



Maggie's Civics Corner

Hi Everyone! It is Election Time. I thought I would discuss the important topic of Voting Rights.

TRUE or FALSE? The Constitution states that all citizens have the right to vote.

FALSE: The fact is that there is no explicit guarantee of a right to vote in the Constitution, but many of the amendments that have been added since the adoption of the Bill of Rights do deal with expansion of the right to vote.

AMENDMENTS DEALING WITH VOTING RIGHTS:

- Fifteenth Amendment (1870) guaranteed right to vote to African Americans in all elections
- Seventeenth Amendment (1913) provided for direct election of members of the United States Senate
- Nineteenth Amendment (1920) guaranteed right to vote to women in all elections
- Twenty-third Amendment (1961) gave right to vote for President to District of Columbia citizens
- Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964) outlawed use of poll tax as requirement to vote in federal elections
- Twenty-sixth Amendment (1971) guaranteed right to vote to citizens eighteen years or older in all elections

The Constitution originally left the matter of voting regulations to the states. Article I, section 2 provides that “the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature.” Accordingly, states could provide for whatever requirements they deemed fit. In addition to literacy tests and poll taxes, states could restrict voting based not only on race and gender, but also religion and property ownership. Not all required citizenship, but there were great differences among the states in terms of residency requirements.

The adoption of the six amendments, the Voting Act of 1965 and the Supreme Court’s interpretation of other provisions of the Constitution, most notably the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, have worked both to reduce the number of restrictions on voting and to make the requirements for voting more similar from state to state.

Civic Resources:

Find out more information on the Voting Act of 1965 at: <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/voting-rights-act>