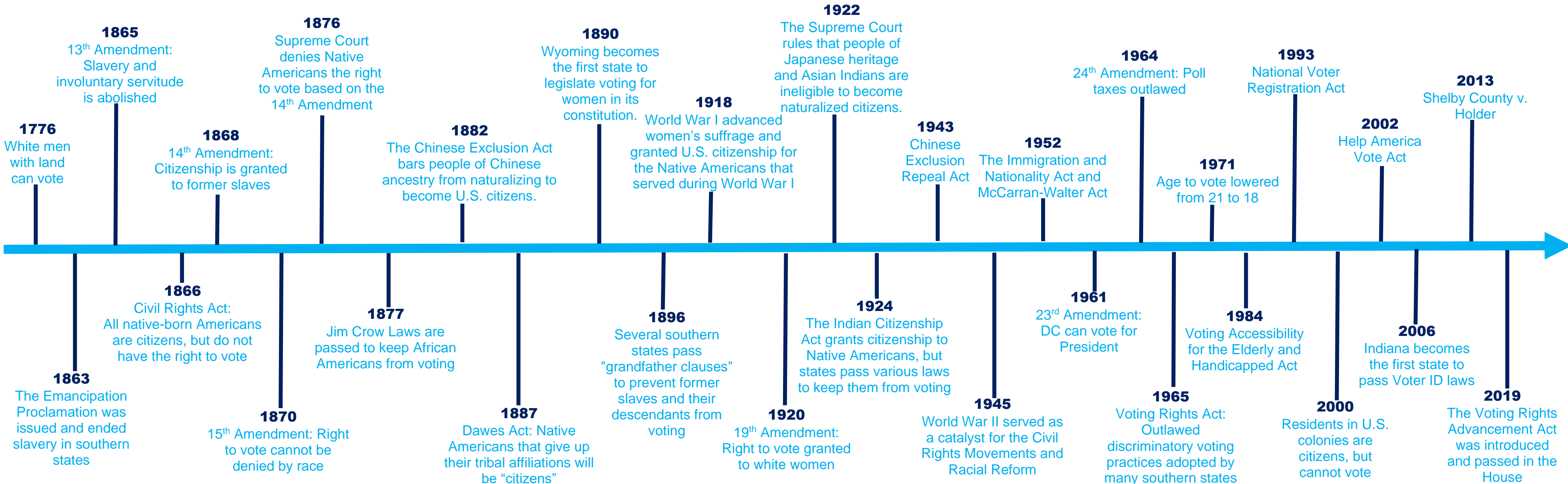


Voting Timeline



❖ **1776-** White men with land can vote

America declares independence from the England and creates a bicameral legislature. The U.S. Constitution leaves it up to the states to determine their own voting laws. The State Legislatures set a standard that only white property owning men can vote.

❖ **1863-** The Emancipation Proclamation

President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring that “all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious Confederate states “are, and henceforward shall be free,” consequently ending slavery in southern rebel states. This proclamation was issued at the start of the third year of the civil war and allowed Black men into the Union Army and the Navy.

❖ **1865-** 13th Amendment

The 13th Amendment, ratified on December 6, 1865, stated that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” This abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in all of America, freeing all slaves and marking the beginning of civil rights for African Americans.

❖ **1866-** Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was the first legislation to define citizenship and declare all citizens as equally protected under the law. This act allowed all males born in the United States to be regarded as citizens “without distinction of race or color, or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude.”

❖ **1868-** 14th Amendment

The 14th Amendment, adopted on July 9, 1868, stated that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside,” and “no states shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” This amendment extended the right to citizenship to everyone born or naturalized in America and granted everyone immutable immunities and the equal protection of the law.

❖ **1870-** 15th Amendment

The 15th Amendment, ratified on February 3, 1870, stated “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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” This granted African American men the right to vote. Nevertheless, states would go on to pass discriminatory voter laws to suppress African Americans from voting.

❖ **1876-** Supreme Court denies Native Americans the right to vote based on the 14th Amendment

The Supreme Court case, *Elk v. Wilkins*, denied John Elk, a Native American, the right to vote, as Justice Gray stated Elk had no claims over citizenship since he had never been naturalized. Despite renouncing his tribal affiliation, assimilating to a U.S. state, learning to speak English, and paying taxes, Elk was denied the right to vote. This set a precedent that Native Americans who paid taxes did not have the right to vote.

❖ **1877-** Jim Crow Laws are passed to keep African Americans from voting

Southern states and border states passed a series of laws that would now become known as “Jim Crow Laws” which enforced racial segregation. These laws formally began around 1877 when the Supreme Court ruled that they could not prohibit segregation on common modes of public transportation.

❖ **1882-** The Chinese Exclusion Act

The Chinese Exclusion Act, signed into law on May 6, 1882, barred all immigration of Chinese laborers for the next 10 years and affirmed that all Chinese immigrants were ineligible for naturalization. The Supreme Court had ruled decades earlier that the Chinese were unable to testify in court, hence, they could not fight against these discriminatory laws. Due to this ineligibility for naturalization, the Chinese in effect were unable to be granted any rights or protections, including the right to vote.

❖ **1887-** Dawes Act:

The Dawes Act, passed into law in 1887, allowed the federal government to divide up tribal land into individual plots. This act was passed to promote assimilation of Native Americans. Only those who agreed to the division of tribal lands and registered with the Office of Indian Affairs were eligible to become U.S. citizens and receive the plot. However, this resulted in the social structure of the tribes to weaken as Native Americans were used to a communal style of living. The failure of this act led the government to hold more of a “hands-off” policy, giving Native Americans the choice between enfranchisement or self-government.

❖ **1890-** Wyoming becomes the first state to legislate voting for women in its constitution.

The Wyoming state convention became the first state to grant White female citizens the right to vote as they passed their state Constitution that included a provision allowing female citizens to vote on September 30, 1889.

❖ **1896-** Several southern states pass "grandfather clauses" to prevent former slaves and their descendants from voting

Several southern states already had amendments in place in their state Constitutions that required voters to be able to read and write English, or own property valued at \$300 or more. However, the “Grandfather Clause” allowed a man to vote, regardless of these previous requirements, if their grandfather or father had voted before January 1, 1867. This allowed White men to still be able to vote even if they could not pass the literacy

tests. However, this clause prevented free African Americans from voting as their grandfathers could not vote before 1867.

❖ **1918-** World War I advanced women's suffrage and granted U.S. citizenship for the Native Americans that served during World War I

World War I helped shift the political attitudes toward women as they filled the jobs left vacant by men when they had to serve in the war. Women supported war efforts and even served overseas as nurses and relief workers. This proved to the country that women were able to set aside their traditional duties to help the nation and deserved the right to vote. World War I also helped Native veterans obtain citizenship because Congress saw their willingness to fight in the war even though they were not required to serve.

❖ **1920-** 19th Amendment

The 19th Amendment, ratified on August 18, 1920, stated 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." This granted White women the ability to vote. However, women of color would still face countless hurdles, for the next few decades, to be able to exercise that right freely.

❖ **1922-** The Supreme Court rules that people of Japanese heritage and Asian Indians are ineligible to become naturalized citizens.

In the Supreme Court case, *Ozawa v. United States*, Takao Ozawa was a U.S. college graduate living and working in Hawaii when his application for citizenship was denied because of his race. The Court ruled that people of Asian descent were ineligible to naturalize as citizens. They affirmed the 1790 Nationality Act that Asians were ineligible to naturalize to become citizens because they were considered racially not "White."

❖ **1924-** The Indian Citizenship Act grants citizenship to Native Americans, but states pass various laws to keep them from voting

The Indian Citizenship Act, passed on June 2, 1924, granted citizenship to all Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the United States. However, the right to vote was left up to the states, in which they passed laws that barred Native Americans from exercising their right to vote.

❖ **1943-** Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act

The Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act was passed to repeal discriminatory exclusion laws that barred Chinese immigrants from immigrating to the United States. This act also required the U.S. to fill an immigration quota of around 105 visas per year for Chinese immigrants. This was largely motivated by Japanese propaganda during World War II, and the act was passed in efforts to improve the U.S.- Chinese relations during WWII.

❖ **1945- World War II served as a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movements and Racial Reform**

While many White men went to serve in the war, African American men filled the manufacturing jobs that were previously occupied by their White counterparts. This allowed them to learn new skills and join unions. Additionally, when many African American soldiers returned home from serving in the war, they were confronted with a wide array of racial injustice and segregation. These soldiers fought to dismantle the racial injustice overseas but still suffered from it at home. This motivated a lot of African Americans to join the Civil Rights Movement.

❖ **1952- The Immigration and Nationality Act and McCarran-Walter Act**

The Immigration and Nationality Act, signed into law in June 1952, extended immigration quotas to all countries and removed the racial restrictions of obtaining citizenship by naturalization. However, the majority of these quotas were allocated to European countries, whereas Asian countries still constituted a small fraction of these quotas and were the only ones tracked by their race. The revised Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, however, abolished these quotas and promoted an immigration policy that reunited families and prioritized skilled labor.

❖ **1961- 23rd Amendment**

The 23rd Amendment, ratified on March 29, 1961, granted citizens residing in the District of Columbia, the ability to vote in the Presidential elections.

❖ **1964- 24th Amendment**

The 24th Amendment, ratified on January 23, 1964, states that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote ... shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay poll tax or other tax.” This consequently prohibited Congress and the states from passing poll taxes to bar anyone from voting.

❖ **1965- Voting Rights Act**

The Voting Rights Act, passed into law on August 6, 1965, abolished any discriminatory practices that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote. This banned literacy tests and allowed the Federal Government to monitor and perform oversight on voter registration and state laws regarding voting in states that had a history of discriminating against African Americans from voting.

❖ **1971- 26th Amendment**

The 26th Amendment, ratified on July 1, 1971, states that “the right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.” This lowered the legal age to vote from 21 to 18. The amendment was a result of young men being conscripted to serve in the Vietnam War but were unable to exercise their right to vote or voice their concerns in government.

❖ **1984- Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act**

The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act, passed on September 28, 1984, required polling locations to be accessible and available for the elderly and people with disabilities. If there are no accessible polling locations available, voters must have an alternative means of voting. Accessible voting registration and aids must also be available to the elderly and people with disabilities.

❖ **1993- National Voter Registration Act**

The National Voter Registration Act, also known as the Motor Vehicle Act, made voting opportunities easier to access for all Americans. This act allowed all Americans to register to vote at their local Department of Motor Vehicle location using a simplified form whenever they applied or renewed their license or ID. This act also required the USPS to mail all election materials.

❖ **2000- Residents in U.S. colonies are citizens, but cannot vote**

In the months leading up to the Presidential election of 2000, a federal court ruled that residents in U.S. colonies are recognized as U.S. citizens but do not have the right to vote in the presidential elections nor are colonies entitled to a seat in the House of Representatives or the Senate.

❖ **2002- Help America Vote Act**

The Help America Vote Act completely reformed the voting process following the Presidential election of 2000. This act was passed in efforts to increase voter education and turnout. HAVA allocated billions of dollars to states to replace voting machines, created the Election Assistance Commission, and created better access for people with disabilities.

❖ **2006- Indiana becomes the first state to pass Voter ID laws**

Although various states passed voter ID laws prior to 2006, Indiana was the first state to pass a strict voter ID law, requiring all voters to present a government-issued ID card before voting at the polls. This sparked a series of strict voter ID laws and voter suppression acts in other states, which disproportionately disenfranchises low income communities and communities of color as they may not be able to afford an ID card.

❖ **2013- Shelby County v. Holder**

In *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court upheld Shelby County's petition that section 5 of the Voting Rights Act violated their 10th Amendment and Article IV. Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act required certain states to obtain federal preclearance before they made any changes to their election laws to ensure states did not make any laws prohibiting Americans from exercising their right to vote on the basis of race. This ruling invalidated provisions of the Voting Rights Act and marked the beginning of several states passing laws to disenfranchise their minority voters.

❖ **2019-** The Voting Rights Advancement Act was introduced and passed in the House

The Voting Rights Advancement Act restores the original protections of the Voting Rights Act and modernize the coverage formula of the Voting Rights Act to determine which states have a history of discrimination. This act would also ensure that voters are notified of all last-minute voting changes and would allow the federal government to send federal observers to polling locations that have a risk of discrimination. This bill passed the House in December 2019 and reintroduced in the Senate in June 2020.