

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No:** HJ-32 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE ATTAINED THE AGE OF SIXTEEN TO APPLY FOR ADMISSION AS ELECTORS AND TO BE SO

**Title:** ADMITTED UPON ATTAINING THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN.

**Vote Date:** 3/11/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/4/2026

**File No.:**

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

The youth voters are a demographic that has had historically low voter-turnout rates in elections. This bill would allow individuals to pre-register to vote once they have turned 16 instead of waiting until their 18th birthday for registration. This bill would seek to increase civic participation among youth voters and keep them civically engaged.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State, Office of the Secretary of State**

Ms. Thomas supports HJ 32. She argues that this is a procedural process that twenty states and the District of Columbia currently embrace. The age of 16 was chosen due to the anticipated interaction with the DMV that 16-year-olds will have when obtaining their drivers license. They could then pre-register to vote at that time. At the age of 18, those preregistered would move from a pending registration to an active registration. This would ensure a smooth transition into civic participation and reduce last minute registration barriers. Existing safeguards would still be in place.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Hajar Abdelfadel, student, Engineering-Science University Magnet School**

Mr. Abdelfadel supports HJ 32, arguing that allowing 16-year-olds to register to vote would increase youth civic engagement and participation. It emphasizes that early registration helps

build lifelong voting habits, improves accessibility, and gives young people a stronger voice. He notes that only 52% of 18–24-year-olds voted in 2020. With a low voter turnout among young adults, he believes this change would encourage greater involvement in the democratic process.

**Cyan Blackwell, Intern, Community Lawyering Clinic**

Speaking on behalf of the Citywide Youth Coalition, Mr. Blackwell submits that this would help eliminate the number one barrier to voting and that is access. He feels that by pre-registering voters when they turn 16 would create an opportunity for young people to engage in conversations about the democratic process and would support civic education initiatives in schools. Turning eighteen brings major life transitions and could decrease the likelihood of registering to vote. Research shows voting is habitual and the earlier the engagement the more likely a young person will vote and continue to vote as they age.

**Lynne Bonnett**

Ms. Bonnett supports pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds for voter registration when they apply for driver's licenses. This time of their life is probably the best time we, as a society, have to interact and encourage voter registration. Ms. Bonnett's understanding is that it is already offered in 15 other states and has proven to be helpful.

**Aaron Goode, New Haven Votes Coalition**

Mr. Goode supports allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote, based on his experiences registering students in New Haven high schools. He notes that many interested students are unable to register because they won't be 18 by the next election, leading to missed opportunities. He argues that ages 16–17 are ideal for civic engagement, as students are learning about government and are more likely to form voting habits. In many localities students who are 16 and over can serve as student reps on the local Board of Education. Citing other states that allow pre-registration and have higher youth participation, the testimony concludes that this policy would significantly increase voter registration and engagement among young people.

**Khlo Lawson, student leader, Citywide Youth Coalition**

Ms. Lawson states that allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote would increase early civic engagement and lifelong participation. She shares personal experience in civic involvement and emphasizes that early exposure helps young people become informed and responsible citizens. Ms. Larson feels many young people are not encouraged at home to be engaged in public policy. She is very fortunate to have been introduced to civics and politics at a young age because of her mom who encouraged her to stay informed and understand how government decisions impact our lives. Ms. Lawson highlights that many teens miss registering at 18 due to life transitions, and pre-registration would ensure they are ready to vote immediately. Overall, the proposal is seen as a simple way to encourage youth participation, build voting habits, and strengthen democracy by making young people feel their voices matter.

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU-CT**

The ACLU-CT supports expanding voting rights and increasing youth voter participation, emphasizing voting as fundamental to democracy. They advocate for preregistration, allowing young people to register before turning 18 so their status automatically becomes active upon eligibility. This approach, already used in many states, has been shown to boost voter turnout

among young people. Ms. Zaccagnino cites Florida statistics from the 2008 election that showed pre-registered young voters voted at a rate of 4.7% higher than young voters who registered after turning 18. The policy requires minimal administrative changes and should be paired with outreach efforts like school registration drives and engagement programs. The ACLU-CT argues that House Joint Resolution 32 is an effective, proven way to strengthen youth participation in elections and urges its adoption.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

##### **Lisa Amatruda, Registrar of Voters, Co-Chair ROVAC Leg. Comm**

Ms. Amatruda states that this is an unnecessary change and does not improve voter readiness or participation. Connecticut state law already allow preregistration at 17 years old, and this system is working well. Also, she believes there is not demonstrated benefit by adding an additional year and that, again by state law, Registrars visit each high school at least once a school year to register eligible students. Current law already covers young voter outreach without altering the Constitution.

##### **Mona Colwell, Intercessors for America**

They oppose any and all “un” Constitutional amendments. These are unnecessary. If you want to make a change, use laws, not the Constitution.

##### **Jennifer Damon**

Ms. Damon states that in 2024 the Town of Mansfield had created numerous duplicate registrations through same day registration. Many of the new voters were already registered through DMV. Registration before 18 years old does not take into effect that the students do not know where they will be when they are 18 years old, most likely college or moved out of their parents home. In 2022 New Hampshire contacted Connecticut to see if students who were trying to vote in NH were also registered in CT. Ms. Damon included copies of text messages from NH and a list of duplicate registrations from Mansfield (78 in total).

##### **Lisa Kops, Registrar of Voters**

Ms. Kops opposes allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote, arguing it would create outdated and inaccurate voter records. She raises concerns that many individuals move before turning 18, leading to inactive or duplicate registrations that cannot be easily removed without permission. Overall, the position is that pre-registration could undermine efforts to maintain accurate and secure voter rolls.

##### **Beth Lundy, Glastonbury Registrar of Voters**

Ms. Lundy opposes pre-registering 16-year-olds, citing logistical and cost concerns for maintaining accurate voter rolls. She argues that young people will most likely move before turning 18, leading to outdated registrations and additional administrative burdens, including system updates and follow-up mailings. She also raises questions about how to verify eligibility for minors without identification. Additionally, she suggests that current high school registration efforts already work well and that pre-registration could diminish the significance of registering to vote as a milestone at age 18.

##### **Michele May, Registrar of Voters**

As a certified registrar of voters, she opposes lowering the voting threshold in any form. The age of 18 has long been recognized as the point of legal adulthood and civic responsibility.

There is no need to create a list of future voters who have not yet attained the age of majority. Keep elections for adults.

**Tom Pugliese, Registrar of Voters, Rocky Hill**

Please do not approve HJ 32 because, if passed, it would not allow more people to vote. It would only necessitate more time to be committed by the Registrar of Voters to unproductive labor and often demand that more unnecessary and often uncompensated work be completed. This would not allow more people to vote but would confuse people.

**Anonymous 39**

Opposes lowering the voting age to civically immature individuals.

**Reported by: Cindy Panioto**

**Date: 3/25/26**