

## HI-Y and Youth in Government's Significant Role Amending the US Constitution!

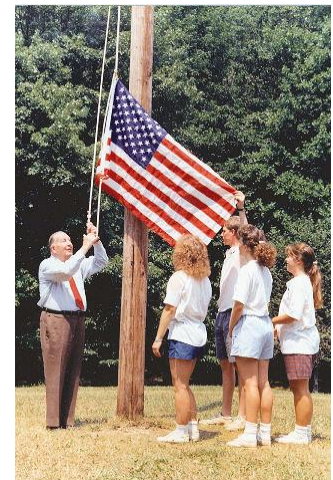
David King, Executive Director, Ohio-West Virginia State YMCA  
March 19, 2011

This year we observe the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution granting the vote to 18 year olds.

HI-Y groups across the nation and their state Youth in Government programs had a key role in lowering the voting age. Youth in Government grew out of HI-Y's mission to improve our local communities, states and nation. The idea is to extend HI-Y's impact by offering teens an opportunity to use their life experience and volunteer initiatives to propose legislation to Youth in Government Student Legislatures. Hundreds of current state laws across our nation have their genesis in Youth in Government.

The "father of the 18 year old vote," the late West Virginia Senator Jennings Randolph, explained the national impact of HI-Y and Youth in Government during a July 16, 1988, visit to YMCA Camp Horseshoe in West Virginia. *"A reason I took up the cause of the 18 year old vote was HI-Y clubs and Youth in Government programs across the nation were advocating lowering the voting age. I listened to our young people and decided to support their efforts. I proposed legislation to amend the Constitution. It took me more than 20 years to build support, get the votes and finally achieve success on July 1, 1971, when the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was ratified. I am honored to be considered the father of the 18 year old vote and my association with HI-Y and Youth in Government."*

Senator Randolph presented a flag from the US Capitol to the Ohio-West Virginia State YMCA's Camp Horseshoe in West Virginia on July 16, 1988. The Senator was the last living legislator who voted to establish the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the depression. Senator Randolph urged HI-Y to get young people to vote and to continue the legacy of the CCC. Horseshoe was built by CCC youth. The Senator was a 50 year member of the Elkins, WV, YMCA; a member of the Washington D. C. Central Branch YMCA; and from 1962 – 1984 hosted the annual National Youth Governor's Senatorial Luncheon. In 1982 he was named *Y Guy of the Year*. The Senator's Horseshoe visit was arranged by Ohio-West Virginia State YMCA staff David King (Executive) and Tony Ganger (Program Director). Mr. Ganger is now Director of Foundation Relations with the YMCA of the USA.



1984 – United States Senator Jennings Randolph is recognized for hosting the annual Senate Lunch for the Youth Governors at the National Youth Governor's Conference in Washington from 1962 – 1984. Pictured (left to right) are: Paul Espinosa of Charles Town, Youth Governor Rob Whitmore of Elizabeth, Senator Randolph, Kent Rhodes - Chairman of the Reader's Digest Foundation, sponsor of the Conference, and Ohio-West Virginia YMCA Executive David King.

The Youth Governors presented their national Service to Youth Award to Senator Randolph during their 1984 conference in Washington. Presenting the award were (left to right) Paul Espinosa, HI-Y and WV Youth in Government alumnus and volunteer from Charles Town, WV, WV 1985 Youth Governor Rob Whitmore of Elizabeth, WV, Kent Rhodes, chairman of Readers Digest Foundation, sponsor of the Youth Governor's Luncheon, and Ohio-West Virginia State YMCA Executive Director David King.