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**State Government Operations &  
Accountability Committee**

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**HJR 4213**

**Brief Description:** Amending the Constitution to allow persons who are sixteen years of age to vote.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hunt, Williams, Green and Haigh.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Amends the state constitution to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years of age.

**Hearing Date:** 4/8/05

**Staff:** Hannah Lidman (786-7291).

**Background:**

Amendments to the State Constitution (Constitution) require a two-thirds majority approval in the Legislature and a simple majority approval by the people at the following general election.

The original text of the 1889 Constitution defined electors as all persons of the age of 21 years or over who were citizens of the United States and had lived in the state one year, and in the county 90 days, and in the city, town, ward or precinct 30 days immediately preceding the election. In addition, the section provided that Indians not taxed would never be allowed the elective franchise and that all male persons, who at the time of the adoption of the Constitution were qualified electors of the Territory, remained electors.

From 1896 until 1910, Article IV, section 1 required that electors be able to read and speak the English language. And from 1910 until 1974 it stated that there would be no denial of the elective franchise at any election on account of sex.

In 1971, the 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution lowered the federal and state voting age across the nation to age 18. However, while states are constitutionally prohibited from raising the state voting age beyond age 18, there is no restriction against a state lowering it.

Since the adoption of Amendment 63 in 1974, Article VI, section 1 of the Constitution has entitled all persons who are 18 years of age or older, citizens of the United States, and who have lived in the state, county, and precinct for 30 days before the election to vote at all elections. Only those who do not meet these qualifications or those who are convicted of an infamous crime (unless

restored to their civil rights) or judicially declared mentally incompetent are disqualified from voting under Article VI, section 3.

**Summary of Bill:**

The State Constitution is amended to lower the minimum voting age from 18 to 16 years of age. If the joint resolution is approved by the Legislature, the constitutional amendment will be placed on the November general election ballot for approval by the people.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.