

History of Voting in America

Federal

1776

Voting is controlled by individual state legislatures. Only white male landowners over 21 years old can vote.

1868

14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution grants full citizenship rights, including voting, to men born or naturalized in the U.S.

1870

15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ends racial barriers to voting, but many states continue practicing voter discrimination. Poll taxes, literacy tests, fraud, and intimidation still prevent many from voting.

1920

19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, giving women the right to vote nationwide.

1952

McCarran-Walter Act grants all people of Asian ancestry the right to become citizens.

1924

Indian Citizenship Act grants Native Americans citizenship and voting rights.

Washington

1910

Washington voters amend the state Constitution, allowing women to vote and run for office.

1912

Washington voters amend the state Constitution, giving citizens the power to propose initiatives and referenda; the first statewide initiative in 1914 bans alcohol sales.

1923

Washington voters pass Initiative 40, repealing the poll tax. Poll taxes are used in many states as a way to discriminate against certain voters.



1964

The federal Civil Rights Act is passed to ensure that all men and women age 21 and older, regardless of race, religion, or education, have the right to vote. The 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, eliminating poll taxes nationwide.

1965

The federal Voting Rights Act suspends literacy tests. Registration and voting rights are now federally enforced.

1971

The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowers the voting age to 18.

1975

The federal Voting Rights Act is renewed, permanently banning literacy tests nationwide. Section 203 is added, requiring translated voting materials in areas with large numbers of citizens with limited English skills.

1984

The federal Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act requires polling places to be accessible to people with disabilities.

1986

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) grants voting rights to United States Military and Uniformed Services, Merchant Marine, and other citizens overseas, living on bases in the United States, abroad, or aboard ship.

2000

The U.S. Census reveals that Washington's non-English speaking population has grown large enough that voting materials in some counties must be translated to comply with the 1975 Voting Rights Act.

2008

After a U.S. Supreme Court battle, Washington enacts the "Top 2 Primary" that allows voters to choose any candidate regardless of party preference.

2022

Law goes into effect allowing 17-year-olds to vote in a Primary Election if they will be 18 by the November General Election.

2011

Washington becomes the second state in the U.S. (after Oregon) to vote entirely by mail.

2019

Future Voter, Same Day Registration, and Pre-paid Postage (as funded by legislature) laws go into effect.