

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Visits Hoboken High School, Highlights Legislation Allowing 16 and 17-Year-Olds to Vote in Local School Board Elections

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HOBOKEN – During a visit to Hoboken High School, Governor Phil Murphy today reiterated his support of legislation, S3240/A4369, that would enable 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in their local school board elections.

Joined by the legislation's first prime sponsors, Senator Raj Mukherji and Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker, the Governor participated in an AP Government and Politics lesson on the foundational documents of the United States of America. Following the class, the Governor spoke to students about the importance of civic engagement and the power of making one's voice heard at the polls.

"I am constantly amazed by New Jersey's remarkable young people, and I believe they deserve the opportunity to meaningfully engage with our democratic system. In New Jersey, we have made it a priority to expand access to the vote by instituting early in-person voting and establishing online voter registration, among other critical reforms, because all eligible voters should have the opportunity to cast their ballots in our elections," **said Governor Murphy**. "Local school board elections directly impact the day-to-day lives of 16 and 17-year-old students, and we have the opportunity to instill in them the lifelong value of voting. Casting your ballot is a simple and effective way to help shape the future. I look forward to the day this bill lands on my desk."

This legislation would build on the Governor's efforts to enfranchise young people in New Jersey. Earlier this year, Governor Murphy signed the "[New Voter Empowerment Act](https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/20240104b.shtml) (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/20240104b.shtml>)," 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.

Sponsors of [S3240/A4369](https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S3240) (<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S3240>) include Senators Raj Mukherji and Brian Stack along with Assemblywomen Cleopatra Tucker and Jessica Ramirez.

 Back

“By enfranchising 16- and 17-year-olds – the voters most directly impacted by local school board decisions – we can address chronically low voter turnout in school board elections and improve long-term voter participation by instilling the habit in teenagers, while counteracting diminishing civic engagement and levels of trust,” **said Senator Raj Mukherji**. “Data from the various other U.S. and foreign jurisdictions that have done this shows no harms result, while the benefits are quantifiable.”

“Giving 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote in school board elections will encourage early civic engagement and empower students to have a direct say in shaping their education,” **said Senator Brian Stack**. “Student’s perspectives offer us valuable insight and deserve to be a part of the process.”

“Local elections matter and if we could empower our youth to vote in school board elections, we could ensure their voices are heard in decisions that directly affect them,” **said Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker**. “This bill would be a vital step in guiding them to become mindful and engaged citizens, not just during election seasons, but in their everyday lives.”

“By allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to participate in school board elections, we would foster their civic engagement,” **said Assemblywoman Jessica Ramirez**. “Education is designed to prepare students for real-world experiences; if we could get teens involved in the local voting process, we could make a deep impact in their understanding of how democracy works.”

“Supporting 16 year-olds right to vote is an important step in expanding our democracy and building a lifelong habit of participating in elections. Young people are best positioned to make decisions about the issues that effect them. Just as NJAIJ supports efforts for same day voter registration, extended early voting, and New Jersey’s own Voting Rights Act to protect language minorities at the polls, we proudly stand in support of this legislation to ensure diverse voices receive their fair share of influence and representation,” **said Erik Cruz Morales, Policy and Advocacy Manager with the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice**.

“The number one question our nonprofit gets around election time is ‘Who do I vote for for the school board?’ School board candidates rarely have public information on who they are and why they are running. This persistent dearth of information from the candidates at the school board level is concerning for everyone. As direct stakeholders, students need to have a voice in the election of those decision-makers and empowering them with the vote will effectively cause candidates to be public with why they are running and what they would do if elected. This legislation also importantly presents an effective opportunity for young people to develop a habit of voting,” **said Uyen “Winn” Khuong, Executive Director, Action Together New Jersey**.

“Governor Murphy is setting a national example in his unwavering commitment to youth voting rights & generational equity. Vote16USA applauds Governor Murphy for taking this monumental step toward building a more inclusive, representative and just democracy. This bold move signals a powerful commitment to ensuring that young people are enfranchised and no longer excluded from school board decisions that affect their futures,” **said LaJuan Allen, Director of Vote16USA at Generation Citizen**.

“It’s time we recognize that Newark’s success in lowering the voting age is just the beginning. Our youth are ready and eager to shape the future of their education and communities. Passing this legislation statewide will give 16- and 17-year-olds the power to lead, participate, and influence decisions that directly affect their lives. Let’s expand this transformative change across New Jersey

and make our democracy more inclusive, representative, and stronger than ever," **said Amanda A. Ebokosia, Founder and CEO of The Gem Project, Inc.**

"Our democracy is stronger – and New Jersey is stronger – when more people, especially our young people, are engaged," **said Micauri Vargas, Associate Counsel of the Democracy & Justice Program at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.** "Young people are passionate and deserve a voice about issues that directly affect their lives every day. That's why we're proud to stand today with Gov. Murphy in support of advancing S3240/A4369, a historic bill that would make New Jersey the first state in the country to allow 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections."

"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 and we urge all lawmakers to support S3240/A4369," **said ACLU-NJ Policy Director Sarah Fajardo.**

"The Youth Voter 16 effort represents a bold and forward-thinking step towards a more inclusive and representative democracy. By lowering the voting age to 16, we can empower the next generation of citizens, enhancing civic engagement, representation, and education," **said Rev. Dr. Charles F. Boyer, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Salvation and Social Justice and Pastor of Greater Mount Zion AME Church in Trenton.** "I'm reminded of how many of the champions of voting rights during the civil rights era were teenagers who organized in Black churches. Houses of worship, schools, communities, and lawmakers must work together to prepare young people for civic engagement and the democratic process."

"Allowing 16- and 17-year olds to vote in school board elections is a way to strengthen our democracy and demonstrate to youth that they deserve a say over who makes decisions about their lives, safety, and education, since students are most directly impacted by the decisions school board members make. Voting is also a habit, so enabling 16- and 17-year olds to develop this habit of voting earlier in life will also increase the chances of them becoming lifelong voters," **said Raisa Rubin-Stankiewicz, State Policy Lead for March for Our Lives New Jersey.**

"In 1957, the Little Rock 9 integrated Central High School," **said the NAACP New Jersey State Conference Youth and College Division.** "Their ages ranged from 15 to 17. If youth can fight for civil rights, then we most certainly can vote for our civil rights. By supporting Vote 16 legislation, Governor Murphy is supporting youth empowerment, and giving them a voice in shaping the future they will inherit. Lowering the voting age is not just about democracy. It is about recognizing the capabilities and perspectives of young people who are already engaged and affected by decisions made today."

"Vote 16 is a way to gather youth in local politics, introducing them to the truth that their voice truly holds power. By providing youth a space to share concerns, stories, and above all else experiences, new perspectives can be brought to the table, allowing all sides to be seen and recognized," **said Ahmed Abdellatif, 17 years old and a Senior at Elizabeth High School and youth representative from Make the Road.** "To allow 16 and 17 year olds in high school to vote, we can truly demonstrate what it means to make a difference, even in a world where it may seem it's impossible to do. Our problems have solutions, and we can help find them too. We deserve to participate in elections to vote for someone who is committed to finding solutions and fulfilling the needs of ALL students. Lowering the voting age for school board elections will make this happen!"

Governor Phil Murphy

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[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet\)](#)

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[Office of Equity \(/governor/admin/equity/\)](#)

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[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca\)](#)

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Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](#)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](#)

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[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](#)

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[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](#)

News & Events

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[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation](#)

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[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

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