



Susan Bysiewicz
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
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- NEWS RELEASE -

HOUSE PASSES RESOLUTION TO AMEND CONSTITUTION & ALLOW 17 YEAR-OLDS TO VOTE IN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

VOTE FALLS SHORT OF SUPER-MAJORITY, BUT BYSIEWICZ SAYS
RESOLUTION IS STILL ALIVE

Hartford: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz is pleased that today, for the first time ever, the Connecticut House of Representatives has approved HJ-11, a resolution that would allow thousands of 17 year-olds to vote in a presidential primary election, so long as they turn 18 before the general election.

“Connecticut is inching closer towards making history and becoming a national leader on youth voting rights,” said Bysiewicz. “It has been more than 35 years since we lowered the voting age to 18 and I argue it’s time to tweak it again. Doing so will increase voter turnout among young people and their parents, supplement our civics curriculum that already exists in our high schools, and fix an inequity in state law that allows 17 year-olds to enlist in the armed services but denies them the right to vote.”

State Rep. James Spallone, of Essex, is a co-sponsor of the resolution and has deserves credit for his leadership. “I want to thank Rep. Spallone for his leadership on this,” said Bysiewicz. “Of course, we still have a long way to go before this becomes law.”

There are two ways an amendment can be made to the Connecticut Constitution. One option is that three quarters of the House and Senate approve the amendment and then it goes onto the ballot in the next general election that falls on an even numbered year. The other option is for a simple majority in both the House and Senate to approve the measure in two separate legislative sessions. If that happened, it would then go onto the ballot in the next general election that falls on an even numbered year.

Despite what many assume to be the law, the United States Constitution does not deny 17 year-olds the right to vote. The 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution only states that the right of citizens who are eighteen years of age or older to vote shall not be denied by the United States or by any State on account of age. Taking into account that the Constitution does not bar states from lowering the voting age, some states have done exactly that. In the past several years nine other states in the nation have passed measures that allow 17 year-olds to vote in primaries so long as they turn 18 by the general election. The states are; Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia.

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