

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Hearing on SB 92
Transcript of Testimony

Thursday, February 14, 2008

Senators—As a high school student in Montgomery County, I would like to voice my strong support of SB 92, Sen. Raskin’s Youth Voter Registration Bill. I represent a broad coalition of students from across the political spectrum that have come together to recognize the importance of this legislation. I speak on behalf of Julie Chang (Chairman, Teenage Republicans of Maryland) and Tiffany Ho (Chairman, Teenage Democrats of Maryland).

Young people are engaged in and excited about politics. We are more organized than ever before. We are turning out in record numbers. We are a growing political force and I thank those who have helped to create this level of involvement. Just two days ago, many of us had the privilege of voting in our very first election. But due to the complicated and at times unreliable registration process, the past few months have been marked by disappointment, then excitement, and then confusion for many seventeen year-olds.

I must simplify the registration process to increase voter turnout and thus grow into an even stronger and healthier democracy. In Montgomery County, I pulled together voter registration drives on very short notice and registered just over 1000 students in only a few days. Imagine the turnout that I will get next election if I take a few steps to make registration more convenient for students. A longer registration period will lead to more voters registering as the Board of Elections will have more time to run drives at schools. With more registrations, I’ll have a larger group of enthusiastic and idealistic youth educating themselves on the candidates and issues.

I must assure that students are not prevented from voting simply because they have no partisan affiliation. Seventeen year-olds are mature enough to vote for the next president, thus they should certainly be able to vote in their local school board election. In fact, students probably know *more* than the average voter about their board of education candidates.

I come to you first as a student seeking a more amicable process for registering young voters. The response I have had from average students – the teenagers who are supposedly “disillusioned with politics” – has been overwhelmingly positive. I can assure you that the vast majority of students would not hesitate to support this legislation.

I urge you to enact SB 92.

Thank you for your time,

Eric Knudson