

As I write this, the U.S. presidential election is still up in the air, but in California, all the state law issues are decided. This year we had propositions for everything from rent control to affirmative action; from privacy law to undoing the progress that's been made toward abolishing prisons. Although most of these measures turned out about how I might've guessed, one prop in particular really irked me.

First off, ~~and~~ ^I absolutely support anything that advances youth rights. However, when it comes to lowering the voting age, this crap about allowing some 17 year olds to vote — only those few who will turn 18 by election day — is the epitome of insulting meaninglessness. That said, well yes, of course I still think it should've passed... how not? It's unimaginable that it wouldn't pass; and yet, here we are. Yep, the progressive Golden State has flatly rejected even this watered-down, reluctant gesture that begrudgingly acknowledged the citizenship of just a tiny fraction of 17 year olds every couple of election years. One has to wonder... why would Californians find such a modest proposal so unappealing? Well, based on the few interviews I've seen (plus a lifetime of hearing the ~~same~~ ^{same old ageist} anti-logic applied to issues of youth enfranchisement), it seems many adults still claim to "fear" that younger people are, ahem, too "uninformed" or too "easily influenced" to be "safely allowed" to vote.

WHEW-WEEE... where do you even START unpacking such a massive crate of bullshit ~~as~~ all that??

Let's leave the obviously anti-democratic nature of this idiocy aside, just for a moment. I listen to these superannuated walruses babble on about "uninformed" young people, and I can't help but think, "Ok, wise one, now tell me — what do you know... about anything? Rattle me off some facts there, boomer. Let's play a round of Jeopardy, maybe?" It's crystal clear that the folks who tend to oppose younger voters aren't exactly policy wonks themselves, and

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far more often than not, what they really are is just painfully stupid. How can millions of people withhold the vote from younger people, supposedly because the young are "ignorant", yet those chauvinistic voters themselves almost certainly can't explain the electoral college; can't name more than two Constitutional amendments; and ~~can't find either North Korea or North Carolina on a map?~~ ^{can't find either North Korea or North Carolina on} a map? And they'll claim youth is "too easily influenced"? Really. Ok, let me see what you follow on Facebook or Twitter, then we'll talk about "influence".

Look, I've heard the same shitty spiel since I was ten: young ppl shouldn't get to vote because they'll just vote however their parents tell them to. First, if we're talking about anyone over about age ten — how disrespectful. It says much more about the person making the claim ^{about any young person.} ~~than about any young person.~~ And anyway, suppose it's true — why worry? Shouldn't carbon copy voters just mean larger vote totals but not different vote allocations? Don't the same candidates probably win in that scenario? Could the ~~the~~ true, unspoken objection be that young ppl won't vote in lockstep with their parents? What effects might such filial apostasy mean for the familiar and comfortable condition of near-absolute adult control over youth? Heavens.

California only offered the vote to a few nearly-18-year-olds, but I propose something much more robust — IF we're going ~~to~~ (unfortunately) continue with governance and rulers at all, then let's open the vote to ALL people, at least from age 6 or 7? Why not? IF ~~we~~ ^{parents gain} some extra representation for a few years, so what? Do we fear the parental voting bloc so much? And, with such early and meaningful participation, or at least access, won't many kids — not all, but many — become desirably "informed" and engaged in the democratic administration of what is, after all, their country too? And not just "theirs too", really, but in a sense theirs far more than ours? Might stewardship become a more common ethic where an early sense of agency and responsibility is cultivated, before 18 years of blatant disenfranchisement cultivates instead a sense of learned helplessness? Or... perhaps all of that just cuts a bit too close to our real fears: fear that the young may start to perceive themselves more as actual people, maybe even demanding — both while young and later as adults — that society stop viewing and treating youth primarily like possessions, projects, and puppets?

In any event, surely no serious person could argue that true universal suffrage will make American democracy somehow worse off, can they?