



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the joint Committees on Education and Law and Government to conduct public hearings to examine the low voter turnout in primary and general elections in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia was the birthplace of American democracy; and

WHEREAS, Participation in self-government through involvement in the democratic process is foundational to American society; and

WHEREAS, Voting in elections is the most direct and essential form of civic participation; and

WHEREAS, The rate of voter participation decreased between 1963 and 2011 by 52%: from around 75% of registered voters in 1963, to around 65% in 1975, to around 62% in 1983, to around 61% in 1991, to around 50 in 2003, to around 30 in 2007, and finally to around 21% of registered voters in 2011; and

WHEREAS, Only around 27% of registered voters participated in the 2015 Philadelphia mayoral primary election; and

WHEREAS, Millennials (defined as those between the ages of 18 and 34), although comprising the largest age group among registered voters, had a turnout of only 12% in the 2015 Philadelphia primary election; and

WHEREAS, The largest percentage of turnout by age demographic (among those aged 65+) remained under 50% of registered voters in the 2015 Philadelphia primary election; and

WHEREAS, Voter turnout rates in other large cities, including Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago, has also decreased substantially over the past 50 years; and

WHEREAS, 144 United States cities averaged a turnout rate of less than 21% in the year 2011; and

WHEREAS, Nationally, until the late 1960s, formal civic education often comprised up to three courses, usually civics, democracy and government, in addition to U.S. history. A recent study, "The Civic Mission of Schools," revealed a continuing trend throughout the 1970s, '80s and '90s to condense those civic education courses into a single course.

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia has an interest in fostering among its citizens a vibrant culture of participation in all levels of government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the joint Committee of Education and Law and Government is hereby authorized to conduct public hearings to examine the low voter turnout in primary and general elections in the City of Philadelphia; and be it further