WELL BEING IN THE NATION NETWORK

Voting + Racial Justice History Resource Guide

How To Use This Resource:

The complicated legacy of voting in the United States is a useful lens for understanding the evolution of systemic racism throughout history. The resources in this document are organized to provide an overview of this history. The overall history has broken up into key three periods. The key below provides an explanation for these three groupings:

1. Racism + Voting in Early US History (1619-1776-1877)
    - In this time period, we can identify the roots of voter suppression by studying how and why Black Americans and others were explicitly excluded from voting by law. This period starts with 1619, which was the date that the first enslaved Africans were brought to the United States, as well as 1776, when the signing of the Declaration of Independence made voting legal for all white men with property. This period also includes Reconstruction, which was an important moment in the history of Black electoral power. Reconstruction (1863-1877), the period directly following the Civil War, was the first time Black men could vote with the passing of the 15th amendment. Over 2000 Black men won elections and held office.

2. Voting in the Age of Jim Crow (1880-1965)
    - After Reconstruction, white people organized to restore racial hierarchy. In this period, we see white lawmakers make new methods to restrict the Black vote. The end of Reconstruction in 1880 marks the rise of Jim Crow, a time when racist lawmakers passed laws to segregate and criminalize Black people in every aspect of life. In the Jim Crow South, white politicians and racial terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan collaborated to ensure that Black people could not vote. However, racist voter suppression was not limited to the South: across the country, white politicians targeted Black people by passing laws which disenfranchised those convicted of a crime. This period ends with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1965, which gave the federal government tools to ensure that Southern states could not restrict Black people from voting.

3. Current Issues in Voting (1965-Present)
    - Historians refer to the period following the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968), when Black people organized to fight segregation and win formal equality under law, as the "Colorblind Era." In our current Colorblind Era, structural racism maintains and evolves without the passage of explicitly racist policies. This process is especially evident in the issue of voter suppression, wherein politicians place barriers to voting that target Black voters, poor voters, and other oppressed groups *without using explicit racial language or justification.* This time period marks the rise of Mass Incarceration, in which Black people have been targeted for arrest, imprisonment, and resulting disenfranchisement. Additionally, voting access has been restricted in the last 5 years following the Supreme Court's *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, which weakened the Federal government's ability to force states to make voting accessible.

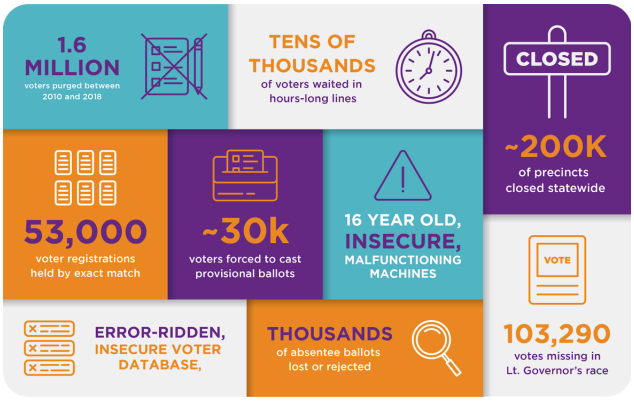


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Historical Period	Title	Description	Author/Publication
Overview	Who got the right to vote when? A history of voting rights in America.	This timeline provides a historical overview of important moments in the history of American democracy. At each event, the article notes the groups of people (Black Americans, women, immigrants) who could legally vote, showing that these rights did not always expand in linear fashion. Key Topics: Legal change, progress is not linear	Al Jazeera
1787	Yes, The Electoral College Really is a Vestige of Slavery. It's Time to get Rid of It.	The article dispels common explanations for the Electoral College and demonstrates how the Electoral College gave enslaving states disproportionate power throughout US history. Key Topics: Electoral College, 3/5ths Compromise, Representative Democracy	Dan Kennedy for WGBH News
1863-1877	Asserting Equality: Black Political Activism During Reconstruction	Article highlighting the political power Black Americans obtained during Reconstruction, as well as early forms of voter suppression lead by white Southern politicians and the KKK. Key Topics: Radical Reconstruction, Black Electoralism	Gale
1874-Present	Racism & Felony Disenfranchisement: An Intertwined History	This article maps how incarceration was employed across the United States to constrain Black political power by criminalizing Black life and disenfranchising those with a record. Key Topics: Felony Disenfranchisement, Black Codes	Erin Kelley for the Brennan Center for Justice
1880-1965	Techniques of Direct Disenfranchisement, 1880-1965	This article effectively lays out the techniques of voter suppression employed in the Jim Crow South in the period between Reconstruction (the period directly following the Civil War) and the passage of the Voting Rights act. Although the article is content-heavy, it is organized effectively to make the information digestible. Key Topics: Poll Taxes, Literacy Test, Grandfather Clause, Lynching	University of Michigan
1954-1965	The Voting Rights Act: Ten Things You Should Know	This article adds to the mainstream historical narratives of the Voting Rights Act by focusing on the strategy and efforts of ground organizers in the South. The authors take special attention to SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) role in expanding access to voting. Key Topics: SNCC, Fannie Lou Hamer, Black Panther Party	Crosby and Richardson for Zinn Education Project
1965-Present	"One Person, No Vote" and the Impact of Voter Suppression	Video interview outlining the strategies used by Republican lawmakers to prevent Black people from voting. Anderson does an exceptional job explaining why benign sounding ideas like "voter ID laws" are used to disenfranchise Black and poor folks and dispels common myths about voter suppression. Key Topics: Voter ID Laws, Voter Roll Purging	Carol Anderson for the Daily Show
2015-Present	How *Shelby County v. Holder* Broke America	Newkirk examines the legacy of the Shelby v. Holder decision, which weakened the Voting Rights Act by ending the Federal Government's legal obligation to oversee voting processes in states with histories of voter suppression. Key Topics: Pre-clearance, Thurgood Martial	Vann Newkirk for The Atlantic
2015-Present	Shelby County v. Holder: An Explainer	Well-organized overview of the *Shelby* decision that uses an FAQ format. Dispels common misconceptions on the Voting Rights Act and looks at how the decision effected the 2016 election. Key Topics: Federal Enforcement, Shelby County V. Holder	Rock the Vote
Present	How the Media Can Mount A War Against Voter Suppression	Article challenges media tendency closely track polls while leaving voter suppression an unaddressed issue. Savan provides examples of methods that journalists could use to call attention to rampant voter suppression in the United States. Article about voter suppression tactics and current practices in our current election period. Suppression efforts range from the seemingly unobstructive,	Leslie Savan for The New Republic

	ACLU Block The Vote: Voter Suppression in 2020 See Say 2018 : Reported voting issues ACLU Voting Rights Act Major dates in History See Say 2020 See Say 2020 : Reported voting issues	like voter ID laws and cuts to early voting, to mass purges of voter rolls and systemic disenfranchisement. Key Topics: Media Coverage, Narratives, Polling This is a map by democracy labs to view voter suppression through self-reported voting incidents during the 2018 elections. This article from the ACLU observes and explains every major date leading up to the voting rights act. It's a timeline of voting in the United States. Link that allows individuals to report voter suppression and election interference they witness or experience. Map of self-reported voter suppression incidents for the 2020 elections thus far.	