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Historic Measure Almost Passes: More than 172,000 Vote to Extend Voting Rights to 16-year-olds for Municipal Elections

Country's First Ballot Measure to Lower the Voting Age Finishes with 48% of the Vote, an Increase of 12% in Just Seven Months

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – San Francisco's Proposition F, the nation's first ever ballot measure to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds for municipal elections, earned more than 172,000 votes to finish at 48%, just shy of the 50% threshold needed to pass.

This is an historic accomplishment for a youth-led campaign that was polling at 36 percent just six months ago, and shows that allowing 16-and 17 year-old citizens to vote on the local level is a viable policy idea that the American people are ready to seriously consider.

"Nobody thought we would come this close," Lowell High School sophomore and campaign leader Joshua Park said. "This shows that young people are truly interested in this idea, and there is definitely a large group of youth willing to move it forward. November 8th's vote was an important first step. We saw time and time again that some people think this idea is a little far fetched at first, but once you have a five minute conversation with someone and really explain the benefits of starting voting earlier they usually come around."

The campaign won over voters with a message that Prop F was about increasing voter turnout and civic engagement in the long term, as voting is habitual and 16 is a better time than 18 to establish such an important habit. In the months leading up to election day, the Yes on F campaign earned the support of many of San Francisco's most prominent political figures and organizations, including the entire school board. The Board recognized that voting on the local level could play a key role in civic education and committed to implementing curriculum to prepare students for the ballot if Prop F had passed.

"The 2016 election has demonstrated that we need to focus on rebuilding the foundations of our democracy. This historic vote shows that the people of San Francisco recognize this issue matters, and we will continue to work towards extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds," said Scott Warren, CEO of Generation Citizen, a nonprofit that promotes youth civic engagement and played a major role in the Prop F campaign.

"I am incredibly proud of the efforts of all of the young people in San Francisco who campaigned vigorously for Proposition F, which would have allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in local elections. When the youth first began their campaign, public opinion was against the measure. Over the last few months, their tenacity and organizing changed thousands of minds, convincing them that youth voice matters," said San Francisco Board of Education President Matt Haney.

"Unfortunately, the proposition did not pass by a very narrow margin. But the work continues. The Board of Education will work to ensure that all young people receive a robust civics education. We need to do more as a country to inspire and educate young people to be active citizens, and the City of San Francisco will take a national lead on this effort, inspired by all the youth that made this their issue over the last few months."

The measure's path to the ballot began with a resolution of the San Francisco Youth Commission, and more than 150 high school students from around the city joined the grassroots effort. The close loss on the ballot puts the push to lower the local voting age on par with other issue campaigns that succeeded after initial losses on the ballot.

In San Francisco, voters rejected propositions to allow non-citizen parents to vote in school board elections in 2004 and 2010 before Prop N triumphed this year with over 53% of the vote.

California's 2010 marijuana legalization initiative was defeated 54-46, and this year California voters approved marijuana legalization by a margin of 74-26.

With this in mind, Prop F leaders are already planning their strategy for bringing the issue back to the ballot in 2020.

"The success of this campaign affirmed that young people are capable of being engaged in city politics and *will be* engaged when policies are relevant to them. In addition, November's national low voter turnout affirms the need for policies like Vote16, that encourage political engagement and civic education at an early age," described Supervisor John Avalos.

Generation Citizen, a nonprofit that promotes long-term civic engagement through an action-oriented civics education program delivered in 50 Bay Area classrooms annually, played a major role in supporting the Yes on F campaign. Generation Citizen also organizes the Vote16USA campaign, a national initiative that supports efforts to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds on the local level in cities around the country and elevate the issue nationally.

This result in San Francisco sends a strong signal to youth leaders and policymakers in other cities that lowering the local voting age is a viable policy idea that people are ready to consider. Vote16USA is eager to work with local leaders to move this forward in other cities and states.

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