

Youth Voting Rights Act

Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Nikema Williams

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment—formally ratified on July 1, 1971—prohibits the denial of the right to vote on account of age for all citizens aged 18 or older. But over fifty years after its ratification, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment’s promise remains [unfulfilled](#). Young voters participate in elections at [lower rates](#) than voters in older age cohorts. Their [provisional ballots](#) and [mail-in ballots](#) are rejected at disproportionate rates. And they routinely face [serious obstacles](#) to voter registration and in-person voting.

The *Youth Voting Rights Act* is comprehensive legislation to enforce the Twenty-Sixth Amendment and expand youth access to voting. Voting is a fundamental right in any democracy, as [bipartisan](#) supermajorities in Congress and the states nearly unanimously recognized when the United States adopted the Twenty-Sixth Amendment in the fastest ratification process in American history. Specifically, the bill would:

- **Empower individuals and the government to enforce the Twenty-Sixth Amendment.** The bill creates a private right of action to enforce the Twenty-Sixth Amendment and establishes a national standard of review for such lawsuits.
- **Expand voter registration services at public colleges and universities.** The bill designates offices at all public institutions of higher education as “voter registration agencies” under the *National Voter Registration Act of 1993*, imposing voter registration obligations on these institutions.
- **Allow young people in every state to pre-register to vote before turning 18.** To ensure that young people can vote as soon as they turn 18, the bill requires states to establish pre-registration processes for 16- and 17-year-olds and allows states to expand their processes to youth younger than 16.
- **Require institutions of higher education to have on-campus polling places.** The bill ensures the availability of polling places on campuses of institutions of higher education, removing one of the most significant barriers to youth voting access.
- **Prohibit durational residency requirements for all federal elections.** The bill extends the *Voting Rights Act’s* protections against durational residency requirements and absentee voting limitations to all federal elections, not only elections for President and Vice President, and codifies the right to vote from a college domicile.
- **Guarantee that states accept student IDs to meet voter-identification requirements.** The bill mandates the acceptance of student IDs to meet state voter-identification requirements in federal elections.
- **Create a grant program dedicated to youth involvement in elections.** The bill creates a grant program for states to encourage youth involvement in elections, including through pre-registration, updated civics curricula, and a paid fellowship for young persons to work with state and local officials to support youth civic and political engagement.
- **Gather data on youth voter registration and election participation.** The bill requires the federal government to study voter registration, absentee voting, and provisional voting trends by age and race to inform efforts to improve youth involvement in elections.