

A RESOLUTION

23-372

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

March 3, 2020

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to amend the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 to provide students with an excused absence of at least 2 hours to vote in person in any election held under the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955, or, if the student is not registered to vote in the District, in any election run by the jurisdiction in which the student is registered to vote, and to allow the educational institution to specify the hours during which the student may take leave, including by requiring that the student take leave during a period designated for early voting instead of on the day of the election.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Leave to Vote Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2020”.

Sec. 2. (a) Over the last several years, the Council has taken great strides through legislation to promote voter engagement, particularly among historically lower-turnout populations, such as young people and communities of color. The District of Columbia Board of Elections (“Board”) has also worked actively to engage students through registration drives at high schools. However, in the District’s 2018 general election, according to the Board’s data, 18- to 24-year-olds had a turnout rate of just 18% in Ward 8 and 23% in Ward 7, the lowest rates in the District.

(b) To promote voter participation among eligible students, the Council must provide accessible opportunities to vote and reduce barriers that may stand in the way. Students often must find time before or after school to vote, which is the busiest time at polls, resulting in the longest wait times. Many students must also juggle other priorities during these times, such as homework, afterschool activities, family commitments, and part-time jobs.

(c) This legislation would provide students with an excused absence from school of at least 2 hours on election day or during the early voting period in order to vote in person. In doing so, the legislation eliminates the dilemma some students may face between voting and commitments outside of school by providing an opportunity to vote during school hours.

(d) The District will hold a primary election on June 2, 2020, and a special election for Ward 2 on June 16, 2020. Therefore, there is an immediate need to allow students leave from school to vote so that they may have greater access to the polls during these elections.

**ENROLLED ORIGINAL**

Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the Leave to Vote Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 be adopted after a single reading.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.