

Governor Murphy Signs New Voter Empowerment Act

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Legislation Allows 17-Year-Olds to Vote in Primary Election if They Will be 18 by General Election

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed the “New Voter Empowerment Act” allowing any registered voter who is 17 years of age by the time of a primary election to vote in that primary if they turn 18 years old on or before the next general election.

Today's signing reaffirms the Governor's longstanding commitment to expanding democracy, building on previous voting rights expansion measures enacted during the Murphy Administration, including automatic voter registration, in-person early voting, online voter registration, and the restoration of voting rights for individuals on probation or parole, among other reforms.

“To strengthen our democracy, we must ensure that all eligible voters can participate in it,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Across government, we see how the decisions we make today impact future generations. I am proud to sign legislation that expands access to the ballot box while engaging and empowering a new generation of voters.”

“Since 2018, I have made youth voter engagement a priority as New Jersey's Secretary of State, and we have seen record youth voter turnout in recent years,” **said Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way**, who oversees the New Jersey Division of Elections in her capacity as Secretary of State and serves as New Jersey's chief election officer. “The New Voter Empowerment Act will bring New Jersey voters into the process earlier than ever before, helping young people build healthy civic habits and contribute to our democracy.”

Current law permits a person who is at least 17 years of age to register to vote if the person will be at least 18 at the time of the election. However, the person is designated in the Statewide Voter Registration System as temporarily ineligible to vote until that person's 18th birthday. The legislation signed by Governor Murphy today, which will take effect on January 1, 2026, allows that person to vote in a primary election as long as the person turns 18 years of age on or before the next general election.

Sponsors of this legislation (A3690/S1888) include Senator Andrew Zwicker and Assemblyman William “Bill” Moen, as well as Senator James Beach and Assemblymembers Anthony Verrelli and Paul Moriarty.

“Allowing young people who can vote in general elections to participate in primaries is a good way to keep them involved in the democratic process,” **said Senate President Nick Scutari**. “They should know that they have a voice in determining their representatives in government and the public policies that will impact their lives and influence their future.”

“We should do everything we can to encourage New Jersey youth to participate in the political process,” **said Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**. “This legislation will empower young people and ensure their voices will be heard in the first election cycle they're eligible to vote in. Hopefully, this will lay the foundation for deeper engagement in our democracy, which will benefit every New Jerseyan.”

“‘One person, one vote’ is at the heart of our democracy and I am happy to see it signed into law. This voter empowerment law gives our young people the opportunity to make their voices heard by granting them the right to vote in a primary election,” **said Senator Zwicker**. “At a time when our politics is polarized and when too many people stay home on Election Day, it is time to engage and empower a new generation of voters so that they may have a say in the future of our great state.”

“Many teens look forward to voting in their first election and now, if they are turning 18 between June and November they will get a say in who's on the ballot,” **said Senator Beach**. “By allowing these 17 year olds to vote in primary elections we are allowing them to weigh in on which candidates they want representing their party in the general election, just like everyone else voting in November.”

“With the enactment of the ‘New Voter Empowerment Act,’ we are energizing our youth and telling them we recognize that their voices are vital in shaping the Garden State's political landscape for the next generation,” **said Assemblyman Bill Moen Jr.** “By engaging 17-year-olds in the democratic process from the outset, we are ensuring

that their perspectives are considered in the selection of candidates who will represent them and their communities.”

“This legislation is a reflection of our commitment to cultivating an informed and active citizenry,” **said Assemblyman Paul Moriarty.** “The votes of these young individuals will help us develop a more representative and responsive government.”

“By allowing 17-year-olds to vote in the primary election, we are empowering all eligible general election voters to have a say in who their elected officials will be,” **said Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli.** “It is our sincere hope that by giving these youths the ability to vote before they turn 18, we are setting them up for a lifetime of participation in the democratic process.”

“Meaningfully engaging young people in elections makes our democracy stronger and more inclusive,” **said Jesse Burns, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey.** “We applaud Governor Murphy, the legislative sponsors and the Legislature for championing this critical legislation. The League of Women Voters looks forward to empowering and educating these new voters as they prepare to participate in their first primary.”

“New Jersey continues to make voting more accessible to its voters with this bill allowing qualified youth voters to participate in the primary election,” **said Uyen “Winn” Khuong, Executive Director, Action Together New Jersey.** “Thanks to the vision and tenacity of Senator Zwicker and the support and leadership of the state Legislature and Governor Murphy, we will be able to engage youth voters earlier which hopefully leads to a lifelong habit of voting. Every legislative district statewide stands to benefit from this law.”

“Our democracy is stronger when more people, especially young people, participate,” **said Micauri Vargas, Associate Counsel of the Democracy & Justice Program at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.** “Allowing 17-year-olds who will be 18 years old by the next general election to participate in the primaries is a common-sense way to expand our democracy and create more lifelong voters in New Jersey. We are thrilled to see this policy signed into law, and look forward to its implementation.”

Governor Phil Murphy

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