

1 [Urging to Lower San Francisco's Legal Voting Age to 16 years of age]

2 **Resolution urging the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to lower San Francisco's**
3 **legal voting age to sixteen in municipal and school district elections**

4 WHEREAS, Upon turning 16, young people can drive, work without limitations on
5 hours, pay taxes, take classes on government in school, are subject to adult criminal charges,
6 and yet are denied the right to vote; and

7 WHEREAS, Young people often feel excluded from being engaged in their government
8 and are underrepresented in local government; and

9 WHEREAS, On September 15, 2014, the United Nations declared 2014's International
10 Day of Democracy theme to be "Engaging Young People on Democracy," calling for countries
11 around the world to increase their efforts to engage young people in their democratic
12 processes;¹ and

13 WHEREAS, Extending voting rights to youth of 16 years of age would empower young
14 people to become engaged in our local government; and

15 WHEREAS, With the right to vote, young people would increase their knowledge and
16 interest in politics and the issues directly affecting them; and

17 WHEREAS, 16 year olds possess roughly the same political knowledge as 21 year
18 olds and come close to the average for all adults;² and

19 WHEREAS, Young people who vote will make voting habitual, as voting is a life-long
20 practice begun once one casts their first vote;³ and

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22 ¹ The United Nations, "2014 Theme: Engaging Young People on Democracy," September 15, 2014. Accessed
23 December 6, 2014 at: <http://www.un.org/en/events/democracday/>

24 ² Hart, Daniel and Atkins, Robert, "American Sixteen- and Seventeen-Year-Olds Are Ready to Vote." *The Annals*
25 *of the American Academy of Social Science*. Accessed December 1, 2014. Accessed at:
<http://ann.sagepub.com/content/633/1/201>

³ Elias, Dinas. "The Formation of Voting Habits." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. Accessed
December 6, 2014 at:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17457289.2012.718280?tab=permissions#tabModule>

1 WHEREAS, Young voters will be more likely to continue civic engagement throughout
2 their lives than are those who begin voting later in life;⁴ and

3 WHEREAS, Having young people voting at earlier ages would increase voter turnout in
4 future elections and further stimulate interest in getting more involved in local government
5 affairs; and

6 WHEREAS, Studies have proven 16 year old voters are competent and mature enough
7 to make well-informed decisions that will influence their lives and the broader electorate;⁵ and

8 WHEREAS, Given the current age demographics in San Francisco where the average
9 age of the electorate has risen from 44.2 in 1980 to 45.8 and is projected to 47.6 by 2025,
10 expanding the electorate is an essential step in counterbalancing this aging; and

11 WHEREAS, Young people have interests and priorities that differ from those of older
12 voters and an aging electorate may neglect the interests of more diverse younger
13 generations; and

14 WHEREAS, Between 2000 and 2013, San Francisco lost about 8,000⁶ school age
15 youth and now has the lowest percentage⁷ of kids of any major U.S. city; and

16 WHEREAS, The young people impacted by these trends are best positioned to identify
17 solutions, and their political enfranchisement is a vital step toward combating family flight; and

21 ⁴ Bhatti, Yosef, and Kasper Hansen. "Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time
22 Voters." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 22, no. 4 (2012). Accessed December 29, 2014 at:
http://www.kaspermhansen.eu/Work/JEPOP_Bhatti&Hansen_2012_young.pdf.

23 ⁵ Hart and Atkins, see supra note 2

24 ⁶ Heather Knight, "Families' exodus leaves S.F. whiter, less diverse," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 10,
2013. Accessed December 12, 2014: <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Families-exodus-leaves-S-F-whiter-less-diverse-3393637.php>

25 ⁷ Aaron Sankin, "Families Flee San Francisco: City Has Lowest Percentage Of Kids Of Any Major U.S. City," *The Huffington Post; San Francisco*, March 11, 2012: Accessed December 12, 2014.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/09/families-flee-san-francisco_n_1335639.html

1 WHEREAS, The city has seen fit to make investments in the leadership and civic
2 engagement of young people through DCYF's Youth Leadership and Organizing programs,
3 Youth Empowerment Fund, and annual Youth Advocacy Day, among other initiatives; and

4 WHEREAS, thousands of SFUSD high school students have cast votes in mock
5 elections and ballot measures through the Youth Vote program, gaining exposure to the
6 electoral process and civic norms and practices; and

7 WHEREAS, On Tuesday, October 14, 2014 over 90 young people attended a Young
8 Voters Forum designed to educate youth on the various issues facing San Francisco this
9 election year and incite reflection on how the ballot might impact their lives and those of their
10 peers and family; and

11 WHEREAS, A majority of the attendees at the Young Voters Forum were under 18, yet
12 meaningfully contributed to the discussion regarding several ballot measures; and

13 WHEREAS, The non-partisan event was put on by the San Francisco Youth
14 Commission, TAYSF, San Francisco Youth Warriors, Youth Leadership Institute, Peer
15 Resources, the Student Advisory Council, and Coleman Advocates; and

16 WHEREAS, Staff from the San Francisco Department of Elections was on hand at the
17 Young Voters Forum to register new voters and recruit young people to work the polls on
18 Election Day; and

19 WHEREAS, These and many other efforts by engaged local youth leaders have been
20 very fruitful, with the city benefiting from several policy and legislative campaigns initiated and
21 led by young people all around the city, including most recently an ordinance amending the
22 health code and establishing limitations for the granting of new tobacco sales permits (File No.
23 141098⁸), which was finally passed by the Board of Supervisors on December 9, 2014; and

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25 ⁸ "Ordinance amending the Health Code by adding density, proximity, and sales establishment limitations on the
granting of new tobacco sales permits, and renumbering all sections in Article 19H; amending the Business and
Tax Regulations Code by increasing the annual license and application fees; and making environmental

1 WHEREAS, Numerous countries—Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Norway and
 2 the United Kingdom—have extended the right to vote to 16 year olds in national, state, and
 3 local elections or are considering doing so, and these efforts have resulted in higher turnout
 4 among voters ages 16-17 than among voters age 18 and older; and

5 WHEREAS, In December 2010, the Lowell, Massachusetts City Council passed a
 6 resolution petitioning the Massachusetts State Legislature to lower the city’s voting age to 17⁹
 7 and the petition is currently being considered by the Massachusetts State Legislature where it
 8 has garnered the support of several state lawmakers;¹⁰ and

9 WHEREAS, In May 2013, Takoma Park, Maryland became the first municipality in the
 10 United States to reduce its legal voting age to 16 years of age;¹¹ and

11 WHEREAS, Voter turnout among these newly enfranchised voters in Takoma Park was
 12 44 percent, as compared to the overall voter turnout which was 11 percent;¹² and

13 WHEREAS, The Scottish government allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in its
 14 referendum on declaring independence from the United Kingdom;¹³ and

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 18 findings,” adopted by the Board of Supervisors on December 9, 2014. Accessed December 12, 2014:
<https://sfgov.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=3413121&GUID=9590AFB0-D62E-4BC6-944C-3375C6D90322>

19 ⁹ United Teen Equity Equality Center (Lowell, Massachusetts), “Vote 17.” Accessed December 1, 2014:
<https://www.utec-lowell.org/actnow/vote17>

20 ¹⁰ Russell Goldman, “Mass. Teens Inch Closer to Lowering Voting Age to 17,” *ABC News*, April 19, 2012.
 Accessed December 1, 2014: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/mass-teens-inch-closer-lowering-voting-age/story?id=16166922>

21 ¹¹ Lindsay A. Powers, “Takoma Part grants 16-year-olds right to vote,” *The Washington Post*, May 14, 2013.
 Accessed December 6, 2014: http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/takoma-park-grants-16-year-olds-right-to-vote/2013/05/14/b27c52c4-bccd-11e2-89c9-3be8095fe767_story.html

22 ¹² J.B. Wogan, “Takoma Park Sees High Turnout Among Teens After Election Reform,” *Governing*, November 7,
 23 2013. Accessed December 6, 2014: <http://www.governing.com/news/headlines/gov-maryland-city-sees-high-turnout-among-teens-after-election-reform.html>

24 ¹³ The Electoral Commission Lothian Chambers, 59--63 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1RN. (2014). *The*
 25 *2014 Scottish Independence Voting Guide*. Accessed December 6, 2014:
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/170400/The-2014-Scottish-Independence-Referendum-Voting-Guide.pdf

1 WHEREAS, These 16 and 17 year old voters used this opportunity to exercise their
 2 newfound right to vote en masse, with over 90 percent of 16 and 17 year old voters registering
 3 to vote in the Scottish independence referendum;¹⁴ and

4 WHEREAS, Research consistently indicates 16-17 year-olds make voting decisions
 5 based on reasoned consideration of their own and larger interests in a fashion similar to older
 6 voters;¹⁵ and

7 WHEREAS, Resolutions adopted by both the San Francisco Youth Commission
 8 (Resolution 0405-013)¹⁶ and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (File No. 051215)¹⁷ in
 9 2005 supported expanding suffrage to citizens of 16 years and older in city and county
 10 elections; and

11 WHEREAS, In 2014 the San Francisco Youth Commission adopted Resolution No.
 12 1314—02¹⁹ that called on for the Board of Supervisors and Youth-Serving Commissions to
 13 create a “Youth Voice” Policy that would allow more young people to come to testify at public
 14 meetings to voice their concerns and opinions on legislation that would directly impact them;
 15 and

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 18 ¹⁴ Eichhorn, Jan, “Will 16 and 17 year olds make a difference in the referendum?” Edinburgh: Scot Cen for Social
 Research (2014). Accessed December 29, 2014. http://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/205540/131129_will-16-and-17-years-olds-make-a-difference.pdf

19 ¹⁵ “Voting at 16: Turnout and the Quality of Vote Choice.” *Electoral Studies* 31, no. 2 (2012). Accessed
 20 December 29, 2014. [http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0261379412000212/1-s2.0-S0261379412000212-
 main.pdf?_tid=1fa2eb02-9237-11e4-a398-
 00000aacb361&acdnat=1420172798_2b922ffa143eaa9603df4a3691b93c3e](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0261379412000212/1-s2.0-S0261379412000212-main.pdf?_tid=1fa2eb02-9237-11e4-a398-00000aacb361&acdnat=1420172798_2b922ffa143eaa9603df4a3691b93c3e).

21 ¹⁶ San Francisco Youth Commission Resolution 0405—AL013 “Resolution Urging the San Francisco Board of
 22 Supervisors to Recommend to State Legislators That They Allow Local Choice, For Which City or County Could
 Permit Persons 16 years of Age or Older to Vote In City or County Elections,” adopted June 6, 2005

23 ¹⁷ See Board of Supervisor File No. 051215—Urging State Legislators to Permit Persons 16 Years of Age or
 24 Older to Vote in City and County Elections, Passed on July 21, 2005. Retrieved at:
[https://sfgov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=477237&GUID=8E3D3E05-BB1D-488F-A1D0-
 8F0B22AB0739&Options=ID|Text|&Search=538-05](https://sfgov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=477237&GUID=8E3D3E05-BB1D-488F-A1D0-8F0B22AB0739&Options=ID|Text|&Search=538-05)

25 ¹⁹ San Francisco Youth Commission Resolution 1313—02 “Resolution Urging the San Francisco Board of
 Supervisors and Youth-Serving Commissions to Support the Creation of a Youth Voice Policy,” adopted March
 3, 2014

1 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors added Rule 2.12.1²⁰ to the Board
2 of Supervisors' Rules of Order in 2014, providing more opportunities for young people to
3 meaningfully participate in public meetings; and

4 WHEREAS, Many states are enacting laws designed to severely limit communities' of
5 color and young people's voting rights, rolling back gains won through a proud history of
6 struggle on behalf of African Americans and groups of young, multiracial activists; and

7 WHEREAS, San Francisco has an opportunity to take bold action to reverse these
8 trends and stand for the political enfranchisement of young people; and

9 WHEREAS, As stated in Section 4.124 of the San Francisco City Charter, the Youth
10 Commission is charged with identifying and proposing solutions to meet the unmet needs and
11 concerns of San Francisco youth; and

12 WHEREAS, The Youth Commission believes that young people's ability to engage in
13 electoral processes that directly impact them is an unmet need; now, therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
15 Supervisors to lower San Francisco's city and school district voting age eligibility to 16 years
16 of age or older; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
18 Supervisors to urge San Francisco's elected state representatives—State Senator Mark Leno,
19 Assemblymembers Philip Y. Ting and David Chiu—to prepare legislation that would provide
20 for a state constitutional referendum to reduce the voting age to sixteen for all state elections;
21 and be it finally

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24 ²⁰ "Motion amending the Board of Supervisors Rules of Order, by adding Rule 2.12.2, to establish
25 communication procedures for hearings on matters related to the Youth Commission." San Francisco Board of
Supervisors. Accessed December 6, 2014:
<https://sfgov.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=3276905&GUID=8ACEC527-F5C4-4E6B-99FF-450D9B60A3BE>

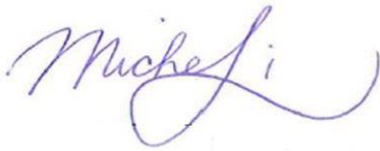
1 RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
2 Supervisors to prepare a charter amendment to relevant sections of the San Francisco
3 Charter allowing citizens of 16 years of age and older to vote and register in municipal and
4 school district elections held in the City and County of San Francisco.

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Michel Li

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2014-2015 Youth Commission Chair

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Adopted by Youth Commission January 5, 2015

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