

# HARVARD LAW SCHOOL STUDENT BODY FALL TERM TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN

**RESOLUTION NO.** Res-203-003

**AUTHORED BY:** Joshua Martin

**A RESOLUTION TO:** SUPPORT AN ACADEMIC HOLIDAY ON ELECTION DAY

**THE STUDENT BODY OF HARVARD LAW SCHOOL ENACTS:**

WHEREAS, Harvard Law School's mission is "To educate leaders who contribute to the advancement of justice and the well-being of society"<sup>1</sup>; AND

WHEREAS, Participating in democracy is essential to promoting the well-being of society; AND

WHEREAS, President Bacow said at Harvard's 2018 Convocation, "Your first homework assignment...if you are eligible to vote, we expect you to register, to inform yourself of the candidates and issues, and to cast a ballot"<sup>2</sup>; AND

WHEREAS, In November 2016 voter turnout among registered Harvard Graduate students only 40.1% and in November 2012 was only 29.9%<sup>3</sup>; AND

WHEREAS, Lines at polling places on Election Day in 2016 were hours long<sup>4</sup> which if replicated could cause many students to miss class or not to vote at all; AND

WHEREAS, The low turnout among student voters is problematic for the maintenance of healthy local, state and federal democracies; AND

WHEREAS, Having classes and other obligations on Election Day actively discourages students and staff not only from exercising their right to vote, but from engaging in civic participation on Election Day, such as volunteering at the polls; AND

WHEREAS, At least one other Law School now gives its students the day off for Federal 5 Elections and student governments at other schools have expressed interest in an Academic Holiday on Election Day;<sup>5</sup> AND

WHEREAS, Many HLS Student Organizations have expressed their support for such a plan;<sup>6</sup>

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, Harvard Law School Student Government Assembly calls on the Registrar, the Dean, and the Academic Affairs Committee of the University to establish an Academic Holiday on General Election Day in 2020, and amend the Schedule Guidelines to do the same on each even numbered year thereafter.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/hr/jobs-at-hls/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/politics/getting-100-percent>

<sup>3</sup> [https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/content/2012%20and%202016%20NSLVE%20Report-Harvard%20University%20\(002\).pdf](https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/content/2012%20and%202016%20NSLVE%20Report-Harvard%20University%20(002).pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/upshot/why-long-voting-lines-today-could-have-long-term-consequences.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lls.edu/academics/experientiallearning/publicinterestprobonoservices/electionengagement/>

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix

**PASSED IN THE STUDENT COUNCIL: 10/16/2019**

**VOTE TOTALS:**

17 YES

0 NO

0 ABSTAIN



**APPENDIX: List of Supportive Student Organizations**

1. HLS American Constitution Society
2. American Civil Liberties Union
3. Alliance for Reproductive Justice
4. First Class Law Students Association
5. Latter Day Saints Student Association
6. National Security and the Law Association
7. Women's Law Association Executive Board
8. HLS Lambda
9. HLS Labor and Employment Action Project
10. Harvard Graduate Student Union
11. Harvard Black Law Students Association
12. Harvard Law School Democrats
13. Equal Democracy Project