

Santa Ana High School Article of the Week # 24

Should 17-year-olds be allowed to vote?

Instructions: READ and ANNOTATE

- Mark your confusion.
- Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)

Student _____ Class Period _____

Should 17-year-olds be allowed to vote? By Michelle L. Price *Associated Press*
January 19, 2016

A proposal that Utah lawmakers will consider could see the state join 20 others to allow 17-year-olds to vote in June primary elections. But, they are only eligible if they'll turn 18 by the general election in November.

Salt Lake City Democratic state Rep. Joel Briscoe is a former high school civics teacher. He hopes his proposal will help boost voter participation. He wants to get more young people engaged.

Briscoe said if someone will be 18 and eligible to vote in November, "Why not get them involved in the primary election? Why not get them involved even earlier that year and get them more pumped for what's going to happen in November?"

Utah primary elections are held the fourth Tuesday in June.

Briscoe said research has shown that the earlier people cast their first vote, the more likely they will be to continue voting.

The Utah lieutenant governor's office oversees elections. It has not studied the proposal, according to state elections director Mark Thomas.

So far, 20 states allow 17-year-olds to vote in primaries and caucuses. This is according to FairVote, a Maryland-based election reform group that advocates for the idea.

Some states have passed laws lowering the primary voting age and in others, state political parties have been allowed to change their party rules to allow 17-year-old participation.

Rob Richie is FairVote's executive director. He said 17-year-olds in a more structured environment of living with their parents and going to high school may be more likely to take advantage of their right to vote than some 18-year-olds who have moved out into the world and the distractions of college.

After a similar law took effect in Illinois in 2014, Chicago election officials reported that 17-year-olds were more likely to vote in that city's primary election than most voters in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

Kari Schott, the 17-year-old founder of a Young Democrats club at Jordan High School in Sandy, said she'd take advantage of the lowered primary voting age. But she isn't sure about her peers.

"That would be an amazing opportunity. But knowing my friends and the people at my school, I don't know if it would be as exciting to them," she said. "They aren't as politically active and a lot of them are apathetic to the political process."

Schott said despite being a politically active 17-year-old, she isn't always taken seriously by candidates because she can't actually vote for them.

Andy Pierucci is a 27-year-old who works with Utah Young Republicans. He said he thinks the voting age should be lowered to 16. That is the age when many teenagers start working and paying taxes.

"I think that they should definitely be able to have a say on elected officials that decide where the taxes go," he said.

Possible response options:

- According to this article, what office oversees elections?
- How many states have lowered the voting age for the primaries?
- What is one stipulation for allowing 17-year-olds to vote in the Utah primary elections?
- Do you agree or disagree with this article? Why? Use an example from your own experience or the text to support your opinion.