

Rise of the American electorate

Theme B

A history of voting in America, pp. 187-192

Voting Amendments

- 1. 15th amendment**
- 2. 17th amendment**
- 3. 19th amendment**
- 4. 23rd amendment**
- 5. 24th amendment**
- 6. 26th amendment**

Historical Perspective of the American Electorate

- For the 1st 50 years of the US only white/male/property owners could vote-By 1880, only 14% of adults could vote.
- African-Americans could not vote for the first 176 years of US History
- Women did not have the right to vote for the first 131 years of US
- It took 181 years for those 18-20 to get the right to vote

Voting Methodology

- The Constitution left voting to be determined by the states.
- Only members of the HOR were originally elected at the national level.
- States set the when, how, and by whom aspects of the elections. These varied widely.
- With amendments, litigation & legislation, the electorate slowly expanded.

Milestones

- A. Jackson's easing of property restrictions in the 1830s
- Issue of Federalism? States initially set voter restrictions & qualifications, but the federal gov't gradually took over through the 14th & 15th Amendments to the present where it has almost total control

Milestones

- 15th Amendment- right to vote not denied on account of race
- The Supreme Court in 1870s decided that Amendment ***did not*** confer the right to vote; merely the denial could not be ***explicitly on ground of race***
- Problem...states set up literacy tests, poll taxes, white primaries, and grandfather clauses
- Solution...1965 Voting Rights Act & 24th Am.
- Impact: Black voters increased and began to affect political outcomes in the South.

Alabama Literacy Test

- http://kpearson.project.tcnj.edu/interactive/im_files/test.html

As a group, answer the questions. All responses must be correct or NONE of you can vote!

Milestones

- States started to allow women to vote in 1915 (ex. Wyoming) eventually leading to 19th Amendment in 1920
- 18 year-olds got the right to vote in 1971 as the 26th Amendment was ratified.
 - Largely due to the Vietnam Conflict.
 - Average age of the drafted war dead was 19.
- What impact did these 2 groups have on elections?

Effects of increased eligibility

- Were unforeseen- newly eligible voters did not flock to one particular party over another and did not vote for radical candidates or issues
- So why the continuing low-voter turnout?

Explaining Voter Turnout

- Decline in popular interest in elections
- Weakening of competitiveness between political parties
- Decline more apparent than real:
 - Voters were more easily manipulated in past
 - Voter fraud prevalent (Public polling, Party ballots, floaters “voted early and voted often” and parties counted and the padded ballots) before Australian Ballots adopted around the turn of century.

Explaining Voter Turnout

- Political withdrawal- fewer citizens felt close enough to or care about government to be interested in voting
- Rational ignorance effect- when people purposely decide not to become informed on an issue because they believe that their vote on the issue is not likely to be a deciding one; a lack of incentive to seek the necessary information to cast an intelligent vote

Explaining Voter Turnout

- Unintended consequences of stricter voter restrictions
 - Registration process reduced voting
 - Requirements of the Progressives in the early 1900s caused a drop in voter turnout in an effort to prevent fraud
 - Disenfranchised legal voters, too.

Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)

- Passed as a result of the 2000 election mess and Bush v. Gore decision.
- Requires every state to have a method of counting disputed ballots and voters.
- NC created provisional ballots-Everyone can vote, but local Board of Elections determine which count.
- Set aside money for states to update equipment.

Best: $+\Delta$ Worst: $+\Delta$

How to improve US turnout rates:

Using your notes, defend or attack the following:

- Compulsory voting
- Make voting on issues less complicated and less frequent
- Institute proportional voting rather than winner-take-all
- Strengthen the two-party system
- Vote on the weekends
- Turn election day into a holiday

Assignment

- Read the rest of chapter 8. Take notes on the type of voters. Use “how do we vote?” sheet to label each from reading.
- Read “Guarding against voter fraud” handout. Answer questions at the end.
- Due Tuesday of next week.