In D.C., the Doors are Open

But just 19% of 16- and 17-year-olds are pre-registered

Los Angeles, CA -- In the District of Columbia, 16- and 17-year-olds are eligible to pre-register to vote. Pre-registration automatically registers students to vote upon their 18th birthday.

According to The Civics Center’s new analysis, as of August 2019, only 19% of 16- and 17-year-olds in D.C. are pre-registered to vote. The Civics Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes high school voter registration and civic engagement.

The District of Columbia has been regarded as a national leader for its continual investments in voter reforms that ensure voting accessibility and youth access to democracy. Since 2009, D.C. has enabled youth to engage in the electoral process by adopting voter pre-registration at 16 and allowing 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections provided that the person will be 18 before the next general election.

Over the past two years, D.C. pledged to utilize its Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds primarily on voter outreach spearheaded by the D.C. Board of Elections and a fully interactive, electronic voter registration system. In 2017, D.C. adopted automatic voter registration, which made voter registration “opt-out” instead of “opt-in.”

Despite D.C.’s success in passing reforms aimed at removing obstacles to voter participation, there is still room for improvement, especially in fully engaging youth in the electoral process.

An estimated 4% of D.C.’s 16 year-olds are pre-registered to vote, while there is a significant increase of pre-registered 17 year-olds at 35%.

“Pre-registering teens is vital to ensuring that students have an opportunity to shape their future,” said The Civics Center’s Director Laura W. Brill, a practicing attorney and former law clerk to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The Civics Center urges students to take the lead by starting clubs that promote peer-to-peer registration and is committed to supporting and guiding students through this process.

“At a time in our country, when we see states time and time again try to block people from the poll, from the ballot box, I’m really proud that in D.C. we actually are trying to make it easy as possible and get as many people registered to vote as we can,” said Ward 6 Council member Charles Allen, who introduced the automatic voter registration bill to the D.C. Council.
# District of Columbia

Based on Pre-Registration Data

## Estimates by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District of Columbia</th>
<th># pre-registered in August 2019</th>
<th>Estimated % pre-registered in August 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Year Olds</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Year Olds</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,064</strong></td>
<td><strong>19%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Based on data provided by the D.C. Board of Elections and the United States Census Bureau.

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**About The Civics Center.**  
The Civics Center is dedicated to building the foundations of youth civic participation in high schools through education, research, advocacy, and volunteer organizing. The Civics Center is a project of Community Partners, a charitable 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, please visit [www.TheCivicsCenter.org](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org).

For our reports on pre-registration in [California](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), [Colorado](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), [Oregon](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), [West Virginia](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), [Utah](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), [Delaware](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), and [Rhode Island](http://www.TheCivicsCenter.org), please see our prior posts in the links provided.

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