



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives

Representative Matt Gress (R-4)

Representative Austin Smith (R-29)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

Friday, January 13, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arizona Lawmakers Announce Arizona Civic Participation Act

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Today, Arizona State Representative Matt Gress (R-4), along with the youngest representatives in the Republican and Democratic caucuses, Austin Smith (R-29) and César Aguilar (D-26), and joined by several other representatives and senators, announced the Arizona Civic Participation Act – a referral to the Arizona Constitution that would lower the age of eligibility for an American citizen and Arizona resident to run for elected office in both chambers of the Arizona State Legislature from 25 years of age to 18 years of age.

On the heels of historic young voter turnout during the 2022 midterm elections, this legislation will further empower young voters looking to get more involved in the civic process while aligning Arizona’s state legislative age requirements with the rest of the country.

Currently, Arizona is tied for the highest age requirement for the State House of Representatives with only Colorado and Utah being that high. Moreover, the minimum age requirement in 12 states is set at 18 years of age to run for at least one chamber of the state legislature.

And just last year, the average age of Arizona state lawmakers was 54 years with the largest generation represented in the Arizona State Legislature being the Baby Boomer Generation – even though the largest voting demographic as of 2020 is now Generation Z and Millennials.

“This legislation is another step in engaging our state’s youth, which started with the American Civics Act of 2015,” said Representative Gress. **“Arizona’s young leaders are resilient, having overcome many personal, unprecedented challenges like a global pandemic. I’m honored to push this legislation forward that encourages more young people to participate in the legislative process and involves them more in Arizona policy.”**

Our country has benefited from young American leaders. In fact, many of our Founding Fathers were in their teenage years and early-twenties at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, including former President James Monroe (18 years old) and Alexander Hamilton (21 years old).

“Young Americans aren’t just becoming the largest demographic in the country, but the most involved. As one of the youngest members of this year’s Arizona State Legislature, part of my role is to offer different perspectives on issues affecting people from my generation – we have many young, emerging state leaders looking to positively impact our communities,” said Representative Smith. **“The Arizona Civic Participation Act will give our younger citizens the opportunity to become more meaningfully engaged in our civic process which only helps build a better future for Arizona.”**

According to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, young voter turnout in Arizona has increased 16 points (10% to 26%) from 2014 to 2018 and 18 points (33% to 51%) between 2016 and 2020.

This bill idea was brought forward by a North Valley Young Republican, Nico Delgado. His involvement reflects the thousands of Arizona’s youth who have become more involved and interested in significant policy choices that will drive the direction of the state’s economy, health, and well-being for decades.

“You’re never too young to be a patriot,” said Delgado. “If you’re old enough to serve our country in the military, you should also have the opportunity to elect peers that reflect your views and values. The Arizona Civic Participation Act will empower thousands of young Arizonans and encourage the next generation of Arizona Civic leaders to step forward now.”

###