

In the Year Two Thousand and Eighteen

Upon the recommendation of the Northampton Mayor's Youth Commission and Councilor William H. Dwight

R-18.097 A RESOLUTION
TO LOWER THE VOTING AGE FOR NORTHAMPTON MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Sponsored by the Northampton Mayor's Youth Commission and Councilor William H. Dwight

WHEREAS, the right to vote is elemental to democracy and that right should be protected and guaranteed to all qualified citizens, and

WHEREAS, sixteen and seventeen-year olds possess the same critical analytic intelligence as eighteen-year-olds, and

WHEREAS, In Massachusetts, sixteen-year-olds have been deemed able to consent to sexual intercourse, obtain a learner's permit and driver's license, get married with parental consent, work a full-time job and pay taxes, and

WHEREAS, Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Scotland, Switzerland lowered their voting age to 16 for municipal and, in some cases national elections, and studies showed that the younger voters were no less informed than their older counterparts, and

WHEREAS, the largest portion of Northampton's municipal budget is the school budget, and

WHEREAS most people voting in Northampton did not go through the modern Northampton Public School system, but most 16 year olds living in Northampton currently are in that school system, giving them an important and unique perspective on school issues, and

WHEREAS, studies have shown sixteen-year-olds have been the largest age demographic to closely follow certain votes, such as following the Scottish referendum to leave the United Kingdom, and

WHEREAS, early voter engagement increases civic participation later in life, which is vital to a democracy, and

WHEREAS, Turnout among all voters in the United States is decreasing, and a push to vote is much needed for younger citizens, and

WHEREAS, younger citizens are demonstrating their desire to influence the government that serves them by demonstrating for sensible laws to prevent gun violence, and

WHEREAS, expanding suffrage to people who previously were not able to vote is good for democracy by every measure, and

WHEREAS Massachusetts legislation has advanced a civic education requirement to promote critical thinking and participation among younger people, and

WHEREAS 16 year olds may now pre-register to vote in Massachusetts, which may provide a logistical framework for their local participation.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the sponsors call upon the Northampton City Council to petition the Massachusetts Legislature to allow the City of Northampton to establish a minimum voting age for residents of Northampton of sixteen years for all municipal elections.