

## History of Efforts to Lower the Voting Age in the U.S.

### City Level Efforts

The best way to lower the voting age is on the city level – one city at a time. Arguments about lowering the voting age are strongest in the context of local elections, and it is easier to build support on the city level than on a state or national level. The most notable city level efforts are:

**2000 - Cambridge, MA:** Students in Cambridge, MA advocated for lowering the voting age in local elections. The city council supported the proposal, but due to MA state law it also had to be approved by the state legislature. The bill did not advance through the state legislature. The students tried again, aiming for just school committee elections. The city council was supportive but it did not advance through the state legislature.

**2003 - Anchorage, AK:** A proposal to lower the voting age in local elections was brought to the city council and voted down. It was then put before voters as a ballot measure, and again failed.

**2005 - Berkeley, CA:** A city council member submitted a bill that would have put the question of lowering the voting age for school board elections to 17 before voters as a ballot measure. The council voted 5-4 against having the ballot measure.

**2010 - Lowell, MA:** Young people from the United Teen Equality Center in Lowell, MA advocated to lower the voting age to 17, and the city council supported the proposal. The proposal went to the state legislature, just like with Cambridge. It passed in the state Senate but not the House.

**2013 - Takoma Park, MD:** Maryland's laws are unique, in that cities can lower the local voting age with just a city council vote – no ballot measure or state approval required. The city of Takoma Park lowered its voting age in 2013.

**2015 - Hyattsville, MD:** Following Takoma Park, Hyattsville lowered its voting age in 2015.

### Current City Level Efforts:

**San Francisco:** A measure to lower the voting age to 16 for all local elections is on the November 2016 ballot.

**Berkeley, CA:** A measure that would give the city council the authority to lower the voting age in school board elections is on the November 2016 ballot.

**Washington, D.C.:** There is a bill in the city council that would lower the voting age to 16.

*Other cities are also exploring the issue, but have not yet introduced legislation.*

## State Level Efforts

State Representatives and State Senators in several states have introduced bills over the past 15 years that would lower the voting age for either all of the states' elections or just school board elections in the state. None of these bills have passed, and very few made it out of committee. These bills include:

- 2003 – Texas
- 2004 – California
- 2004 - Iowa
- 2005 - Washington
- 2008 - Illinois
- 2008 - Michigan
- 2009 - Wisconsin
- 2011 - Washington
- 2014 - Missouri
- 2015 - Minnesota
- 2015 - New Mexico
- 2015 - Arizona
- 2015 - Hawaii