

SENATE APPROVES 18-YEAR-OLD VOTE IN ALL ELECTIONS

Amendment to Constitution
Is Sent to House, Where
Passage Is Expected

By **JOHN W. FINNEY**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 10.—The Senate approved today, 94 to 0, and sent to the House a proposed constitutional amendment that would lower the voting age to 18 years in all elections, possibly by 1972.

The amendment is expected to be approved by the House next week, permitting it to be submitted to the states for ratification in the coming year.

The proposal is designed to remedy the situation that resulted when the Supreme Court ruled that legislation passed by Congress last year lowering the voting age to 18 could apply only to Federal elections and not to state and local elections.

Chance Held 'Realistic'

As a result of the Supreme Court decision, most states in 1972 will have to maintain separate registration and voting procedures for Federal and local elections at a cost estimated as high as \$20-million.

Congress is intent on pushing the amendment through as the first major business of the present session in the hope that it can be ratified by the states before the 1972 elections. For it to become the 26th Amendment, it must be ratified by three-fourths of the states, or at least 38.

On the basis of a survey of the states, the Senate Judiciary Committee has concluded that there is a "realistic possibility" the amendment can be ratified before the elections of November, 1972. Some 38 legislatures are meeting this spring, and at least 40 legislatures are expected to be in session next year.

15-Month Target

At present only Kentucky, Alaska and Georgia permit 18-year-olds to vote in state and local elections. Of the remaining 47 states, only eight have reported it possible to lower their voting age by state action before the 1972 elections without resorting to some extraordinary procedure, such as a special statewide referendum.

As a result, in the absence of a constitutional amendment, most states face the confusion and cost of maintaining a dual voting system by age in the 1972 elections.

The last three amendments to the Constitution were adopted in an average time of approximately 15 months, and the

Continued on Page 20, Column 4

The New York Times

Published: March 11, 1971

Copyright © The New York Times

SENATE APPROVES 18-YEAR-OLD VOTE

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

hope in Congressional circles is that this record can be equaled in adoption of the proposed new amendment.

The only controversy in the Senate developed over a move by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, to attach another constitutional amendment that would have granted Congressional representation to the District of Columbia.

In an unusual parliamentary move against one of his fellow Democrats, the majority leader, Mike Mansfield of Montana, moved to table, and in effect to kill the Kennedy amendment before it could be brought to a vote. The Mansfield motion carried, 68 to 23.

In a debate before a largely empty chamber, Senator Kennedy argued that his move was the only way to bypass the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Rules Committee, which have traditionally opposed any home rule or Congressional representation for the District of Columbia.

But Senator Mansfield protested that the result could be to jeopardize Congressional passage of the amendment for the 18-year-old vote. Contending that a dual voting system could result only in added cost, confusion, delay and waste, Senator Mansfield said, "It is imperative that no action be taken to jeopardize the effort to extend to 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds the full franchise of the ballot in all elections."

The differences between Senators Mansfield and Kennedy were a renewal of a personal

struggle that developed last year over lowering the voting age.

Senator Kennedy originally conceived the idea of lowering the voting age by legislation rather than by constitutional amendment. But he then backed away from offering the legislation as an amendment to the Voting Rights Act when objections were raised by civil rights groups.

To the surprise of Senator Kennedy, Senator Mansfield stepped in to offer the 18-year-old legislation as his own amendment to the Voting

Rights Act and now regards its passage as his most important legislative accomplishment in 24 years in Congress.

Passage of the legislation, combined with the Supreme Court decision, cleared the way for action by constitutional amendment.

For the last 20 years constitutional amendments to lower the voting age have been introduced in every Congress but, with the exception of 1953, when an amendment was defeated on the Senate floor, they never won committee approval in either the Senate or House.

The New York Times

Published: March 11, 1971

Copyright © The New York Times