

AMENDMENT V

Reduced Age Qualification for General Assembly Members

Summary

This amendment would lower the minimum age to serve in the Colorado General Assembly as a representative or senator from 25 to 21.

Research

Colorado's age requirement to serve in the general assembly is one of the highest, ranking with only Utah and Arizona. According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), "the average age of a Colorado legislator in 2015 was 55, a decade older than the state's average age." In 43 [states](#), the minimum age requirement for state representatives is set at either 18 or 21. About half of states have a minimum age between 25 and 30 for state senators, while the other half have a requirement of either [18 or 21](#).

Every year, the number of [young Coloradans](#) (21-25) is steadily increasing, and is projected to keep increasing for the next 20 years. That said, only 3 percent of Colorado's legislators are millennials, despite making up 32 percent of the state. Comparatively, baby boomers comprise 61 percent of legislators in Colorado, where they make up only 29 percent of the [population](#). Referendum L, a similar amendment, failed 46.5 percent to 53.5 percent in 2008.

Arguments For

- Not allowing 21- to 24-year-olds to be elected to the General Assembly is a random qualification that has no tangible effect on Colorado politics. A 21-year-old is widely considered an adult, both under the law and according to popular opinion; they can serve our country, vote, drink, and make thoughtful decisions as any adult can. Age doesn't necessarily determine maturity or competence, but nevertheless, it should be up to the voters to decide if someone is right for office.
- More and more, issues that directly impact and involve young people are being debated and decided in Colorado politics; it's only right young people have a say in those issues so their interests are represented.

Proponents

Sen. Vicki Marble (R-23), Sen. Michael Merrifield (D-11), Sen. Steve Fenberg (D-2), Rep. Kevin Van Winkle (R-43), and Rep. Jovan Melton (D-41) were the prime sponsors in the legislature. It [passed](#) the Senate 29-6 and the House 45-20. New Era Colorado supports this measure, and two issue committees are registered in favor: Let Coloradans Serve and Win the Fourth Colorado Issue Committee.

Arguments Against

- The current age requirement is appropriate. To adequately serve the interests of constituents, a representative or senator must have enough experience, just as any other job requirement.

Opponents

State Ballot Issue Committee is registered in opposition. In the legislature 24 Republican members and 2 Democratic members voted against it.

Recommendation: Support

Encouraging more young people to participate and serve in the legislature will bolster public systems and ensure a more exhaustive and diverse spectrum of perspectives is represented in the legislature. Although the overall [average age of Coloradans](#) is increasing, so is the number of young Coloradans, presenting a more diverse state. As Colorado's demographics shift, it makes sense to have our representatives shift with us. The Bell supports this measure because the economic challenges facing Coloradans are also adjusting with the changing demographics, and we need to answer that call with representatives who experience, reflect, and have solutions to these new challenges.