



“The Way
Democracy Will Be”

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March 20, 2007

Assembly Member Mullin
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0019

Dear Assembly Member Mullin:

I am writing on behalf of FairVote, a non-partisan election reform and pro-democracy organization headquartered in Takoma Park, MD. We have field representatives in California, who have worked on a number of voting rights and election reform issues in San Francisco, Oakland and Davis. FairVote supports Assembly Bill 183, introduced by Assembly Member Coto.

Ensuring that every young person receives an opportunity to register to vote before they leave high school should be a priority for the state of California. FairVote advocates for universal registration, where the government shares the responsibility of voter registration with its citizens. The factors that determine if a student will register to vote are largely socioeconomic and based on his or her parent's voting behavior. AB 183 will move in the right direction by giving all students, regardless of their parent's income or voting habits, a chance to participate in the democratic process.

For the first time in recent history, the number of registered voters in California has dipped below 70 percent, which is lower than the national average. Registration rates among young people are even lower. With the adoption of AB 183, the California Legislature has an opportunity to combat this negative trend and improve participation among its citizens.

Although registering to vote does not guarantee participation, statistics show that the vast majority of those registered actually do turnout on Election Day. Over 88 percent of registered voters (nationwide) and 81 percent of registered 18-24-year-olds voted in the 2004 presidential election. In addition, young people who vote in the first election for which they are eligible are more likely to continue voting for life. Put another way, voting is habit-forming. Giving all students an opportunity to register to vote before they graduate from high school will provide more young people with a chance to cast a ballot when they are eligible.

Assembly Member Coto's proposal will provide the next generation of Californians an equal opportunity to participate in our democracy as citizens of the United States of America.

Thank you,

Adam Fogel
Right to Vote Director

cc: Assembly Member Coto

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