

A Country Past its Prime



Bill Pascrell Jr.
Image via billboard.com

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Image via The Hill

Chuck Grassley
Image via grassley.senate.gov

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The members of the political class running America are getting to an age where they can no longer properly govern the country, a national concern hitting headlines everywhere. The country is growing with new creations, innovations, and beliefs, but our government is still stuck in the previous generation with the inability to adapt to modern ideas. Students at Johnston agree.

"As the country grows they are not growing, they are staying the same," said Akshara Eswar '24.

Joe Biden (80), America's current president, is the oldest president that has held office in U.S history. The average age of our senate is 65.3 years, with the oldest senator standing at 90 years old. An alarming statistic based on research from National Institutes of Health showing age related cognitive decline usually begins around 60 years old, sometimes earlier. Meaning a majority of our senators are becoming less mentally capable of running a country.

"At a certain point generations become out of the loop with issues facing our society and our times"

- Laura Thangi '24

"I definitely think we're seeing more cognitive decline in our current politicians especially since many of them have not rotated in so long. Cognitive decline may not have been as common in past years because there was always a mix of old and young in office, but now we don't have that," Laura Thangi '24 stated.

Incapability of sustaining attention, slowness in thinking, difficulty multitasking and word finding, are all symptoms of cognitive decline that are apparent in senator Mitch McConnell's (81) recent behavior. The political figure's recent public appearances have been defined with slurred, even incomprehensible orations and freeze ups where he is unable to speak at all. At one point McConnell even mistaked his wife for his sister. These figures are clearly incapable of informing and leading our society.

Citizens brought attention to the mental limitations and proposed that aging politicians should take a literary exam to test their mental capabilities and see if they are sound enough to be in office. Age related cognitive decline is not the only issue found with elderly governors, Americans

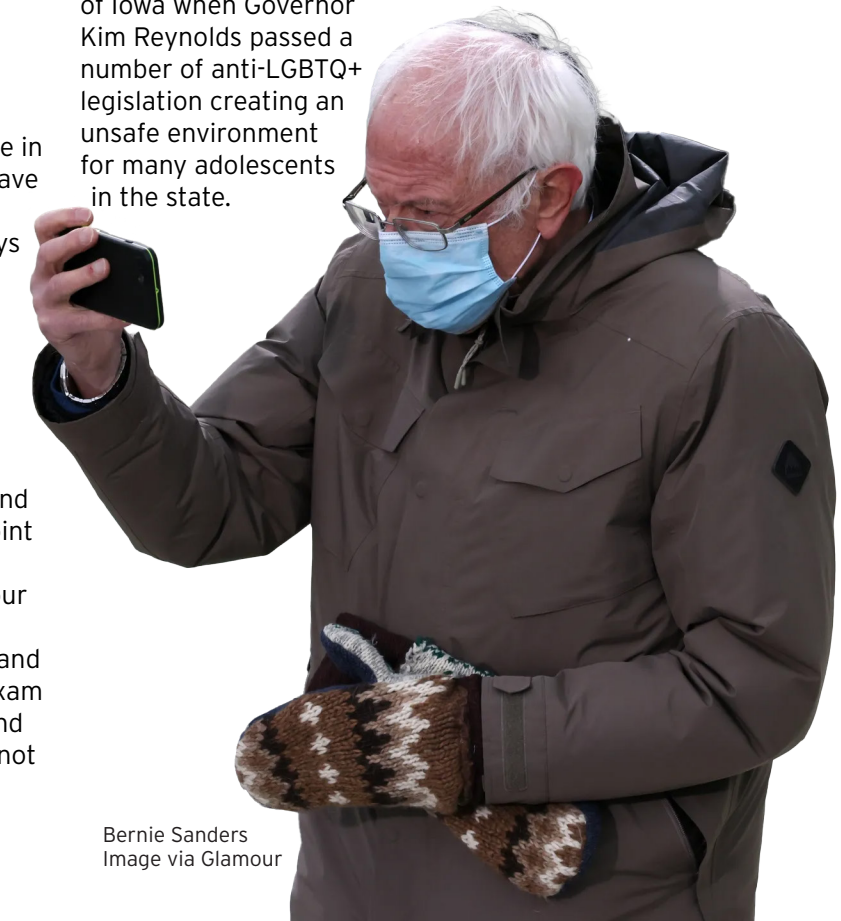
also believe that they are out of touch with modern society and have proposed the idea of age caps for potential candidates. This would limit the age they would be when running for office. Research from today.yougov showed that 58 percent of Americans have stated that they are in agreement with this idea.

"There's so many instances where they are perfectly mentally capable. It's just that they don't realize that we've moved on to a different time. It might just be better to have someone younger, not just health wise but policy wise," Eswar stated.

Most elder politicians hold an outdated perspective on the world, many are so set in their ways that it would be nearly impossible to shake them into seeing what we need in today's society. Younger candidates have a greater understanding of current affairs, and bring fresher concepts to our government.

"At a certain point generations become out of the loop with issues facing our society and our times," said Thangi.

The problems facing our country today are drastically different to the conflicts years back. Artificial Intelligence is a new concept taking the country by storm, older generations are far less technically advanced and may not be properly equipped to solve this dilemma. This also applies to growing social concepts that are more foreign to elder political figures such as, LGBTQ+, greater racial equality, gender identity, gun control, abortion and many others. This was seen first hand in the state of Iowa when Governor Kim Reynolds passed a number of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation creating an unsafe environment for many adolescents in the state.



Bernie Sanders
Image via Glamour

"I think they [younger candidates] bring a new younger perspective...I do think it would be a nice fresh perspective on things," said Alec Bauer '23.

Younger candidates have grown up in a more modern society and are more adapted to the conflicts citizens are facing today. Iowa Senate's Democratic Leader, Zach Wahls (32) grew up in a "two-mom family" and uses his unconventional experience to guide his platform; because of his age he can better relate to the newer generation.

"Younger candidates have lived through and witnessed modern issues...The younger generation also has a deeper connection to issues such as gun control and climate change in my opinion because we have to face the consequences of it while the current office won't be here long enough to see the long term effects of their decisions," Thangi said.

It often takes years to see the full impact of a law after it's been passed, most of our government will not be around to see the long term impact of their decisions. Why should they decide the rules for future generations?

"I think politicians are there to make the country, or the state, a better place for the future. If they are so far removed from the future because they are like 70 or 80 years old I don't think they have any business making plans for the rest of us," said Eswar.

Older candidates remain in powerful political positions because voters do not put their faith in the younger generation. Age is often correlated with wisdom, they believe the older politicians would have a better idea on what we need as a country and don't trust the ideas proposed by newer politicians.

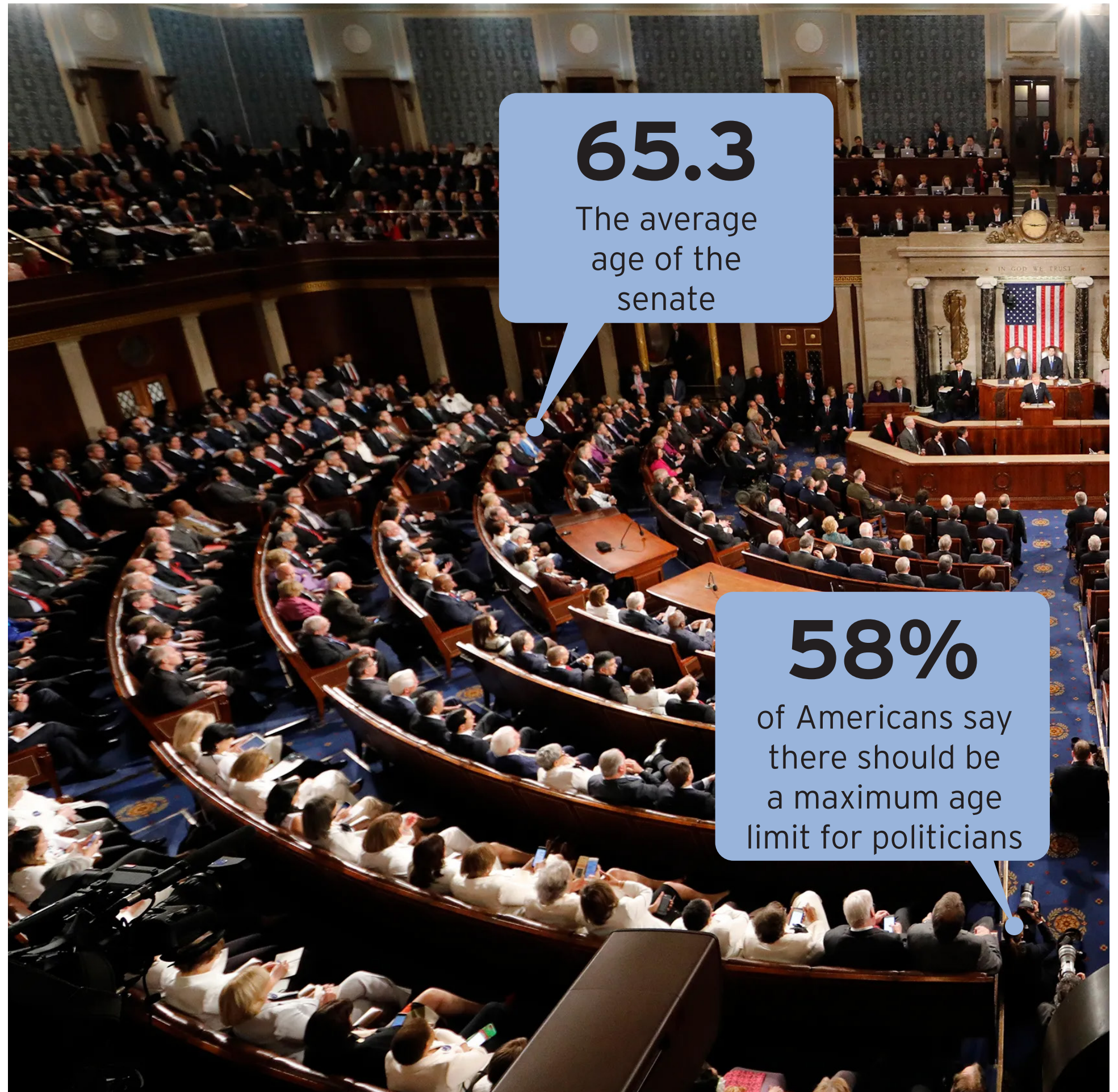
"Young people right now, we are not really regarded as important in general. Most people just think we're talking out of our hats a little bit, which is understandable I guess. They are all much older than us, they have a lot more experience than us...people tend to vote for people who are older because they seem to think that they have more knowledge or experience in life," stated Eswar.

The people in power in the American government, to put it bluntly, are too old to properly govern a country. They are not able to provide our society with what it needs today. We need to put our faith in the ideas of the younger politicians and give them the opportunity to hold power in our government. The future of this country is in the hands of the younger generation, at the next election stand up and vote.

"America is not past our prime - it's just that our politicians are past theirs," stated Nikki Haley, 2024 presidential candidate.



Mitch McConnell
Image via Washington Times



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Congressional Chamber
Image via brookings.edu