



Expanding the Youth Electorate in Arizona with Preregistration

Arizona's state legislators should support legislation that allows 16 and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. A preregistered voter's registration becomes active upon turning 18 years of age. Preregistration for 16 and 17-year-olds is an important step in addressing underrepresentation among youth in Arizona's electorate. Several factors demonstrate why preregistration legislation is necessary.

Unequal Representation

Arizona's youth are underrepresented in the state's registered and voting electorate, even as Arizona ranks 40th out of all states for voter registration at 68.9%.¹

- As of November 2008, Arizona citizens 18 to 30 years old were registered to vote at rate 5 points lower than the general voting-eligible Arizona population.²
- In 2008, Arizona citizens 18 to 30 years old turned out to vote at a rate 12 percentage points lower than the general voting-eligible Arizona population.

The Impact of Preregistration Could be Substantial

Preregistration policies have the ability to increase the electoral participation of youth in Arizona, which could improve Arizona's overall voter registration and turnout rates.

- There are an estimated 191,000 16 and 17-year-old citizens in Arizona.³
- If preregistered at the same rate as their 18 to 30-year-old counterparts, there would have been over 122,000 preregistrants in Arizona as of November 2008.
- According to a recent analysis of Florida and Hawaii, two states that have implemented preregistration policies, those who preregistered were more likely to turnout to vote than those who registered after turning 18 years-old.⁴

Preregistration is a Low Cost but High Reward Policy

This legislation also can be implemented at low cost.⁵ Implementation costs would only include:

- Making small changes to the voter registration form and to any voter registration software and online resources;
- Informing voter registration agencies of the changes and providing the updated materials; and
- Processing the additional new voter registrations generated through preregistration.

While these costs are low, the potential rewards of preregistration are high.

- Preregistration has the potential to engage young voters early on as electoral participants.
- Preregistered youth would be likely to register through the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) or online, which would reduce voter registration errors.

Preregistration has broad support

- The states of Hawaii, Florida, North Carolina, and California as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have passed preregistration laws.
- Several states are considering preregistration, including New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

Arizona's legislature should follow the lead of such states as Florida and North Carolina and allow 16 and 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote.

¹ See Doug Hess and Jody Herman's report *Representational Bias in the 2008 Electorate*, available at www.projectvote.org.

² Unless noted otherwise, data come from Project Vote's analysis of the November 2008 Current Population Survey.

³ Due to the small sample size, the margin of error for this figure is large, at about +/- 14%.

⁴ Michael McDonald, *Voter Preregistration Programs*, available at http://elections.gmu.edu/Preregistration_Report.pdf.

⁵ See Ari Savitzky's testimony before the Rhode Island senate, available at <http://fairvote.org/ri/?page=2227>.



Commonly Asked Questions About Preregistration

Why should I support preregistration legislation?

Arizona's youth are underrepresented in the state's registered and voting electorate.⁶ Preregistration of 16 and 17-year-olds has been shown to improve registration and turnout rates among those who have preregistered as compared to those who registered after turning 18 years of age.⁷ Arizona could help improve its overall voter registration and turnout performance and reduce the underrepresentation of youth in the electorate by enacting preregistration for its estimated 191,000 16 and 17-year-old citizens.⁸

States like Florida, Hawaii, and North Carolina have proven that preregistration programs can successfully prepare 16 and 17-year-old citizens to become engaged voters. Arizona's legislature should follow the lead of these states and allow 16 and 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote.

What would preregistration cost?

Preregistration legislation can be implemented at low cost.⁹ Implementation costs include making small changes to the voter registration form and to any voter registration software and online resources, informing voter registration agencies of the changes and providing updated materials, and processing the additional new voter registrations generated through preregistration.

The cost of preregistration is potentially very small; especially given that it would engage young voters early on as electoral participants. Maricopa County, Arizona, reported that processing voter registration applications costs on average \$0.83 per paper registration and \$0.03 per online registration.¹⁰ If preregistered youth were to register online, the cost for processing 122,000 new preregistrations could be as low as \$3,660.

Will preregistered voters move when they turn 18, thereby nullifying their preregistrations?

While 18-year-olds may move slightly more than the general public, they move much less frequently than citizens in their mid-to-late 20's. Eighty-three percent of 18-year-old citizens remain at their current address for at least one year. This rate is just slightly lower than the general voting-eligible public, 87 percent of whom remain at their current address for at least one year. By contrast, only 66 percent of 25-year-old citizens remain at their current address for at least one year.

Furthermore, preregistrations remain valid on the voter rolls at a rate similar to the general voting-eligible public. Based on a study of preregistration programs in Hawaii and Florida, preregistrations are purged at a rate only 2 percentage points higher than new regular registrants.¹¹

⁶ Unless noted otherwise, data come from Project Vote's analysis of the November 2008 Current Population Survey.

⁷ Op. Cit. Michael McDonald.

⁸ Due to the small sample size, the margin of error for this figure is large, at about +/- 14%.

⁹ Op. Cit. Ari Savitzky.

¹⁰ See The Pew Center on the States' Issue Brief *Bringing Elections into the 21st Century: Voter Registration Modernization*, available at http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/Voter_Registration_Modernization_Brief_web.pdf

¹¹ Op. Cit. Michael McDonald.