

MOTION TO THE GREEN PARTY

Democratize democracy - give everyone the right to vote by allowing parents to vote on behalf of their children.

We are facing serious climate and war threats. Despite the gravity of the situation, there is no consensus in society on how to solve the problems and no sign that politicians are taking children's perspectives seriously.

As early as the 1980s, some doctors in the Pediatricians' Association pushed the issue of allowing parents to vote by proxy, in order to highlight the urgent injustices in society and better overcome situations that lead to ill health in children and young people. Several political scientists also pushed the issue, highlighting the risk of a society with more people in the 70-90 age range, while individuals between 0-18 (around 2 million individuals) have no representation at all in democratic society. They did not win a hearing for their aspirations.

Now the issue of voting rights for all individuals has become more topical and the discussion is being held in several contexts and at our Swedish universities, for example at the Children's Rights Center Stockholm University.

In the US, Johan Wall (*Professor of Philosophy, Religion, Childhood Studies. Director of the Childism Institute in Rutgers University*) has published the book "GIVE THE CHILDREN THE VOTE, on democratising democracy" where he argues why it is important that children have a political voice in society. The Childism Institute is also present in Norway and Denmark.

Election researcher Henrik Ekengren Oscarsson (University of Gothenburg) describes 2009:

*"More than two million Swedish citizens are still denied the democratic right to participate in general elections. **Citizens under 18 do not have the right to vote.** I believe that the issue of children's right to vote will be the voting rights battle of our lifetime"* He further describes that the practical problems with proxy voting are not great because it is already common today for many people.

<https://ekengrenoscarsson.com/2009/01/12/om-barns-rostratt/år 2009>.

Stefan Olsson, PhD in political science, describes in a paper from 2008 how democracy can be strengthened by giving all individuals a voice https://www.politiskfilosofi.se/fulltext/2008-2/2008-2_007-034_olsson.html. He describes that no individual should be excluded from voting and that parents can vote by proxy for their children until they want to vote themselves. It is time to remove the only restriction we have on individuals voting. Everyone should have a voice!

A basic idea in a democracy is that everyone who lives in a country should have a say in how the country is run. One citizen - one vote. In our society, those who have the opportunity to vote are called "demos" (those who have the right to vote in a country) in Sweden, i.e. those aged 18 and over. Anyone who is a "demos", but who cannot vote themselves due to various disabilities or for other reasons, may have a person to help them vote by proxy. In this way, everyone under the age of 18 can also have a political voice in our democratic society.

There is also discussion about lowering the voting age. This can be seen as a less good proposal because studies have shown that young people up to the age of 21 have low political maturity. They are most competent to make political choices between the ages of 30 and 70, which argues **against** lowering the voting age and **in favor of** allowing parents to vote by proxy.

The idea of this motion is for the Green Party to raise the issue of giving all individuals the right to vote from birth. Since the child is not competent to vote, it becomes the responsibility of the parents/guardians to use the child's vote in political elections. Democracy's

The basic idea is that those who are subject to collective decisions should have the opportunity to participate in them and influence them, but since children lack the competence to choose, it becomes the parents' responsibility, in the same way that parents in many other situations make choices for their children based on what they consider to be the best for the child. Children are in many ways subject to collective decisions throughout their childhood in, for example, pre-school, school, health and social care. In this way, children's voices can influence the society of which they are a part.

The practicalities of this will of course have to be worked out, but it is important that all children are seen as individuals with a political voice when they are born, and that their guardians are allowed to use it in the way they think is best for the child.

All Swedish children receive a political education at school. In grade 6, in order to achieve a passing grade in civics, they must have a basic knowledge of democracy and human rights, and it is therefore to be expected that many children will have opinions on the subject and that political awareness will be strengthened by this reform. Hopefully, the parent will hand over the voting process to the child earlier than the age of 18, if it is seen that the child is mature enough to take responsibility for their own vote.

Impact on families with children.

- Increased political awareness, both for children and parents, as it can be expected that there will be discussions in the family when it comes to choosing which party best protects the rights of the child.

Implications for policy makers.

- All political parties are getting a greater focus on children's rights. There is a legal requirement for this in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but the requirements need to be strengthened and clarified.
- Political parties will focus more on families with children because there are two million more votes at stake. Families with children are becoming a more pressing constituency.

Implications for society at large.

- Vitalized political debate. Older children are more engaged if they can make a real difference.
- Of course, the political voting system needs to be changed to accommodate the inclusion of children's voices.
- Allowing parents to vote by proxy increases the competence of voters, unlike lowering the voting age. Studies show (as described above) that people are most competent to make political choices between the ages of 30 and 70.
- The risk of "gerontocracy" (national aging) is reduced, .e. that too much emphasis is placed on issues for older citizens because this constituency is the largest. The person who has the right to vote looks primarily to their own interests. Although many people believe that they also vote for a society that is good for children, when we look back we can see that we have voted for a policy that takes very little account of the fact that we should strive for a sustainable society for our children. Many children and young people today feel bad and have difficulty feeling confident about the future.
- Climate policy is gaining in importance. Children are the ones who will suffer the consequences of current policies in the future, so it is urgent to give them greater opportunities to influence.
- A more responsible investment in renewable energy sources and a halt to nuclear power planning that leaves difficult nuclear waste issues for our future generations to deal with.
- A society with a strong focus on children and young people will be a better society for all, as investments in children and young people will also benefit other individuals in society.
- Voting rights for children can bring about positive changes in society in a similar way to when women were given the right to vote. A large group of around 2 million is included in democracy.

I request

- **that the Green Party takes up the issue of children's right to vote by allowing parents to vote by proxy, as part of democratizing democracy and giving the climate issue and children's conditions greater weight in politics.**

Motion by Anita Svantesson. I have worked as an intensive care nurse, nursing and care teacher but am now retired and a voluntary cultural worker. Putting forward this idea, which I have had since the 1980s, feels urgent in view of the situation in the world around us and out of concern for my children and grandchildren. Over the years, I have read up on the issue in many writings by political scientists, pediatricians, etc., and have formed a picture of the problem that I present here. I am now also in contact with John Wall, who is very committed to the issue and who, among other things, runs the Childism Institute at Rutgers University.