

Irish Brigade Camp #4 Patriotic Instruction Oct 26, 2017 The Heart of a Democracy – The Right to Vote

The Constitution established voting by the people for persons to “represent” them in the House of Representatives.

The US Constitution (1789) stated in Article I, Section II, Clause I:

"The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature."ⁱ

The Amendment VIII set up the system for the people to choose Electors who would then vote for the President and Vice President unless there was not a clear majority which then provided for the House of Representatives to pick the President and Vice President. The power was still in the hands of the people through their elected representatives.

The Union victory in the Civil War resulted in enfranchisement of the former male slaves through three different amendments.

The US Constitution stated in Amendment XV, which was ratified by the states in 1870: "Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."ⁱⁱ Again, the power to enforce voting rights is in the hands of the people via the representatives they elect.

Amendment XIII ended slavery and Amendment XIV established those born in the United States are citizens but Amendment XV was needed to ensure that the states did not attempt to deny the right to vote to former slaves who were now citizens.

Males age 21 and older were guaranteed the right to vote unless they “rebelled” against the United States and did not take a loyalty oath. Certain felons are also denied the right to vote unless they petition to have the right restored.

Amendment XVII (1913) allowed the people to pick Senators, Amendment XIX (1920) gave women the right to vote, and Amendment XXIV (1964) eliminated poll or other tax as a restriction against voting.

Amendment XXVI changed voting age to eighteen years of age.

Step 1 is to register to vote and Step 2 is to **actually show** up and vote, either in person (86%) or absentee (14%). Approximately 70% of Virginians registered to vote **actually vote** in Presidential elections. During midterm elections for Congress, voting drops to approximately 40%. It is just slightly higher for Governor races at approximately 42%.ⁱⁱⁱ

Your ancestors fought for the right to vote. Get registered and vote in every election.

ⁱ <https://felonvoting.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=000649>

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ⁱⁱⁱ Results summarized from data at <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/registration-statistics/registrationturnout-statistics/index.html>