PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

San Francisco Board of Education unanimously supports lowering voting age to 16

February 23, 2016 (San Francisco) - San Francisco Board of Education commissioners unanimously endorsed a proposal before the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to extend voting rights in San Francisco to 16- and 17-year olds for San Francisco municipal elections, while also urging the Board of Supervisors to include non-citizens in local elections.

Because 16 and 17-year olds are able to work and pay taxes, use public services, and obtain drivers licenses, the resolution asserts that these same individuals should have a say in government decisions. It also cites research that shows that younger voters create a positive ‘trickle up’ effect on family members who become more likely to vote.

“At the age of 16, young people are embedded in their communities,” said Board President Matt Haney. “We know they care about local issues, and have opportunities to have conversations at home and school that support informed voting choices.”

Citing the low San Francisco voter turnout rate plus the aging of the average voter, the resolution suggests that allowing a younger age group to vote will increase turnout and diversity for city elections. Furthermore, research shows that the age of 18 is a challenging transitional age for youth, and is not optimal for establishing the habit of voting.

State Assembly member Lorena Gonzales (D-San Diego) introduced a similar constitutional amendment this month at the state level. Two cities in Maryland already have established this younger voting age. Voting rights have also been extended to 16- and 17-year-olds in more than 20 countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil and Scotland.

Board commissioners pledged SFUSD’s involvement, should the proposal pass, in educating, preparing and registering teen voters.

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