



Abolish the Voting Age Limit

America is at a tipping point. For the first time in American history the next generation of Americans may not live as well as their parents. For too long, policymakers have kicked the can of indebtedness and unsustainable entitlement programs down the road. Today's children will be left holding a bill that they will not be able to pay.



The voting age restriction is arbitrary and archaic. It should be abolished.

The legal voting age used to be 21, but was reduced to 18 with the 26th amendment, which was ratified in 1971. Eighteen is really just a number picked out of a hat (just as twenty-one was before that). The counter arguments to abolishing the voting age can find no support in today's laws or even the principles of the Constitution. I'll attempt to take down each argument against abolishing the voting age. From here on out, "youth" will refer to the entire under-18 population.

1. Youth don't have the cognitive ability to vote.

First, this is a blanket statement that does not apply to the vast majority of youth. The implications of this statement are laughable: do youth suddenly acquire the cognitive ability to vote the moment they turn eighteen? "Youth" are not a monolithic group, they are individuals. Some are smarter and have higher levels of thinking at a younger age than others.

Second, even if it were true that no one younger than 18 had as developed cognitive abilities as adults, it still would not be enough cause to deny youth the vote. No citizen adult can be turned away from the polls because of their lack of cognitive abilities.

2. Youth are not informed enough to vote.

Once again, do youth suddenly become more informed the moment they turn 18? What about the thousands of proactive youth who volunteer for political campaigns? Incredibly, today's campaign finance laws do not explicitly bar donors based on age. Youth are in the ludicrous situation of being able to contribute to candidates...whom they cannot vote for! Youth, like all other citizens, should be able to do both.

And don't forget about the Constitution. It is obviously unconstitutional to prevent a citizen from voting because of how informed, or uninformed, they may be.

3. Youth can't think for themselves and will vote the way their parents or guardians tell them to vote.

This argument is both insulting and ironic. First, who is anyone to say whether someone else can or cannot think for themselves? What does "thinking for yourself" even mean? Coming to your own conclusions? That's hardly the reality for the vast majority of people, both youth and adults. Point is, our ideas and even the way we think is hardly a product of only our own efforts. When we "think for ourselves" it's not just our minds but also our experiences doing the thinking. This is true across all ages.

The irony of this argument is that the primary factor deciding how 18-30 year olds vote is...how their parents voted! And again, the Constitution: it is unconstitutional to prevent a citizen from voting based on how they are influenced.

4. What about infants and toddlers? You can't possibly think that they should vote?

Outside the freak possibility of infants or toddlers who have the motor skills to actually make it inside a voting booth, current voting laws would make it highly unlikely that infants or toddlers would make it inside the voting booth--but NOT because of their age! It is illegal to physically coerce someone into voting in a certain manner just as it is illegal for someone to fill out a voting card for somebody else except in cases of disabilities (and youth is not a disability).

So, abolishing the voting age limit would not suddenly lead to over-zealous parents taking their infants' hands and guiding it through the ballot. That would be illegal. But, conceivably, if a two and a half year old could, through his own abilities, enter a voting station, provide the requisite information to the polling officers, access the voting booth (with the help of a step stool) and successfully fill out the ballot, then, on principle, there is no reason he or she should not be allowed to vote.

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In Contrarian is a blog hosted by Joshua Alvarez where he discusses politics, culture, and society