



Delaware House of Representatives House Majority Caucus

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VOTER PRE-REGISTRATION BILL INTRODUCED IN HOUSE

Longhurst bill would allow 16-year-olds to register to vote when getting driver's license

DOVER – With a daughter about to turn 16 years old, House Majority Whip Rep. Valerie J. Longhurst introduced legislation on Wednesday that would allow 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote when they apply for their driver's license.

House Bill 381 would permit a teenager who is applying for their driver's license at the Department of Motor Vehicle to also pre-register to vote. However, they would not be able to vote in an election until they turn 18. Current state law allows people over 18 and those who will turn 18 before the next general election to register to vote through the DMV.

“I have a daughter turning 16 soon. Teens turning 16 are coming into the age of adulthood: they are starting to drive, getting after-school jobs and planning for their future after high school,” said Rep. Longhurst, D-Bear. “These teens are the leaders of tomorrow. By making driver's licenses and pre-registering to vote available as one-stop shopping for them, we're engaging them at an early age and encouraging them to be informed and involved in the electoral process before they turn 18 so that when they're able to vote, they will.”

Rep. Longhurst noted that once a teen gets their driver's license, there is no need for them to return to the DMV for a new one until they turn 21. The legislation would eliminate the need for a separate trip to register to vote when they turn 18.

Earlier this month, Maryland's General Assembly passed similar legislation allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Rhode Island passed legislation last year allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register. Legislatures in Arizona, Georgia, Kansas and Michigan are considering pre-registration proposals for teens under 18 this year.

Rep. Longhurst's HB 381 would take effect on January 1, 2012. The bill has been assigned to the House Administration Committee.

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