



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 1, 2012

When 16-year-olds Can Vote

If they don't get wisdom from the mouths of babes, that's okay. Votes are all they really want.

In Argentina, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and her ruling Victory Front coalition have succeeded where certain American leftists have thus far failed. They have [passed a bill allowing](#) 16-year-olds to vote.

The desire to extend suffrage to younger adolescents is nothing new. A few other nations have made the move, and approximately half of U.S. states allow 17-year-olds to [vote](#) in primaries and caucuses. And some Americans would take it further. Executive director of the National Youth Rights Association, Alex Koroknay-Palicz, wants to [grant voting rights](#) to 16-year-olds; and former California state senator and then septuagenarian John Vasconcellos' (D-Santa Clara) advanced age didn't stop him from advancing our decline. Vasconcellos — famous for advocating the “self-esteem” movement — [proposed](#) in 2004 an idea called “Training Wheels for Citizenship,” which would have extended limited voting rights to kids as young as 14 (and he wanted to grant them full rights).

Quite apropos, this effort to empower the immature is supported with juvenile arguments. For example, [this](#) Debatewise.org article states, “Studies show voting is a habit that has to start early. If people don't start out as voters, they're less likely to ever vote.”

But why not then extend voting rights to seven-year-olds? After all, the formative years are thus called because that's when habits are formed. And any (good) parent knows that if you wait till adolescence to instill habits — governing manners, language, work ethic, etc. — it's too late. So perhaps it's time for a Cartoon Network constituency.

Debatewise also writes, “Since the national voting age was lowered to 18 in 1971, the voting rate among 18- to 24-year-olds has dropped.” But this is for good reason.

Their maturity level has likewise dropped.

And that's the point. Failure to vote is not the problem; in fact, it's not even just a symptom of the problem.





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It's a mitigation of it.

When people don't vote, it's entirely explainable: lack of interest. And if you don't have enough get-up-and-go to get out to the polls without prodding, it follows that you don't have the greater get-up-and-go necessary to inform yourself on the issues. This means you shouldn't be voting in the first place.

After all, did anybody ever achieve competence through disinterest? No one says, "You know, music so bored me to tears that I thought about it religiously once a year and became a maestro."

In truth, things today are backward, with kids' rights on the increase as their responsibilities decrease. There was a time when a child might become a trade apprentice at age 8 and marry at 14 or 15, but now we see grown men who'll wile away hours a day playing video games. Our modern society is stunting people's moral, emotional, and intellectual development, thus extending toddlerhood into later childhood (psychologist John Rosemond attributes the common ADD/ADHD "diagnosis" to this phenomenon), childhood into adolescence, and sometimes adolescence indefinitely. Conclusion? If anything, the voting age should be raised. Thirty sounds good to me.

However ridiculous the youth-voting arguments may be, they do reflect a wider misconception. For example, Debatewise warned, "Some researchers fear that as this generation of nonvoters ages, they will stay that way, causing a dangerous dive in voter turnout as baby boomers and older generations die out."

Of course, the obvious answer here is that they won't stay precisely that way; as they mature, they'll become more interested in adult pursuits such as politics. And what if they become more interested than their former selves but still remain less so than former generations? Then, to reiterate, disinterest is *supposed* to beget disengagement. For there is nothing "dangerous" about low turnout; the danger lies into trying to turnout the tuned out, in perpetuating the myth that greater voter participation yields a stronger republic.

Think about it: Would we entertain the notion that, somehow, air travel would improve if everyone got a chance to take the helm of a jumbo jet? Would it comfort you if, in deference to democratic principles, your brain surgeon was going to let every orderly and kitchen worker poke around inside your skull? We wouldn't dream of allowing those ignorant in the area of aeronautics or medicine to do the aforementioned, yet we encourage the politically ignorant to cast ballots.

In reality, it isn't your civic duty to vote, and it certainly isn't your civic duty to indiscriminately prod others to do so. It is your civic duty to educate yourself so you're qualified to vote — and to know who certainly is not.

Of course, it would be nice if youth-voting and other turnout-inflating initiatives were motivated simply by childlike naiveté. But it's no coincidence that their advocates are always leftists (Argentina's Kirchner legalized faux marriage), people who want others to be able to vote often; illegally; dead; and now, quite fittingly, early as well. Selling childish policies requires a childish electorate.



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