



Maggie's Civics Corner

Special Lesson – Voting Rights

Maggie says ...

Hi everyone! It is Election Time, so I thought I would discuss the importance of **VOTING RIGHTS**.

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

FALSE: Surprisingly, the fact is 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 deal expressly with the right to vote.

AMENDMENTS THAT ADDRESS VOTING RIGHTS:

AMENDMENT	WHAT IT PROVIDES OR GUARANTEES
15 th Amendment (1870)	- the right to vote in all elections for <i>African Americans</i>
17 th Amendment (1913)	- direct election of members of the U. S. Senate (Can you believe citizens didn't vote for their senators until 1913?!)
19 th Amendment (1920)	- the right to vote in all elections for <i>women</i>
23 rd Amendment (1961)	- the right to vote for president for <i>citizens of Washington, D.C.</i>
24 th Amendment (1964)	- outlawed the use of poll tax as a requirement to vote in federal elections
26 th Amendment (1971)	- right to vote in all elections to <i>citizens 18 years or older</i>

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.” That meant the states could make whatever requirements they deemed fit to vote. In addition to literacy tests and poll taxes, some states restricted voting based not only on race and gender, but also on religion and property ownership. And there were great differences among the states concerning residency requirements.

The adoption of the above-listed six amendments, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and various interpretations by the Supreme Court regarding other provisions of the Constitution, most notably the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, have helped to reduce the number of restrictions on voting rights and to make the requirements for voting more similar from state-to-state.