

Vote16SF Youth Empowerment Academy (Vote16 YEA!)



Passionate about youth civic engagement and voter participation?

Want to be part of the effort to make SF the first city to expand voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds?

We are seeking young leaders ages 14-19 to serve in paid leadership roles through July 2016!

**Learn Leadership & Campaign Organizing Skills and
Be Part of An Historic Effort to Expand Voting Rights!**

Background:



Robust voter participation is fundamental to a healthy democracy. But the United States has much lower voter turnout rates than other established democracies. San Francisco is no exception to these trends. The city's November 2013 ballot saw participation from less than 30% of registered voters. We also know that families increasingly cannot afford to raise children in San Francisco. The city now has the lowest ratio of families with children of any U.S. city. We need all hands on deck to face these challenges and we want to engage and build the civic leadership of young San Franciscans, now, not later!

The San Francisco Youth Commission passed a resolution urging for the extension of voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds in municipal and school district elections in January 2015. The Youth Commission's 2015 resolution was passed after months of research on how extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds will boost our democracy and increase voter turnout over the long term.

Since 2010, we have seen increasing attempts nationally to keep young voters and people of color from voting in parts of the U.S. **San Francisco has an opportunity to build on its reputation of innovation and commitment to participatory democracy by being the first major city to extend voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds, and in doing so, to position itself as a national leader in the conversation on the political enfranchisement of young voters, especially young voters of color.**

In March 2015, four members of the Board of Supervisors introduced a charter amendment that would lower San Francisco's voting age to 16 years of age for municipal elections. In June 2015, the legislation was amended to be considered for placement on the 2016 ballot! We want to see the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously opt to place the voting age charter amendment before voters on the November 2016 ballot, and we want to ensure that this effort to promote the long term civic and political enfranchisement of young people in San Francisco is youth-led and that it is an opportunity for young leaders to develop their civic leadership skills. **But this is going to take a lot of work and leadership from YOUth!!!!**

Why Should 16 and 17 year olds be allowed to vote?

- **Age 16 is a better time to start voting than age 18.** Many young people encounter major transitions at age 18, which can make it a challenging year to establish new voting habits. As a result, voter turnout among eligible voters under 30 is lower than any other age group. Extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds would mean more young voters could cast their first vote in a community where they have roots, are enrolled in school, where their parents are voters, and where they may be more interested in voting than those who are just two years older.
- **16 and 17 year olds will turn out and vote.** When given the chance to vote, 16- and 17-year-olds register and turn out at greater rates than older voters. This has been confirmed in other countries that allow teens to vote (all or parts of Norway, Germany, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Brazil, and Austria) as well as in U.S. cities that have extended voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds like Takoma Park, Maryland, and Chicago, for its 2014 primary.
- **16 and 17 year olds are ready to vote.** Research shows that 16-year-olds' political knowledge is about the same as 21-year-olds' and quite close to the average for all adults and that 16- and 17-year-olds have developed the ability to logically analyze information and make responsible and informed voting choices.
- **16 and 17 year olds can and do vote independently.** We also know that 16- and 17-year-olds are capable of forming independent ideas. In the Scottish independence referendum, 44% of teens voted differently than their parents.
- **16 and 17 year old voting will increase parent voter turnout.** Teen voting can also promote civic dialogue within families and foster engagement in the older electorate. In fact, evidence suggests there is a "trickle up" effect from youth civic participation. When 16- and 17-year-olds engage in civics, conversations about politics and civic life are brought home, with a positive effect on voter turnout for parents and family members of all ages.
- **16 and 17 year olds have major civic responsibilities but are denied the right to vote.** Age sixteen holds a special significance in our society. Upon turning 16, young people can drive, work without limitations on hours, pay taxes, take classes on government in school, and are frequently subject to adult criminal charges. Despite the civic responsibilities that accrue at age 16, 16- and 17-year-olds are not able to vote.
- **San Francisco has an aging electorate.** Given the current age demographics in San Francisco where the average age of the electorate has risen from 44.2 in 1980 to 45.8 and is projected to 47.6 by 2025, expanding the electorate is an essential step in counterbalancing this aging and ensuring the interests of younger generations are protected.
- **San Francisco is losing youth and families.** Many families have left San Francisco due to affordability issues. Between 2000 and 2013, San Francisco lost about 8,000 school age youth and now has the lowest percentage of children of any major U.S. city. The young people impacted by these trends are best positioned to identify solutions, and their political enfranchisement is a vital step toward combating family flight.
- **San Francisco communities with families and children have low voter turnout.** The two San Francisco neighborhoods with the highest concentration of families with children, the Bayview and Visitacion Valley, have the lowest voter turnout rates
- **Many San Francisco young people are living in families where a parent is denied the right to vote.** One in three SFUSD students has at least one immigrant parent, who may not enjoy voting rights themselves.

Available Leadership Opportunities:

The Vote16 youth empowerment academy is currently seeking San Francisco youth 14-19 for the following positions:

- **Organizer-Fellows** commit approximately 5-10 hours a week after school to work on media, communications, social media, voter registration, and other efforts related to the Vote16 campaign.
- **Campus Outreach Captains** work on a project-basis planning outreach events to connect students at their high school with the Vote16 effort
- **Youth Speakers Bureau members** offer presentations to student, community, and parent groups and receive training on public speaking, writing personal narrative, voting rights history, and young voter engagement

Youth are offered stipends for serving in the positions and are paid on a quarterly basis.

Those participating will lead important advocacy activities, like:

- Creating a toolkit guide for student leaders
- Developing social media campaigns and competitions
- Giving classroom presentations and building a youth speakers bureau
- Planning outreach events at school campuses
- Engaging parents and teachers on the issue
- Planning a youth lobby day and mobilizations to hearings on the issue
- Holding student voter registration drives
- Giving press interviews and writing op-eds
- Developing outreach materials, including video and radio spots

Participants will gain:

- Training, political education, and mentorship from experts in the field of community and student organizing on topics such as facilitation, advocacy strategy, power analysis, social justice and voting rights history, press and outreach strategies, lobbying and public speaking
- Extensive experience interacting with elected officials, decision makers, and media outlets
- The opportunity to be part of an historic advocacy effort and help lead a national conversation about efforts to enfranchise young voters!

How to Apply:

If you are interested in the positions above, please email Youthcom@sfgov.org. Please include in your email short answers to the following questions:

1. Your name, email, phone number, school, grade, and age
2. What communities do you feel connected to in San Francisco and beyond? (examples: first-generation immigrants, LGBT community, etc.)
3. Do you have any special skills or past experience that you think would make you a good fit for this opportunity?
4. Why are you are passionate about voting rights, social justice, community organizing and/or youth leadership?
5. Which weekday afternoon and evenings are you available after school? Do you have the necessary time to fulfill the role?
6. Which positions are you interested in being considered for? (Organizer-fellow, youth speakers bureau member, campus outreach captain) *Note: the roles are not exclusive. You can conduct outreach on your campus as well as join the speakers bureau, but please tell us more about what type of leadership role you are interested in.*

DEADLINE: Applications are being accepted on an ongoing basis, but **we are encouraging applications to be turned in by Friday, January 29th** to allow applicants to participate in a **skills training retreat February 6-7**. Applicants will be given a short interview by peer leaders.

We are excited to help you grow and flourish as an advocate for youth! If you have any questions about this opportunity or your application, please call the Youth Commission office at (415) 554-6446.

VOTE16 YEA! IS A PROJECT OF:



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