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Governor Phil Murphy

# Ahead of Historic Newark School Board Election, Governor Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Way Join Non-Partisan Voter Registration Drive for 16 and 17-Year-Old Students at Newark School of Data Science & Information Technology

Posted on - 03/18/2025

*Voter Registration Deadline for April School Board Election is March 25, 2025**Newark Board of Education Election Scheduled for April 15, 2025 – Marking the First Time That 16 and 17-Year-Olds Will Be Allowed to Vote in New Jersey**Governor and Lieutenant Governor Joined by Award-Winning Rapper and Recording Artist A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie, First Lady Tammy Murphy, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, Newark Schools Superintendent Roger León, and Over 150 Students from the Newark School of Data Science & Information Technology*

**NEWARK** – At the Newark School of Data Science & Information Technology, Governor Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Way, today joined a non-partisan voter registration drive to encourage 16- and 17-year-olds to register to vote in their upcoming local school board election on April 15, 2025. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor were joined by award-winning rapper and recording artist A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie, First Lady Tammy Murphy, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, Newark Schools Superintendent Roger León, and over 150 juniors and seniors from the Newark School of Data Science & Information Technology. The deadline to register to vote for the April election for the Newark Board of Education is March 25, 2025.

“Newark has set a national standard for youth voting rights by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in their local school board elections,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Providing young people a say in issues that directly impact their lives is not only the right thing to do, but also helps make voting into a lifelong habit. At a time when our democracy is threatened, we must do everything we can to empower the next generation by instilling in them the value of civic engagement.”

“Starting civic engagement at a young age fosters a lifelong commitment to democracy,” **said Lieutenant Governor Way, who oversees the Division of Elections in her capacity as Secretary of State**. “By allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in their school board election, Newark’s young people will have a say in the decisions that directly impact their education.”

Newark made history as the first city in the state to enact an ordinance lowering the voting age for local school board elections to 16. The Newark City Council unanimously voted to approve the change in January 2024, but implementation was delayed until the April 2025 election due to voter registration issues. As part of this historic

occasion, Governor Murphy reinforced his support for S3240/A4369, which would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections statewide.

“Our youth are our future, and they deserve a voice in electing the leaders who shape their education,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. “I commend the city of Newark for establishing voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds and recognizing their interest in decisions that impact them. Allowing our youth to vote will not only give them a firsthand experience in democracy but also reinforce the power of civic engagement, ensuring they understand the importance of letting their voices be heard come Election Day.”

“These kids are going to shape the future so supporting them is really important to me,” **said Award-Winning Artist and Rapper A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie**. “If we set them up right, they’ll shape a world we all can be proud of.”

“The City of Newark is leading the way in strengthening youth voting rights by empowering 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in their local school board elections. Allowing young people to have a say in the issues that impact them day-to-day ensures that their perspectives are taken into account, helping shape both their education and their community,” **said Senator Cory Booker**.

“VOTE16 is a program close to my heart, and I encourage all Newark 16-and 17-year-olds to take advantage of this opportunity to shape our city,” **said Congresswoman LaMonica McIver**. “Your vote is your voice and our democracy is stronger, more diverse, and more representative when everyone’s voice is heard. Thank you Governor Murphy for your continued support in expanding voting rights for our state.”

“Today’s youth voter registration event underscores our belief that empowering young people paves the way to a brighter future,” **said Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka**. “This April, we are proud to make history as 16- and 17-year-olds in Newark will have the opportunity to vote in our school board elections for the very first time. We hope this experience will inspire a lifelong commitment to civic engagement and active participation in our democracy. We are deeply grateful to Governor Murphy for standing with us and championing youth voter registration, ensuring that the voices of our young people are not only heard but valued.”

“Ensuring that students have a voice in the decisions that shape their education is a monumental step forward in fostering civic engagement,” **said Newark Board of Education Superintendent Roger León**. “Newark Public Schools is proud to stand at the forefront of this historic movement, empowering our 16- and 17-year-old students to participate in local school board elections. By engaging in the democratic process early, our students will not only help shape their education, but also cultivate a lifelong commitment to advocacy and leadership. We are grateful to Governor Murphy, Lieutenant Governor Way, First Lady Tammy Murphy, Mayor Baraka, the Newark Municipal Council, and all of the organizations and young people involved for their dedication to expanding voter access and recognizing the importance of student voices in shaping the future of education.”

The prime sponsors of S3240/A4369 are Senator Raj Mukherji and Brian Stack along with Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker and Assemblywoman Jessica Ramirez.

“Giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in local school board elections – elections that directly impact their lives as students on their way to becoming adults – just makes common sense. Indeed, it is likely these young people know the issues facing their education as well as anyone, regardless of age,” **said Senator Raj Mukherji**. “Furthermore, this will give these students a chance to learn to participate actively in the democracy in which they live. In the process it will be a good proving ground for them, and increase the chances they will continue to vote throughout their lives.”

“Young people deserve a say in the decisions that shape their education, and allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections is a powerful step toward amplifying their voices,” **said Senator Brian Stack**. “Engaging students in the electoral process early not only strengthens their connection to civic life but also ensures that school policies reflect the needs and experiences of those they impact most.”

“This bill is an opportunity to plant the seeds of civic responsibility early, creating a generation that values and prioritizes participation in our democracy,” **said Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker**. “Voting at a young age can create lasting habits. When students are encouraged to vote early, they’re much more likely to make it a regular part of their lives.”

“At a time when our democracy is under attack, Governor Murphy’s commitment to expanding youth voting rights is a

powerful reminder that the best way to defend democracy is to include young people. Empowering 16 and 17 year-olds to vote isn't just about preparing the next generation, it's about acknowledging that young people are already leading movements, shaping conversations, and fighting for their communities. In Newark today, students understood the weight of this moment. The youth are excited not just to register to vote, but to take ownership of their future. In the face of efforts to silence voters, expanding youth voting rights is an act of resistance, resilience, and hope. Governor Murphy's leadership is ensuring that youth voices, often the most forward-thinking and fearless among us, have the power to help rebuild and reimagine our democracy. This is how we secure a more inclusive, just, and lasting democracy," **said LaJuan Allen, Director of Vote16USA at Generation Citizen.**

"We couldn't be more excited that for the first time, Newark's 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to vote in April's school board election," **said Assatta Mann, Sr. Community Organizer at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.** "We are grateful for the leadership and enthusiasm from the Governor and Lt. Governor around this historic moment, including through the organization of this event at a high school – ground zero for civic engagement for our young people. This is a huge victory for democracy in New Jersey, and we look forward to more and more students registering to vote and casting their first ballots on April 15."

"It shows tremendous leadership that Governor Murphy is supportive of Vote16. With voter participation in school board elections in Newark under 5%, it is imperative that more voters are engaged in the school board elections. Young people are most impacted, and they should have a say and a vote. The City of Newark leads the way," **said Vivian Cox Fraser, President and CEO of Urban League of Essex County.**

"Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy and the fundamental right upon which all our civil liberties rest. Ensuring that 16 and 17-year-olds can vote in school board elections empowers young people to engage with the decisions that shape their education every single day. By including students in elections at a younger age, they will begin to build a lifelong habit of civic participation sooner – which will only help to make our democracy stronger. We're grateful for Governor Murphy's leadership in advancing voting rights," **said ACLU-NJ Campaign Strategist Alejandra Sorto.**

"Empowering young voters is crucial for safeguarding a vibrant and inclusive democracy. The disillusionment and apathy often attributed to young people stem from decades of neglecting civics in our schools, alienating them from critical issues while trivializing their potential to activate change. By equipping our youth with the knowledge and tools to participate in the democratic process, we are nurturing the next wave of change-makers and cultivating a lifelong commitment to civic responsibility and the collective well-being of our society," **said Racquel Romans-Henry, Director of Policy, Salvation and Social Justice.**

"Ensuring that young people in Newark are prepared to be active participants in our democracy is essential to building a stronger, more just future. Governor Murphy's support of this voter registration drive sends a powerful message—that every voice matters, and every vote counts. At Project Ready, we believe that civic engagement starts early, and by equipping our students with the tools to participate in the electoral process, we are shaping the next generation of leaders who will drive meaningful change in our communities," **said Shennell McCloud, CEO of Project Ready.**

"These young folks are now positioned for a lifetime of civic engagement," **said Jesse Burns, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of New Jersey.** "Through engaging in elections that directly impact their daily lives, they are learning the power of the ballot. These new voters are the future of a more inclusive democracy, and we are honored to celebrate them today."

"As young people, we are not just the leaders of tomorrow—we are active participants in our communities today, whether through work, caregiving, or activism. The future of our education is too important to be left out of the conversation," **said Mary, a youth leader at Make the Road NJ.** "As current students, we are directly affected by the decisions of school boards. We are impacted daily by decisions made in school board meetings, from curriculum choices to policies on discrimination and school safety. Yet, we are denied the opportunity to influence those choices. It's time we are given a voice in these decisions. Lowering the voting age to 16 would not only empower us to have a say in our schools' policies but also send a message that our voices matter. It's about ensuring that our education system reflects the needs and interests of the students it serves. It's time to break down the barriers that keep young people from shaping the policies that will determine our futures and make our democracy stronger."

"Thanks to continued efforts, thousands of young people in Newark now can have a say and may be able to vote in their school board elections," **said Amber Reed, Co-Executive Director, AAPI New Jersey.** "As an organization serving

our state's fastest-growing voter demographic, we applaud the Governor's leadership in getting Newark's newest voters to the polls, and are excited for the example this sets for the nation and the conversations this will spark among families and communities about the importance of all of us exercising our right to vote."

"As a student movement that has been fighting to lower the voting age for years, Vote16NJ is incredibly excited for Newark students to cast their first ballots in school board elections. Now comes the crucial next step: ensuring every eligible Newark student registers to exercise this vital right," **said Anjali Krishnamurti and Yenjay Hu, Co-Founders and Executive Directors of Vote16NJ.** "Student leaders in Newark have been hard at work over the past few months to ensure that their peers are engaged, well-informed, and ready to vote. We appreciate the work that the Governor's office and our other partners in Newark have done to support voter registration efforts."

"Vote16 is more than a movement—it's a commitment to democracy, youth empowerment, and a future shaped by the voices of the next generation. When young leaders rise, democracy thrives," **said Jane Collins-Colding, New Jersey Black Empowerment Coalition.**

"Initiatives like these play a crucial role in fostering civic engagement among our youth, shaping the future of our communities and our country. Expanding access to civic education is essential to empowering the next generation of informed and active citizens," **said Maria Andrade, Latino Action Network.**

"Eighty-nine years ago, the Youth and College Division was established with the goal of encouraging young people to be actively engaged in civic life. Over the decades, its alumni have gone on to make significant contributions in various fields, becoming judges, filmmakers, community leaders, and advocates for change. Lowering the voting age would provide even more young people with the opportunity to have their voices heard, inspiring them to take an active role in shaping policies that impact their communities. By including a more diverse group of young individuals with unique backgrounds and experiences, we can build a more representative and inclusive democracy for the future," **said Ryan Bates, President, NAACP New Jersey State Conference Youth and College Division.**

"On behalf of the Abbott Leadership Institute, we are proud to support the Governor's Voter Registration Event today," **said Jennifer Made, Director of Youth Programs.** "Through our Youth Media Symposium we have seen the power of student civic engagement to transform schools and community. We will continue to lead young people in discovering their power through their vote and political action."

"It is imperative that our youth become involved in the civic process of voting. Voter registration along with voter education will enable them to become life long, civically engaged citizens," **said Deborah Smith Gregory, President of NAACP Newark.**

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