vote. The authors also identify an interesting first phase on the graph of turnout by age, showing that 18 and 19 year olds vote at noticeably higher rates than their slightly older peers, and that "from age 18 – 19, each extra month of age is mirrored by a one percentage-point turnout drop."

"How lowering the voting age to 16 can be an opportunity to improve youth political engagement: Lessons learned from the Scottish Independence Referendum" – **Jan Eichhorn (2014)**
The voting age was lowered to 16 for Scotland's 2014 independence referendum, and Eichhorn found that the newly enfranchised voters "were not simply following the lead of their parents or appeared to be easily influenced in an inappropriate way." This research also supports claims about the importance of informed classroom discussions of politics.

"Vote Early, Vote Often: The Role of Schools in Creating Civic Norms" – **David Campbell (2005)**
Campbell uses YSS survey data from 1965-1980 to find a link between strong civic norms at school and engagement in the political process. He finds that civic climate in school has meaningful effect on voter turnout at least 15 years later. Someone is more likely to vote if a high percentage of their peers believe that "voting is a good indicator of citizenship." This factor even outweighs an individual's own belief about whether voting is a good indicator of citizenship. Campbell concluded that "Any school-based reform aiming to enhance voter turnout among the rising generation should focus on ways to foster a strong civic climate."

"Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood" – **Eric Plutzer (2002)**
Pluzer studies voter turnout and presents framework for a developmental theory of turnout. In the course of discussion, he presents well-established claims about the habitual nature of voting and factors and patterns relevant to habitual voters and nonvoters across the age spectrum.

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

"Should the Voting Age be Lowered to Sixteen? Normative and Empirical Considerations" – **Tak Wing Chan and Matthew Clayton (2006)**
Chan and Clayton use survey data to examine whether the voting age should be lowered to 16 in the UK, using survey data. They conclude that 16-year-olds are less politically mature than older adults and should not be able to vote.

"Voting at 16: Turnout and the quality of vote choice" – **Markus Wagner, David Johann, Sylvia Kritzinger (2012)**
Austria lowered the voting age to 16 for all of the country's elections in 2007. The authors use survey data regarding the 2009 European Parliament elections to test the quality of vote choice among 16- and 17-year-old voters. They find that while turnout among those under 18 was low, that was not due to lack of ability or willingness to participate effectively in politics. Most importantly, the quality of vote choices, determined by the level of ideological congruity between a voter's stated preferences and the party they voted for, was equal between 16- and 17-year-olds and older voters.

"Does voting rights affect the political maturity of 16- and 17-year-olds? Findings from the 2011 Norwegian voting-age trial"
– **Johannes Bergh (2012)**
This research tests whether differences in political maturity between 16- and 17-year-olds and older voters (established by Chan and Clayton, above) are evened out when the 16- and 17-year-olds are given the right to vote. Using survey data collected during Norway's 2011 municipal elections, in which the voting age was lowered to 16 in some municipalities as a pilot project, Bergh compares political maturity of 16- and 17-year-olds to 18-year-olds in the municipalities with the temporarily lower voting age and those without. He concludes that no, having voting rights do not affect the political maturity of 16- and 17-year-olds. Bergh also analyzes turnout and shows that 16- and 17-year olds voted at much higher rates than older first-time voters.

"Are People More Inclined to Vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the First-Time Voting Boost Among 16- to 25-Year- Olds in Austria" – **Eva Zeglovits and Julian Aichholzer (2014)**
This paper focuses on the consequences of lowering the voting age to 16 in Austria. The authors specifically address a pattern called "first-time voter boost," in which first-time voters, usually 18- and 19-year-olds, vote at higher rates than their slightly older 20- and 21-year-old peers. The "first-time voting boost" did indeed hold true after Austria lowered its voting age. Sixteen- and 17-year olds turned out at significantly higher rates than older first-time voters (aged 18-20). The paper also discusses the Austria's broader civic engagement efforts that coincided with the country lowering its voting age.

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[22] Jan Eichorn, How lowering the voting age to 16 can be an opportunity to improve youth political engagement: Lessons learned from the Scottish Independence Referendum, (Edinburgh, Scotland: d|part - Think Tank for Political Participation, 2014.)

[23] Wogan.

[24] Emily Green, "Plan to allow S.F. 16-year-olds to vote won't be on 2015 ballot," SFGate, June 8, 2015, http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Plan-to-allow-16-year-olds-to-vote-won-t-be-on-6314581.php.

[25] Zeglovits and Aichholzer, 359.

[26] Ibid, 354.

[27] Bergh, 92.

[28] The Electoral Commission, "Scottish Independence Referendum Report on the referendum held on 18 September 2014," (December 2014).

[29] Maryland is unique among all states in the fact that it lets city councils change local election laws without a voter referendum.

[30] Day v. Robinwood West Community Improvement Dist. 2010, 693 F. Supp. 2d 996. E.D. Mo.