

URGING THE WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE TO INITIATE A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STUDY
ON HOW TO IMPROVE YOUTH VOTING PARTICIPATION IN WISCONSIN

The Dane County Board of Supervisors requests and strongly urges the Wisconsin State Legislature to call for a Wisconsin Legislative Council study examining the participation of youth voters in elections and providing policy recommendations for improving and potentially expanding youth voting participation.

It is well documented that voters between 18 and 29 years of age have consistently had the lowest turnout among all age groups in U.S. presidential elections, and often even lower turnout levels in local elections. Less than 20% of eligible voters voted in Wisconsin's spring primary held on February 18, 2025. Civic engagement and voter turnout are key pillars of our democracy and they are currently under threat on all governmental levels. We must make efforts to reverse disenfranchisement that leads to erosion of democratic systems.

More research is warranted to understand steps and initiatives that could motivate young voters to take civic action. These initiatives might include engagement strategies focusing specifically on youth, early education, community influence, social media, and technology, as well as state and local policy changes and grassroots efforts that improve youth voter engagement and access. To address specific issues already identified in Wisconsin, a Legislative Council study should include but not be limited to research and recommendations on:

- University of Wisconsin changes to the Wiscard to make it Voter ID compliant
- Ensuring adequate and accessible campus polling locations are available
- Registration and residency requirements that act as barriers to youth voting
- Reducing voting age to include 16-and 17-year-olds

The goal of this Legislative Council study would be to create a data-driven, comprehensive set of recommendations for spurring civic engagement in the electoral process by current and next generations of youth voters in Wisconsin.

In recent years, scholars and policymakers have considered whether the U.S. minimum voting age should be changed to 16 years of age and a growing body of research is showing that 16- and 17-year-olds have the cognitive ability and reasoning on political issues to be able to make their own political decisions. But changing the voting age is an approach that must be examined within a larger context that explains lower participation rates among already currently-eligible youth voters. A Legislative Council study focused on this topic would send the message that youth have a place in politics and a civic right and duty that should start early and endure throughout their lives.

Positive habits started in the earlier adolescent years have a better chance of extending into adulthood. Research shows voting in one election can increase the probability that a person will vote in the next election. Enacting policy changes and initiatives shown to improve youth voter access and engagement would bolster routine democratic participation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors requests and strongly urges the Wisconsin Legislature to initiate a Legislative Council study on how to improve youth voting participation in Wisconsin, which researches, among other things, making

52 changes to the University of Wisconsin Wiscard to make it Voter ID compliant, provision of
53 adequate and accessible campus polling locations, registration and residency requirements that
54 act as barriers to youth voting, and reducing voting age to include 16-and 17-year-olds.
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56 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Dane County Board encourages other local governments
57 to support and request a Legislative Council study to advance youth voter engagement.
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59 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to Governor Tony Evers and
60 the Dane County State Legislative Delegation.