

HB246, Voter Preregistration Age Shift
Legislature State Affairs Committee
Tuesday, April 9th, 2024
Region 6 Student Council

We are the Region 6 student council. The Region 6 student council is a board of student representatives from around Interior Alaska who are involved in their school, community, and state. Our students are cultivated and organized to be one body working for a better Alaska regardless of what school they attend. Region 6 is a part of a larger organization known as The Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG). You might recognize that name as the organization that organized and promoted the statewide student walkout. Each spring and fall Region 6 attends AASG conferences and debates current issues that are happening in our communities. One of the issues which continually is mentioned each and every conference is the lack of voter education and voter turnout in the state of Alaska.

This past fall we wrote and sponsored a resolution for the Fall Conference seeking to change the way we elect our executive officials within AASG to match the election system voted on in Ballot Measure 2 (Rank choice voting). Our goal with this resolution was to promote voter education and literacy within our youth in an environment where they would be able to get comfortable with it prior to voting in an actual election. Since then we have focused on maintaining a strong civic presence in our community and our next step was bringing forth HB246 to be discussed within AASG (April 18-21).

House Bill 246 permits preregistration for 16-year-olds as an alternative to 90 days prior to when an individual turns 18. Through rigorous discussion and debate our students researched, and brought forth arguments, and positive criticism of a bill that supports our voter rights instead of restricting them. We believe that allowing preregistration when a youth turns 16 allows for more time to be given to our youth population prior to voting. The majority of support for this bill within Region 6 came from our Senior students who admitted that their schedule with school, extracurricular activities, and personal matters, has restricted them and made them forget preregistration even exists. If we were to lower the age to 16, we

believe thoroughly that it would give time for minors to preregister in advance so that when they do become of age they can complete their civic duty and vote without having to worry about registration on top of a multitude of other activities occurring in young adult life.

Eighteen States already including Washington DC permit preregistration beginning at 16. Although cost might be a factor as shown in Colorado where it was estimated at \$572,112 in 2013. Additionally, the cost of returned mailings to this mobile population can be significant. Regardless of these additional costs, a series of studies have shown that preregistration increases voter turnout by a significant amount. In the 2016 election, only 17.2% of Alaskans showed up to the polls.

Region 6 student council firmly believes that HB246 will achieve higher levels of voter turnout, civic engagement, and youth voter literacy. We support this bill as we believe that it is our responsibility as leaders of our community to advocate for our own and future generations of Alaskan and American Voters.

-Region 6 Student Council

