



# Representative Andi Story

## Alaska State Legislature

### House District 3

Upper Mendenhall Valley

Haines

Klukwan

Gustavus

Skagway

Member

House Education

Member

House State Affairs

### Contact

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### Sponsor Statement House Bill 246 Version A April 15, 2024

**"An Act relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of ages and providing for an effective date."**

House Bill 246 would promote democracy in our next generation of Alaskans by introducing high school students to voter pre-registration before they turn 18 years old. Early voter registration has been proven to heighten youth awareness of the importance of exercising their right to vote in a working democracy, not only for the students, but in their families and communities. Dinner table discussions of our national, state and local governing process and issues of the day are vital to growing the next generation of informed Alaskan voters.

HB 246 permits citizens who are at least 16 years old to pre-register to vote. In accordance with existing statute, they would then become eligible to be placed on the voting rolls 90 days before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Current statute allows Alaskans who are 17 years old to be able to register to vote within 90 days of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Starting this process at 16 years old expands the period of time in which young Alaskans are aware of the electoral rights they will have upon turning 18, so they have more opportunity to develop the habits needed to be informed voters.

Twenty-three other states plus the District of Columbia offer pre-registration to 16 and 17-year olds. Young voter participation has increased in these states, a habit that will result in lifelong voters. 36.42% of Alaska's population (44.37% of registered voters) cast ballots in the last general election. This bill can bring that percentage up by building awareness, at an early age, of the importance of voting. This bill will also encourage families, communities and educators to promote civic engagement resulting in newfound focus and helping to ensure all Alaskan eligible citizens register to vote.

I respectfully ask for support in the passage of HB 246.