

Wellesley High School Student Says He Has Political Ambitions

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WELLESLEY, Mass. -- He's got a passion for politics and he's not even old enough to vote.

This week, a 17-year-old from Wellesley officially became that town's youngest Town Meeting member ever, and as NewsCenter 5's Liz Brunner discovered, getting elected isn't the first challenge he's overcome.

Michael D'Ortenzio packs a lot into every single day.

A junior at Wellesley High School, he co-moderates the School Council, manages track, sings in the Keynotes Choir and is vice president of the student congress.

If that isn't enough, he's also the student representative to the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"I love government. I believe in the power of government to help people help themselves," D'Ortenzio said.

The teen's passion for politics is a direct result of the Sept. 11 attacks, he said.

"It was such an important time in our history, is the way I really saw it, and I felt like it was a time to really be involved," he said.

But with a diagnosis of [Tourette's syndrome](#) in the fourth grade, he knew there would be challenges. Tourette's is a neurological disorder defined by multiple involuntary motor and vocal tics.

"I work really hard to be respectful of when other people are speaking because it's tough. It's tough for me to kind of sit there and stay still," he said, explaining that he has to live with a constant feeling movement.

"I have to work extra hard to do what I want to do," he said.

And doing what he wants to do includes a long-held dream to be a Town Meeting member. There are no age restrictions, so he ran for a seat and won.

On Apr. 5, D'Ortenzio officially became one of the 240 voting members of the town's legislative body.

"The town will be well served to hear his voice," said John Schuller, the longest-serving member of Wellesley's Town Meeting, having served for 53 years.

"Just like Michael, I tried to get into Town Meeting as early as I could, but I am not as astute as Michael, so I had no idea you could get into Town Meeting before you were a voting member of the town," Schuller said.

"I directly benefit from the town. I go to school every day," D'Ortenzio said. "I think it's really important to have somebody who is really so invested in town services."

Those are D'Ortenzio's goals for now, but he does have even more ambitious aspirations. He may try to get onto another ballot in years to come, maybe even running for president someday.

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