

When browsing one of my favorite past-time websites “Reddit” I came across a post that stuck my eye. The post was in a forum where people ask questions to anyone who may be scrolling by. The post was titled “There’s a minimum age for certain political jobs. How would you feel if there was a maximum age limit?” The most liked comment on this post talked about the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and how some kind of rule like the one proposed in the title would be illegal<sup>1</sup>. I personally believe that, while that person is correct, they are also missing the point. In this situation, people should be looking for experience and knowledge in important positions such as politics. Not only would it be wrong to make a maximum age limit, but they if that rule were implemented, then they could possibly be missing some of the best candidates. The politicians that we elect should be knowledgeable and experienced in whichever field they are running for. For example, John Hickenlooper was just elected to be a senator of Colorado in the most recent term. He got an undergraduate degree at the age of 22 and then a masters at the age of 28. He then worked in petroleum and later founded his own brewery after becoming an entrepreneur. When he was 49 he began to get into the political world and ran for mayor of Denver. He was reelected as mayor in 2007 and then turned his head toward being governor of Colorado. From 2010-2018, he was elected governor of Colorado. This was from ages 54-64. It was only then that he decided to run for senate. At this point in his life he had 15 years of political experience plus about 20 years in the work force and many more in school. All in all, he had to get a lot of experience and work very hard in order to be elected in such a prestigious position such as the senate<sup>2</sup>.

For some reason, many people in the United States continue to disrespect those who are older by simply expecting less from them. However, when it comes down to it, those with experience keep getting elected. Sure, people like Kanye West may run for president like he did

in 2020 and 2016. But the public knows not to elect him because he is not the right person for the job. The public knows that he has no political experience (among other factors that would rule him out).

The idea I am trying to get at here is that when the people of the United States need something done they will typically default to people who have more experience. So why is it so difficult for people to believe that they need to continually help people who are older than them? If they continue to trust those with more experience to do the important things, wouldn't it make more sense if they asked their elders for help? Going back to the reddit post I referenced earlier, putting an age cap on any kind of job would also be eliminating a lot of knowledge from any kind of company. For example, the average age of CEO's and CFO's are 54.1 and 48.9 years old respectively. If we were to create a cap of about 45 years old, we would be getting rid of a combined 55 years of experience in the work force. Now that's just for two people in any give company. Multiply that by however many people below them in the ranks are also above 45 and all of the sudden we have gotten rid of tens of thousands of years of experience throughout the United States. That being said, we don't have those laws because we know that each and every company values those many years of experience. So now we must ask ourselves again, "why do we as a nation expect less out of our elders when we clearly value their experience?"

The idea of people thinking out loud that they expect less from their elders makes me think that they may be overtly ageist, but maybe covertly they are not really ageist. Normally, these concepts are flipped. Someone may have a subconscious prejudice against a group. But when speaking out loud, they do not realize that they will only express their beliefs so subtly that most people would not catch on<sup>3</sup>. Typically this is talked about with racism. Someone may talk normally to someone of a different ethnicity than their own, but they actually dislike the person

simply due to the ethnic differences. In the case that I am proposing, I wonder if people are continuing to have their lowered expectations for the elderly because that's what they see other people do. However, when it really comes down to it, they respect the experience and wisdom of the elders, they just don't express it. Maybe whoever came up with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 knew this. At the time of that enactment, people who were in the age groups 35-44 made up the vast majority of the work force. Despite this, it was not the older people who had a higher rate of unemployment, but it was the younger people. Those older than 44 years old had a less than 5% rate of unemployment while those less than 25 years old had almost double that<sup>4</sup>! The big thing that I want to get out of this article is that I believe that people respect their elders whether they show it or not. When people read this blog, I want them to be more conscious about what they are saying and what they are doing. After reading this blog, go and find an elder that you respect and ask them for advice. Even if you think everything is going well in your life, they have more experience than you do and will be able to share some kind of pearl of wisdom. Even if you don't need advice, the worst thing that can happen is that you have a great conversation with a friend.

### **References**

1. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/age-discrimination-employment-act-1967>. Published 2021. Accessed February 19, 2021.
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4. A-10. Unemployment rates by age, sex, and marital status, seasonally adjusted. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea10.htm>. Published February 5, 2021. Accessed February 19, 2021.