

## **Penang Assembly passes Bill to allow youths aged 18 and above to be candidates for next polls**

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Legislative Assembly has passed the Penang State Constitution Enactment (Amendment) Bill 2021, which allows those aged 18 and above to be candidates for state seats in the next polls.

The amendment was tabled by Soon Lip Chee (DAP-Bagan Jermal), on the second day of the sitting, making Penang the seventh state after Sabah, Perlis, Terengganu, Sarawak, Kelantan and Perak to permit those aged 18 and above to stand for elections.

The youth and sports committee chairman said a total of 3,475 respondents aged 15 to 35 participated in the survey conducted by the Penang Youth Development Centre (PYDC) between Dec 8, 2020, and June 6, 2021.

"From the survey, the data showed a total of 2,261 respondents or 65.06% agreed with the implementation while 1,214 respondents (34.94%) did not agree," he said when tabling the Bill on Wednesday (Sept 1).

He said the survey was conducted by sending the hard copy of the questionnaire and via online to the respondents.

Citing the Statistics Department, which stated that 35% or 624,000 of the state's population of 1.77 million were aged 15 to 34, Soon said it was critical that youths be allowed the chance to take on an active role in Penang's politics.

"The move will also bring us on par with countries like Australia, Canada and the UK in allowing those above 18 to contest in elections," he said.

He also said the Parliament in July 2019 had unanimously passed the amendment to allow those aged 18 and above to participate in polls and to implement automatic voter registration (AVR).

On July 16, 2019, Parliament unanimously passed the constitutional amendment to lower the voting age to 18 and to make 18 the minimum age for a Malaysian to run for public office.

Last November, it was reported that former minister in the prime minister's department Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan said the two initiatives were expected to be implemented in July this year.

However, the EC later announced this was delayed and said that the lowering of the minimum voting age and AVR could only be done by Sept 1, 2022.

This caused some to question the government's commitment to allowing youths to vote.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/09/01/penang-assembly-passes-bill-to-allow-youths-aged-18-and-above-to-be-candidates-for-next-polls>