



**The Fairfax County Democratic Committee
Calls for Increasing Teen Civic and Political Engagement by
Allowing Half-Day Student Advocacy Events**

Whereas,

Under new school board policy, middle and high school students of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are permitted to take a partial day excused absence to engage in political or civic events.

The new FCPS policy has been largely successful despite unfounded fears that serve to prevent the ability of students to express themselves.

The implementation of the new FCPS policy did not impact the rates of chronic absenteeism, nor is there any evidence of abuse, as assessed by the Virginia Department of Education School Accreditation Ratings.

Of the six FCPS middle and high schools that did not “exceed state standard” of preventing chronic absenteeism in the 2018-19 school year, only one had their score downgraded for the 2019-20 school year, and one had their score upgraded to “exceed state standard.”

As a general practice, the United States Congress and the Virginia General Assembly are in session only during the regular business hours of the week, and therefore those days of the week are the best for student activists to influence public policy.

There is a great amount of desire among students to get involved in political advocacy, but it can be difficult to do so when all of the decision-making occurs during the regular school week.

The fact that the youth vote today consistently falls behind other generations may partly be a result of the aforementioned obstructed civic engagement.

Policies such as these encourage political involvement and participation of teens which eventually translates to a more politically conscious electorate.

Increased political involvement shall help remedy the low voting rate of young people. The voices of young people should, as a principle, be heard and amplified to further the best interests of this nation.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Fairfax County Democratic Committee urges:

1. The Virginia General Assembly to pass legislation statewide amending attendance law to permit middle and high school students across Virginia to miss half a day of school to engage in civic or political events; and
2. Every Democratic member of the Virginia General Assembly to reiterate their commitment to policies that further enfranchise young activists across the Commonwealth.