



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON

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Susan Albright, City Council President  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

Dear President Albright & Honorable Members of the City Council,

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) Board of Directors, I am writing in support of docket item #494-20 *Request for a Home Rule Petition to provide legal voting rights in municipal elections for residents aged 16 & 17 years old.*

The LWVN supports the Home Rule Position based on the following positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA).

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen's right that must be guaranteed. (LWVUS) (1982) The 1986 LWVUS Convention affirmed an essential element for protecting the right to vote was encouraging participation in the political process. The 1990 convention affirmed that the LWVUS should continue emphasis on protecting the right to vote by working to increase voter participation.

We think that lowering the voting age is a logical follow-on step after the passage and signing of [An Act to Promote & Enhance Civic Engagement](#). "Civics education is about both learning and doing, and effective civic engagement is not simply about advocacy or action, it's about listening, questioning, respectful dialogue, and compromise..." **said Education Secretary James Peyser.** **In addition,** [research](#) shows that those who vote at an early age develop the habit of voting thus leading them to becoming regular voters. Many 18-year-olds change where they live as they go off to higher education and change their address, often out of state, making voting a bit more difficult. So, starting this good habit of civic involvement and social responsibility earlier makes tremendous sense

Additionally, the LWVMA, through its research, planned to use the following statement in support of the [Empower Act](#) in February 2019:

Engaging voters as early as possible tends to produce life-long voters. Allowing teens to vote in local elections would increase their interest (and maybe their parents' interest) in local issues. The argument could especially be made that high school students should be allowed to vote in school committee elections that directly affect them.

In summary, the LWVN believes that engaging younger voters is an important step that the City Council and the Massachusetts State Legislature can take to increase voter participation in our municipal elections. Therefore, we ask that you please vote *YES* on docket item #494-20 *Request for a Home Rule Petition to provide legal voting rights in municipal elections for residents aged 16 & 17 years old.*

Sincerely,

*Marcia Johnson*

Marcia Johnson  
President, League of Women Voters, Newton