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The Intersectional, Multi-Generational Fight for Voting Rights





This project was created by **Detroit Disability Power**, led by **Dessa Cosma**, during her time as a **Twink Frey Visiting Social Activist** with the **Center for the Education of Women+ (CEW+)** at the **University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor. The Twink Frey Visiting Social Activist program is made possible through a generous gift from U-M alumna Twink Frey. This resource was researched, written, and designed by **Kaci Messeder**, Detroit Disability Power's MSW Intern.

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[A screenreader accessible version of this resource can be found here.](#)



Introduction¹

Voting rights are a crucial piece of the foundation for all rights, as voting provides the path to protecting one's freedoms. However, since voting began in the United States, there have always been groups of people who have been systematically barred from it--kept away from a large portion of the democratic process. The push for universal suffrage is over a century and a half old--movement after movement has lobbied, protested, and advocated for the expansion of voting rights in the United States. Each one of these movements was critical in opening the door to vote for more and more groups of people, and there is still much work to be done so that all people can have the right to vote.

This document details some major points in the history of suffrage, detailing many key events from the movement for women's suffrage, the civil rights movement and the fight for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Disability Rights movement pushing for voting access for people with disabilities. Second, it presents a discussion on the intersections and overlap in strategies and tactics for change used in each of these movements. Third, it highlights major historical political wins that were accomplished in large part due to the foundation of voting rights work that came before them. Finally, an overview of current voter suppression is presented with suggestions on how to continue the movement toward universal suffrage--the right to vote for all.

As you read through this, keep in mind that women, people of color, and people with disabilities are not three distinct categories of people who experience oppression in separate ways. In the United States, 40% of women are women of color, 25% of women have a disability, and 25% of Black and 30% of Indigenous people have a disability. These intersecting identities often overlap, creating several layers of access barriers as (1) poverty often causes disability, (2) disability often causes poverty, and (3) race is linked to disability and poverty because of the systems of oppression in our society.



History of Suffrage in the United States



The following timeline of suffrage-related events includes the year and a brief description of the event. For **new policies and laws**, there are also symbols to show which marginalized groups benefited from it most.

Key:

● = Women

★ = People of Color

■ = People with Disabilities

| YEAR | EVENT |
|----------------------------|--|
| Post-Revolutionary War | |
| 1776 | The country becomes independent. Voting rights are reserved for landowners (mostly white male protestants over the age of 21) |
| 1787 | States decide who is allowed to vote, and most states decided only white male landowners can vote |
| 1790 | Naturalization laws state that “free white” immigrants are the only people who can become naturalized citizens |
| Post-Civil War through WWI | |
| 1848 | First Women’s Rights Convention, creating the original agenda for the Women’s Rights Movement |
| 1856 | Voting rights are extended to all white men in every state |
| 1866 | The American Equal Rights Association was formed by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (who was inspired by women’s historical political rights within the Haudenosaunee [Iroquois]) for Black and white women and men pushing for “universal suffrage” |
| 1868 | The 14th Amendment is ratified, granting former slaves citizenship, but defining citizens and voters as exclusively male |

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| 1868 | The suffrage movement split into two organizations: The National Woman Suffrage Association with the vision on achieving suffrage through a constitutional amendment (led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony) and the American Woman Suffrage Association with the goal of gaining women's voting rights through individual states (led by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell) |
| 1870 ★ | The 15th Amendment passes, allowing Black men to vote. This legislation stated it would prohibit states from denying citizens the right to vote based on race or color; however, many Native Americans and all Chinese immigrants were still denied citizenship. |
| 1872 | Susan B. Anthony registers and votes against the law; she was arrested, tried, and convicted |
| 1877 | The Woman Suffrage Amendment is introduced to Congress (included the exact same language that was passed over years later in the 19th Amendment) |
| 1882 | The Chinese Exclusion Act is passed, stating that Chinese immigrants cannot become naturalized citizens |
| 1887 | The Dawes Act passes, allowing Native Americans to vote if they give up their tribal affiliation |
| 1892 | <i>The Women's Era</i> became the first national newspaper by and for African-American women, established by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin. African American women leaders advocate for women's suffrage through education, publication, legal advocacy, and activism, including: Susan Frazier, Mary Woodlen, Getrude Elzora Durden Rush, Georgianna Offutt, Victoria Haley, and many others |
| 1896 | The National Association of Colored Women is formed |
| 1912 | Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party becomes the first political party to support women's suffrage |
| 1913 | The Woman Suffrage Procession occurs in Washington, DC is the first public demonstration in the nation's capital for women's suffrage |
| 1915 | Suffragists Mabel Vernon and Sara Bard Field lead a transcontinental tour, gathering over a half-million signatures on petitions to Congress |
| 1916 | Alice Paul and the Congressional Union the National Woman's Party (NWP) began demonstrations, marches, large public meetings, and picketing at the White House over the refusal of President Woodrow Wilson and other Democrats to support the Suffrage Amendment |
| 1916 | Jeannette Rankin becomes the first woman elected to the House of Representatives. President Wilson and the Democratic Party expressed support for women's suffrage |
| 1917 | Protesters arrested for obstructing traffic. Alice Paul and others are arrested and imprisoned, where they begin a hunger strike. Many are force fed while incarcerated |

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| 1918 | During WWI, after heavy press coverage on the inhumane treatment of Alice Paul and other political prisoners, President Wilson states women's suffrage is necessary and urgent as a "war measure" |
| 1919 | The Woman Suffrage Amendment , with the original language of Susan B. Anthony from over 40 years earlier, is passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification. Wisconsin and Illinois were the first states to support |
| 1919 | Native Americans who served in WWI are granted citizenship |
| 1920 ● | The 19th Amendment to the Constitution becomes law, certifying that "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 sex" |
| 1924 ★ | The Indian Citizenship Act passes, deeming Native Americans US citizens. However, states still get to decide who votes, and most continue to disenfranchise Native Americans |
| Post-WWII, Civil & Voting Rights Movements, Vietnam War | |
| 1940 | Only 3% of eligible African-Americans in the South are registered to vote due to suppression tactics |
| 1943 ★ | The Magnuson Act passes, granting Chinese Americans a path to citizenship (and voting) |
| 1946 | Medgar Evers gathers a group of Black veterans to go to the courthouse and try to register to vote, where they were turned away by a mob of armed white men |
| 1960 ● ★ | Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1960 , which (1) requires election officials to keep voter registration records, (2) allows the Department of Justice to inspect these records, and (3) allows people who were locally denied the right to vote to apply through a federal court. |
| 1961 ● ★ ■ | The 23rd Amendment allows citizens of Washington, DC to vote in presidential elections |
| 1964 ● ★ ■ | The 24th Amendment is signed, outlawing poll tax payments being used as a condition for voting in federal elections. This was also the year of Freedom Summer, a mass Black voter registration drive |
| 1965 | "Bloody Sunday": Over 500 voting rights protesters in Selma are violently attacked by the state police while marching to Montgomery |
| 1965 ● ★ ■ | The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 is signed into law, outlawing literacy tests and other suppressive measures. By the end of the year, more than a quarter million new Black voters are registered |

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| 1970 | President Richard Nixon signs VRA extension for 5 years |
| 1971 ● ★ ■ | The 26th Amendment is signed, allowing ages 18-21 years to vote |
| 1973 ■ | The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is passed. Section 504 outlaws discrimination against people with disabilities in any publicly-funded activity, but it does not include necessary regulations for enforcement. In San Francisco, disability rights activists staged a sit in for 25 days* until such regulations were signed into law |
| 1975 ● ★ ■ | President Gerald Ford signs Voting Rights Act extension for 7 years |

Post-Vietnam War, Reagan Era

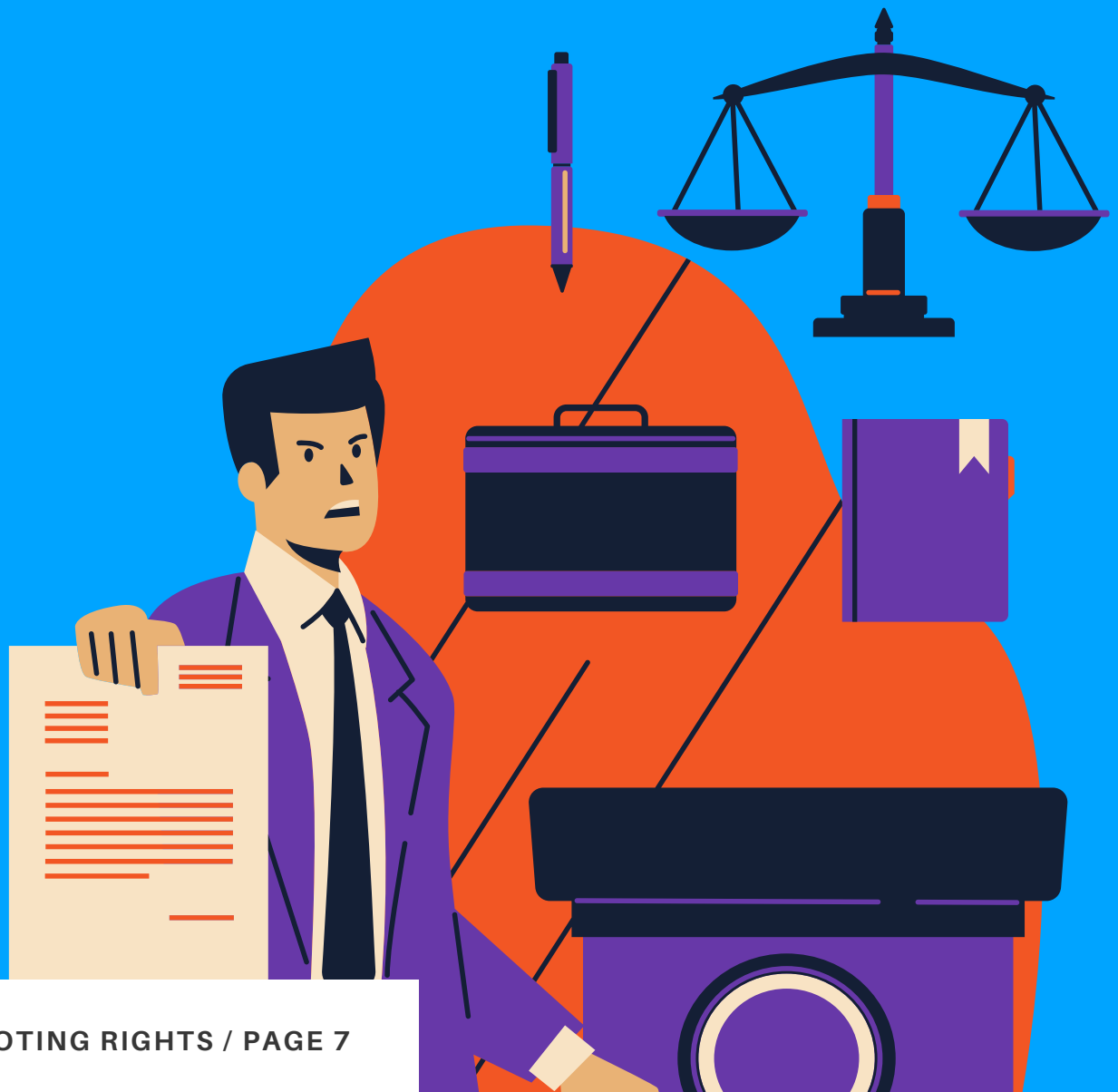
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|---------------|---|
| 1982 ● ★ ■ | President Ronald Reagan signs the Voting Rights Act extension for 25 years and creates a Congressional responsibility for requiring states to allow voters who need assistance (by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write) to receive assistance from someone of their choice (except an employer or union representative) |
| 1984 ■ | The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped of 1984 was passed to improve access to voter registration and polling places |
| 1990 ■ | Congress passes the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) , which provided a national mandate to end discrimination against people with disabilities and increase access to participate in society |

Post-Cold War Era, New Millennium

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1992 ★ | The Voting Rights Language Assistance Act is passed, which requires bilingual voting materials in largely bilingual communities |
| 1993 ★ ■ | Congress passes the National Voter Registration Act , which allows for registration by mail and at state offices |
| 2001 ■ | Doe v. Rowe (Maine) : Court decision ruled that people with cognitive, intellectual, developmental, or mental health disabilities cannot automatically lose their right to vote under guardianship |
| 2002 ■ | The Help America Vote Act is passed, which is designed to make it easier for people with disabilities to cast private, independent ballots and set minimum accessibility standards for polling locations and voting equipment. However, this legislation also included Voter ID requirements, a barrier for many marginalized groups |
| 2006 ★ ■ | President George W. Bush signs 25-year extension for Section 5 of the VRA (requires areas with a history of voting discrimination to get voting changes pre-approved) |

Modern Era

| | |
|------|---|
| 2009 | The Supreme Court rules that municipalities can get a Section 5 exemption by demonstrating 10 years of good behavior |
| 2011 | A number of new voter suppression techniques are introduced in state legislatures, including photo ID requirements, early voting restrictions, and voter registration barriers. Many of these are blocked by the Department of Justice |
| 2013 | <i>Shelby v. Holder</i> : The Supreme Court rules that parts of the VRA are unconstitutional, stripping back the power of Section 5 by arguing that it creates “burdens that are no longer responsive to the current conditions in the voting districts in question.” After this decision, several states are able to put restrictive changes in place that still exist today (see Modern Voter Suppression section below) |
| 2014 | Voting Rights Amendment Act is introduced to congress to repair damage from 2013 court decision (did not make it past committee) |
| 2019 | A second Voting Rights Amendment Act is introduced to congress (did not make it past committee) |



Organizing Strategies³ & Tactics

Though the movements for women's suffrage, civil and voting rights, and disability voting rights remain somewhat distinct from one another in history, they all built upon one another, as well as utilized similar organizing strategies and tactics to spur change. Below are some of the ways in which their organizing strategies were similar and different (including examples).

Voting is
power!



All: Lobbying & Democratic Techniques

The most common strategy and often the most logical starting point for change movements is directly lobbying and petitioning those in power (the President, Congressmembers) to support the desired changes.

My
rights,
my vote!



- Formation of religious groups, student organizations, labor unions, and other activist organizations to lobby and petition
- Lobbying and petitioning officials (federal, state, and local) for Constitutional amendments, new legislation, and enforcement of such laws
- Filing lawsuits in court against discriminatory policies and actions
- Supporting candidates and elected officials who support movement messaging
- Organizing voter registration drives
- Door-to-door canvassing
- Women, people of color, and people with disabilities running for public office themselves

All: Civil Disobedience & Public Action

When strategies of lobbying and petitioning are continually ignored, leaders and organizers often graduate to more public-facing actions to gain support and increased demand for change.

- Formation of religious groups and other activist organizations to spread education and awareness of issues and build mass following
- Mass meetings for people to learn and organize
- Public marches, protests, boycotts, and sit-ins (at the Capitol, large cities, government buildings, etc.)
- Voting illegally
- Using public arts, parades, and pageants to build empowerment and raise awareness
- Hunger strike
- Press coverage of inhumane treatment towards activists



Women's Suffrage: Racism, Ableism, & Exploitation

One exploitative but successful strategy for convincing those in power to expand rights for the disenfranchised is by convincing them that you have something in common (expanding the in-group), while creating another out-group (shifting the negative focus). Some suffragists exploited existing stereotypes around mental health, cognitive and physical disabilities, and race in order to spark outrage among white women, strengthening their campaign.

- The 1893 painting *American Woman and Her Political Peers* was displayed at the World's Fair in Chicago and depicted white suffragist Frances E. Willard surrounded by a Native American, a prisoner, and two other pictures of what people of the time would have identified as someone with a mental illness and someone with a cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disability.

Major Wins: Result of Expanded Voting Rights⁴

The following timeline highlights some of the major political wins that could not have been accomplished without the foundation of voting rights work that came before them, building a path for marginalized groups of people to vote for their rights and protections. Each event listed includes the year and a brief description of the new policy or political milestone. For new policies and laws, there are also symbols to show which marginalized groups benefited from it most. When reading through the legislation, notice how civil rights wins for one group benefits every group. Liberation is collective!

Key:

● = Women

★ = People of Color

■ = People with Disabilities

| YEAR | EVENT |
|---------------|--|
| 1938 ● | The Fair Labor Standards Act created a standard minimum wage without regard to sex. |
| 1963 ● | The Equal Pay Act is passed by Congress, promising equitable wages for the same work, regardless of the social identities of the worker |
| 1964 ● ★ ■ | Title VII of the Civil Rights Act passes, prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of social identities |
| 1966 | Over half a million Southern African Americans are registered to vote |
| 1968 | Almost 400 Black people had been elected to office |
| 1969 ● | California adopts the nation's first " no fault " divorce law |
| 1972 ● | Title IX of the Education Amendments prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded education programs |
| 1973 ● | The U.S. Supreme Court declares that women have a constitutional right to have an abortion (Roe v. Wade) |

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|---------------|--|
| 1974 ● | Congress bans housing discrimination on the basis of sex and credit discrimination against women |
| 1990 ● ★ ■ | The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is passed, banning discrimination against individuals with disabilities in any area of public life (like jobs, schools, transportation, etc.) |
| 1993 ● ■ | The Family and Medical Leave Act goes into effect |
| 1994 ● | Congress adopts the Gender Equity in Education Act to provide gender equity training for teachers, promote STEM education for girls, counsel pregnant teens, and prevent sexual harassment |
| 1994 ● | The Violence Against Women Act allocates federal funds for services for survivors domestic violence and rape |
| 2010 ● ★ ■ | The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is signed, which requires private health insurance companies to provide birth control without copays or deductibles |
| 2012 - 2020 | Voting difficulties decrease for everyone! For people with disabilities, the number of people who reported difficulties dropped 15% during this time period (from 26% to 11%). For nondisabled folks, the percentage of voters reporting difficulties dropped from 7% to 6%. |



Changes in Voter Turnout⁵

Women

The proportion of women voters has been higher than men in every presidential election since 1980. Even prior to that, going back every presidential election to 1964, women voters outnumbered (though not out-proportioned) men. The proportions of eligible voters who voted by gender since the presidential election in 2000 are listed below (2020 not included, as data are not yet available).

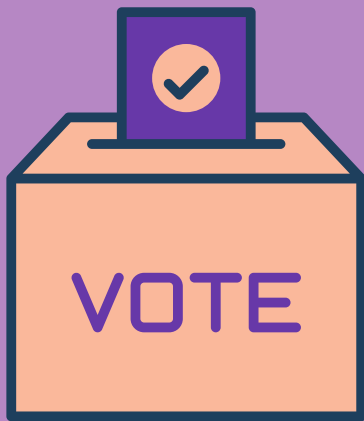


| Year | Proportion of Eligible Women Voting | Proportion of Eligible Men Voting |
|------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2000 | 60.7% | 58% |
| 2004 | 65.4% | 62.1% |
| 2008 | 65.6% | 61.5% |
| 2012 | 63.7% | 59.8% |
| 2016 | 63.3% | 59.3% |

People of Color

In most recent elections, white eligible voters turn out to vote at a slightly higher rate than Black voters and other voters of color (though this is likely due to modern voter suppression; refer to section below). However, in the 2012 presidential election, Black voters had the highest proportion of voter turnout. In 2008, the proportion of eligible Black voters was less than 1% lower than white voters. In addition, in every election since 2000 except 2016, Black voters have had a higher turnout than the national average.

The proportions of eligible voters who voted by race since 2000, compared to the overall percentage of American voters, are listed below (2020 not included, as data are not yet available).



| Year | All | Black | White | Latinx |
|------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| 2000 | 54.2% | 56.9% | 61.8% | 44.1% |
| 2004 | 60.1% | 60.3% | 67.2% | 47.2% |
| 2008 | 60.6% | 65.2% | 66.1% | 49.9% |
| 2012 | 61.6% | 66.6% | 64.1% | 48.0% |
| 2016 | 60.1% | 59.6% | 65.3% | 47.6% |

When broken down by race (only Black and white voters shown below) and gender, the proportion of eligible Black women who voted in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections was the highest of any other group. In addition, in every presidential election since 2000, Black women have a higher voter turnout than the national average.

| Year | All | Black Women | White Women | Black Men | White Men |
|------|-------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| 2000 | 54.2% | 59.7% | 63.0% | 53.0% | 60.6% |
| 2004 | 60.1% | 63.4% | 68.4% | 55.8% | 65.9% |
| 2008 | 60.6% | 68.1% | 67.9% | 60.5% | 64.2% |
| 2012 | 61.6% | 70.1% | 65.6% | 61.4% | 62.6% |
| 2016 | 60.1% | 63.7% | 66.8% | 54.2% | 63.7% |

People with Disabilities

The table below shows the proportion (%) of eligible voters by disability status who voted during midterm elections since 2010. This shows that nearly 9% more people with disabilities turned out to vote in 2018 than in 2014. During the 2018 midterm elections, voters with disabilities (14.3 million) had a higher turnout than Latinx voters (11.7 million) and was nearing the number of Black voters (15.2 million), showing the power of the disability vote.

| Year | People with Disabilities | Nondisabled People |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 2010 | 42.8% | 45.9% |
| 2014 | 40.8% | 42.1% |
| 2018 | 49.3% | 54.0% |



Current State of Voter Suppression

Groups Still Stripped of Voting Rights⁶

Incarcerated Populations

As of 2016, more than 6 million people (2.2 million of whom are Black) are barred from voting because of a felony conviction. Felony disenfranchisement laws, as they're known, keep people who have committed a felony-level crime from voting while incarcerated, while serving on parole or probation, and/or after a sentence is fully completed. As of 2019, 77% of felony-disenfranchised voters fell into the last two categories, living in their communities and still unable to vote. Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wyoming all strip voting rights from folx with felony records who are in prison, on probation or parole, and some (if not all) of those who have completed their full sentencing. Michigan is one of the 17 states that doesn't allow prisoners to vote, but allows formerly incarcerated folx to vote (even with felony records). Only two states, Maine and Vermont, have no felony disenfranchisement laws.

These laws disproportionately affect communities of color. One in 13 Black Americans of voting age is disenfranchised, which is four times higher than the non-Black population. In some states (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and Florida [prior to Florida's 4th Amendment]), more than 20% of voting-age Black citizens are disenfranchised.



Those Deemed "Mentally Incompetent"

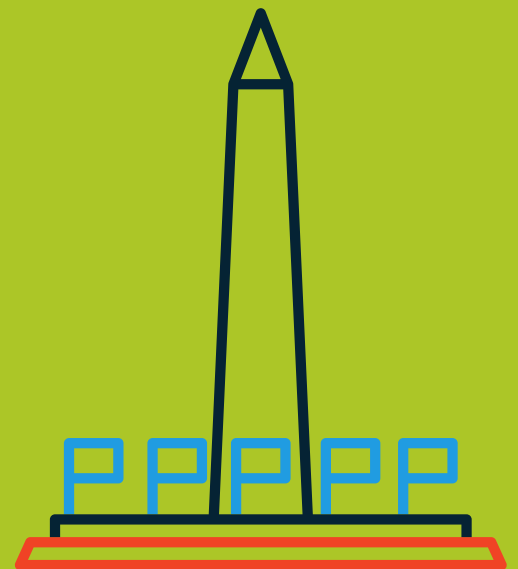
As of 2018, there were 39 states that allow judges to deem people with intellectual developmental disabilities placed under guardianship incompetent to vote, stripping their voting rights (many of these laws still use outdated and disrespectful language). In the same year, 1.5 million people were under legal guardianship, but no data exists to show just how many of these citizens have lost their right to vote.



Another major issue is that there is also not a clear definition for "mentally incompetent," which leaves more room for discrimination and voter suppression. Different judges rule very differently--some strip voting rights in every guardianship case that comes before them, and others apply their own tests like being able to name elected officials. Many advocates call for a federal standard to be put into place using the measure of "Can the individual make a choice?" If so, they should be allowed to cast a vote.

Washington, D.C. & US Territories

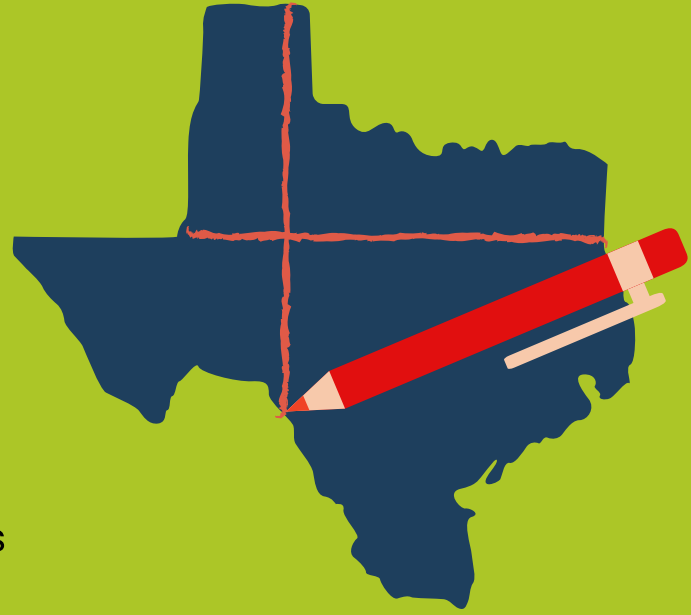
People living in D.C. are unable to have full congressional representation and, instead, are limited to a single delegate who serves in the U.S. House of Representatives (as opposed to having a number of delegates based on the number of people living there). Although D.C. residents can vote for president and have three presidential electoral votes, people living in U.S. territories cannot vote in presidential elections and also have limited representation in Congress (Delegates from US territories cannot vote on passing legislation).



Other Forms of Modern Voter Suppression⁷

Gerrymandering

Partisan gerrymandering is also effectively disenfranchising millions of U.S. voters. Every decade, states redetermine the area of their electoral districts that determine which people are represented by which politician. In many states, this activity is manipulated to try to weaken the amount of support for the opposing party in electoral districts, while maximizing support for one's own party. Unfair and biased redistricting has successfully shifted nearly 60 congressional seats since 2010, shifting 20 seats in favor of the Democratic party and 39 in favor of the Republican party between 2012 and 2016.



Closing Polling Locations

Between 2014-2018, after the Supreme Court's Shelby v. Holder decision (which struck down the VRA's requirement for areas with a history of voting discrimination to get voting changes pre-approved by the federal government), over 1,100 polls were closed in formerly protected cities and counties. Known as The Great Poll Closure primarily shut down polling locations in cities with large minority group populations, despite the fact that voter turnout increased in these areas during the same timeframe. For many rural voters, voters of color, older adult voters, and voters with disabilities, these closures mean they have to travel further and/or wait longer to vote on election day; for some people, this makes it not only difficult, but sometimes impossible to vote.



Inaccessible Polling Locations

In 2016, a small sample study found that about 60% of polling places had potential access barriers outside (steep ramps, lack of accessible path signage, inaccessible parking lots or paths, etc.), and 65% of polling locations had accessible voting booths that did not allow for casting and private and independent vote. People with disabilities vote at a 7% lower rate than nondisabled folx, pointing to the barriers in voting access for this population. In addition, 1 in 9 disabled voters experienced barriers to voting in 2020, which is double the rate of nondisabled voters. If people with disabilities had voted at the same rate as nondisabled voters in the 2018 midterm elections, there would have been 2.35 million more votes, which highlights how big an impact increased voting accessibility could have on elections.

Holds on Voter Registrations

In 2019, Georgia's Secretary of State Brian Kemp put 53,000 voter registrations on hold because of a faulty "exact match" system designed to identify voter registrations with any sort of small discrepancy. As it turned out, 70% of these voter registrations were from Black residents. At the time, Kemp (a white Republican) was also running for governor against Stacey Abrams (a Black Democrat) in a clear conflict of interest.

Cuts to Early Voting & Extended Voting Hours

Early voting options benefit elder citizens, people with disabilities, and working folx. Being able to vote on evenings and weekends ahead of election day expands voting access for everyone. They increase access for getting to the polls for those who can't show up during regular polling hours, and it results in shorter lines at the polls during regular hours on Election Day. In addition, voters of color are more likely to utilize voting early, so extended hours and early voting also provide more access to yet another targeted group.



Voter Purging

Some states remove voters from their voter rolls if they haven't voted in a certain number of previous elections. This disproportionately targets voters of color and creates another logistical barrier for them to access their right to vote.

Voter Identification Requirements

As of 2020, 36 states had voter ID laws, 18 of which specifically required a photo ID. About 21 million Americans (11%) do not have government-issued IDs. Why? First, it costs money for both the ID and the documents needed to get an ID. Second, transportation costs and availability can be difficult to come by for older adults, people with disabilities, rural voters, and folx with low income.



These ID laws are also discriminatory against targeted groups, specifically Black voters. Up to 25% of Black people of voting age do not have government IDs, compared to only about 8% of white people. The types of IDs accepted are also discriminatory (for instance, concealed weapons permits and military IDs may be accepted, but student and public assistance IDs may not). In addition, voter ID laws have proven to lower turnout for voters of color.

For trans and gender diverse voters, voter registration forms and voter ID laws create barriers when they ask for name, gender, and photos that may not match a voter's government-issued ID. Further, trans voters in certain groups are even less likely to have an accurate ID. 69% of young adults 18-24 years old, 48% trans people of color, 54% of trans students, 60% of trans folx with incomes less than \$10K/year, and 55% of trans people with disabilities do not have accurate government-issued IDs that reflect their name, gender, and physical appearance.

College-age young adults also face barriers due to voter ID laws when they attend school outside of their electoral district or in a different state. Many states also do not allow students to use their student IDs.

Conclusion: Toward Universal Suffrage⁸

To engage every citizen in our democracy, everyone must have the right to vote. The fight for that right has been going on for over 150 years now, but there are still citizens who do not have the right to vote and others who experience countless and purposefully-placed barriers in the voting process. We must continue the movement toward universal suffrage, while keeping a watchful eye on those who oppose it as they will continue to create hoops and barriers to keep targeted groups from accessing their right to vote. Below are some recommendations for federal and state lawmakers, as well as some currently proposed legislation to support that is aimed at increasing voting rights and access.

Suggestions for Federal Lawmakers

- Restore Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act
- Ban voter ID laws, felony disenfranchisement laws, modern versions of poll taxes, and voter purging
- Mandate state processes to prevent partisan gerrymandering
- Create federal standard for defining when someone is mentally incompetent to vote (i.e. Are they able to make a choice? If so, they are allowed to vote)
- Pass laws to prevent discriminatory poll closures
- Pass legislation requiring increased language support for voters who do not have high English literacy or proficiency skills
- Declare Election Day a national holiday
- Incentivize state expansion of early voting, voting hours (weekends and evenings), and alternative options (voting by mail)
- Mandate and fund states to regularly run accessibility audits of polling locations, as well as Election Day readiness assessments (look at poll workers, accessible voting machines, etc.)
- Federal-level automatic or same-day registration or pre-registration for 16-17 year olds
- Increase funding for public voter education programs

An illustration of a person with blue hair and a green shirt, seen from the back, holding a large yellow sign. The sign has the text "STOP CLOSING OUR POLLS" written on it in black, hand-drawn capital letters.

STOP CLOSING
OUR POLLS

Suggestions for State Lawmakers

- Get rid of all voter ID laws, felony disenfranchisement laws, modern versions of poll taxes, and voter purging
- Create bipartisan boards for gerrymandering
- Expand early voting, voting hours (weekends and evenings), and alternative options (voting by mail)
- Regularly audit the accessibility of polling locations, as well as Election Day readiness assessments (look at poll workers, accessible voting machines, etc.)
- State-level automatic or same-day registration or pre-registration for 16-17 year olds
- Increase funding for public voter education programs

Proposed Federal Legislation to Increase Voting Rights & Access

John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

The Supreme Court's decision *Shelby v Holder* allowed for states to put more restrictive voting measures in place without federal approval of new changes, but it also recommended that Congress create a new formula for calculating areas more prone to creating discriminatory voting policies. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would do this by:

- Creating a modern VRA formula to determine which states and localities have a pattern of voter discrimination
- Requiring officials to publicly announce voting changes at least 180 days before an election
- Expanding governmental authority to investigate jurisdictions where there may be a higher risk of voting discrimination



Accessible Voting Act

This bill is specifically targeting ways to make voting more accessible for elder citizens and people with disabilities. It's main points include:

- Creating an Office of Accessibility within the Election Assistance Commission to guide state efforts to increase voting accessibility
- Creating a new state grant program for the Office of Accessibility to run aimed at increasing accessibility of voter registration, absentee ballot voting, and voting in person
- Providing up-to-date voting information and resources via an accessible website with information like how to: register to vote, cast an absentee ballot, and find someone to help if their right to vote is challenged
- Increasing the number of accessible options to cast a ballot in federal elections so people can use the voting option that works best for them
- Creating a national resource center on accessible voting to provide cultural competency training for election officials and poll workers
- Re-authorizing U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grants to increase voting accessibility for older Americans and people with disabilities



Resource Links

1. [Workplaces that Work for Women](#), [CDC: Disability Impacts All of Us](#), [CDC: Adults with Disabilities: Ethnicities and Race](#), [National Disability Institute](#)
2. [American Bar](#), [ACLU: History](#), [ACLU: Suppression Laws](#), [A Voice Online](#), [National Women's History Alliance](#), [Oyez](#), [Congress.gov: VRA Amendment 2014](#), [Congress.gov: VRA Amendment 2019](#), [Your Vote Your Voice](#), [DisabilityJustice.org](#), [US Election Assistance Commission](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
3. [Stanford](#), [Library of Congress](#), [CivilRightsTeaching.org](#), [Khan Academy](#), [Your Vote Your Voice](#)
4. [US Election Assistance Commission](#), [Khan Academy](#), [National Women's History Alliance](#), [ADA National Network](#)
5. [Center for American Women and Politics](#), [Census.gov](#), [The Washington Post](#), [Rutgers](#)
6. [Stanford](#), [Brookings](#), [ACLU News & Commentary](#), [The Sentencing Project: Felony Disenfranchisement](#), [The Sentencing Project: 6 Million Lost Voters](#), [PEW](#), [Ballotpedia](#)
7. [American Progress: Partisan Gerrymandering](#), [The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#), [Election Assistance Commission & Rutgers](#), [Rutgers](#), [US Government Accountability Office](#), [Vox](#), [ACLU News & Commentary](#), [ACLU Fact Sheet](#), [ACLU Cutting Early Voting](#), [American Progress: Systemic Inequality](#)
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