

A Chronology of the Growth of Suffrage in the United States

- 1776 At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the right to vote is based on property ownership. Suffrage is reserved primarily for white, male Protestants over the age of 21. There are a few instances of African Americans owning property.
- 1787 With the drafting of the Constitution, states are given the power to regulate their own suffrage laws and they favor white, male property owners.
- 1789 George Washington is elected President by the Electoral College. Only six percent of the entire population is involved in the election.
- 1791 Vermont, the 14th state, moves the country along with a pioneering spirit as they declare all adult, white males, irrespective of property ownership or religious preference, can vote.
- 1816 Twenty-five years later, Indiana, Illinois, and Alabama join the Union and establish voting rules similar to Vermont's. By 1821, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York follow suit. Between 1820 and 1830, the voting electorate doubles. Voter population increase is an impetus to the development of political parties.
- 1842 Rhode Island does not join most other states with reformed voting rights and continues to require property ownership to qualify to vote. This issue causes much controversy, and rival state governments are elected in Providence and Newport. Thomas W. Door begins a movement known as the Door Rebellion, which is victorious and forces Rhode Island to adopt a new constitution in 1843. This provides broader suffrage provisions.
- 1848 African Americans and women are still subject to discriminating practices at the polls and no significant advancement for their cause has occurred, even though reformers have long voiced opposition to the white male-only vote. The plight of women is denounced by Elizabeth Cady Stanton at a gathering of 100 women's rights advocates in Seneca Falls, New York. She reads a proclamation that "all men and women are created equal" and the convention passes several resolutions that call for women being given the vote. The Women's Suffrage Movement has begun.
- 1865 A Civil Rights Act defines citizenship and prohibits discrimination based on race. However, President Andrew Johnson vetoes the bill, stating that it favors the rights of African Americans over whites. The Republican Congress overrides the veto, hoping to lure the votes of former slaves.
- 1868 Slave states allow no African-American person to vote. After the Civil War, lawmakers enact the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, granting citizenship to African Americans and permitting them to vote. However, state officials still attempt to deny them this right.
- 1869 The National American Women's Suffrage Association is founded, with Susan B. Anthony as president.
- 1870 The 15th Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, providing African Americans the right to vote and prohibiting state and local governments from denying that right.

- 1872 Victoria Woodhull contends that under the provisions of the 14th and 15th Amendments, women are citizens of the United States and should be allowed to vote.
- 1872 Susan B. Anthony votes and is arrested for violating a federal law that forbids the votes of confederates or traitors.
- 1875 The Supreme Courts rules in *Minor v. Happersett* that suffrage is not coexistent with the right to citizenship granted in the 14th Amendment, and that the extent of women's rights is up to state legislatures.
- 1876 Poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and literacy tests are introduced in many southern states. These measures are designed to restrict the ability of African Americans to register and vote.
- 1890 Wyoming becomes a state and is the first to provide suffrage for women in its constitution.
- 1913 The 17th Amendment to the Constitution is ratified. It allows popular election of U.S. Senators. No new group receives the right to vote but the voting power is expanded.
- 1920 The 19th Amendment to the Constitution guarantees suffrage for women.
- 1940 Native Americans are made citizens by an act of Congress. However, in New Mexico and Arizona, Native Americans cannot vote because they do not pay property taxes.
- 1943 Georgia lowers its voting age from 21 to 18 in state and local elections.
- 1947 Miguel Trijillo, a Native American and former Marine, wins a suit against New Mexico for not allowing him to vote. Since Native Americans pay most forms of taxes, they are subject to taxation without representation. New Mexico and Arizona are required to give the vote to all their Native American citizens.
- 1957 By provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the Justice Department may punish interference or disruption of protection for African-American voters.
- 1960 The Civil Rights Act of 1960 allows courts to appoint federal referees to protect voting rights. Obstruction of these court orders is a federal offense.
- 1961 The 23rd Amendment to the Constitution allows residents of the District of Columbia to vote for President and Vice-President. Until this amendment, residents were unable to vote since the District is not a state.
- 1964 The Civil Rights Act of 1964 guarantees the right to register to vote without fear of reprisal.
- 1964 The 24th Amendment to the Constitution guarantees that no person can be denied the right to vote due to an inability to pay a tax prior to voting. The "poll tax" is now considered unconstitutional.
- 1965 Martin Luther King leads 25,000 people on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to dramatize the need for more voting rights.
- 1965 The Voting Rights Act is amended to ban the use of literacy tests, poll taxes, and other barriers to voting.
- 1971 The 26th Amendment to the Constitution lowers the voting age to 18.

Source: *KidsVoting USA, Tempe, Arizona*