

Wilmington, Delaware
March 19, 2020

#4786

WHEREAS, about 50.8 million students attend public schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics; and

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Dixon**

WHEREAS, voting in local, state and federal elections is a core right, an obligation of citizenship and a primary vehicle to ensure the United States remains a government by and for the people; and

Co-Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Harlee**

WHEREAS, in 1971, the 26th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was adopted, lowering the voting age to 18; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 16.9 million youth voters became eligible in 2016 to vote in their first presidential election; and

WHEREAS, data from Pew Research Center indicates that people between the ages of 18 and 35 are now as large a political force as the Baby Boomer generation, comprising more than 31 percent of the overall electorate; and

WHEREAS, voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election dipped to its lowest point in two decades with only about 53 percent of voting-age citizens participating; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the enactment of the National Voter Rights Act of 1993, any U.S. citizen residing in the State of Delaware, who meets the eligibility requirements, is afforded the opportunity to register to vote while obtaining or renewing a driver license. The Delaware Department of Elections and Department of Motor Vehicles capture a portion of 16- and 17-year-old voting pre-registrations and 18-year-old voter registrations through their State ID Voter Registration Program. Approximately 600 16- and 17-year-old Delawareans enroll in this program monthly. However, according to the State's data, only 500 of 8,900 of the State's current queue of citizens who are pre-registered to be automatically registered upon reaching the required age requirement are Wilmingtonians; and

WHEREAS, while organizations such as the Delaware League of Women Voters are widely credited with providing voter education, pre-registration and registration services to teens in Delaware’s schools, there is no mandate requiring school districts to ensure that all students statewide have access to these services through the school where they are enrolled; and

WHEREAS, the lack of participation in the electoral process deprives individuals and communities of agency, voice and representation; and

WHEREAS, as a partner in the struggle for educational justice and increased civil participation across the state of Delaware and the United States of America, Wilmington City Council has the responsibility to educate and empower students and citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, that we strongly encourage the Delaware General Assembly to embark on an ongoing voter registration drive for eligible high school students and others eligible to vote, wherein Delaware School Districts are the leading educational agency in their duty to address voter registration opportunities as a part of an eligible student’s transition to adult, civic life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wilmington City Council will seek to work with our community and civil rights partners to increase voter education, registration and participation, and will educate, assist and empower those who, though ineligible to vote, need to understand their individual rights as well as the roles and responsibilities of active citizen engagement.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution encourages the Delaware General Assembly to develop and enforce processes by which Delaware public and charter schools would offer voter pre-registration and registration to eligible high school students via partnerships between school districts, municipalities and advocacy organizations.