

Who Can Vote?

A Brief History of Voting Rights in the United States

Educator's Guide

Developed by

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

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NOTE TO EDUCATORS AND LIBRARIANS

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is delighted to bring you this traveling exhibition. Traveling exhibitions are freestanding panels that contain reproductions of important historical documents and images, and interpretive text by leading scholars. Exhibitions cover a range of major topics in American history, including the Revolutionary era, the Civil War era, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Since 1997, exhibitions have been hosted in almost fifty states nationwide.

One of the goals of this guide are to expand educational outreach in your community. Document-based traveling exhibitions, in particular, support the mission of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, a New York–based national nonprofit devoted to the teaching and learning of American history. Gilder Lehrman draws on top scholars, an unparalleled collection of original historical documents, and a national network of affiliate schools to create and provide a broad range of innovative resources, help new generations of students learn about American history in a way that is engaging and memorable, and promote critical thinking and excellent writing.

For further information about the Institute, visit www.gilderlehrman.org.

OVERVIEW OF EXHIBITION

This exhibition examines voting rights with an emphasis on the role of the Constitution and the impact of, and the relationship between, the states and federal government in determining who is allowed to vote.

Key Takeaways

- Voting requirements are primarily determined by states.
- The right to vote is fundamental to representative democracy.
- Voting rights have expanded significantly since the Constitution was ratified in 1788.
- Throughout American history, people have fought to gain and keep the right to vote.

PANEL OVERVIEWS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Panel 1: The Founding Era, 1787-1838

The British North American colonies greatly desired local self-government and formed their own legislative bodies to create policies for regulating internal colonial activity. In the 1760s and 1770s, the British Parliament and monarchy imposed stricter oversight and taxes on the colonies, which led to growing calls for separation from the mother country. The colonies declared war against Britain, won their independence, and formed a new system of government. Early in the republic's history, in 1787, the founders scribed the United States Constitution.

Constitutional Convention delegates discussed the topic of voting in the new representative government. James Madison explained the differing viewpoints by stating that limiting suffrage to people who owned land would oppress the rights of poorer people, who had also fought in the revolution. He also cautioned that giving everyone the right to vote might allow the lower classes, who made up the majority of the population, too much power; he suspected that poorer people lacked the education and judgment to make good decisions. Ultimately, the Constitutional Convention's delegates decided to give each individual state the authority to make their own policies regarding voting rights and requirements rather than mandating provisions from the national level.

Panel 1 of the exhibition focuses on the early years of the United States under the governance of the Constitution and presents sources reflecting the varying policies each state implemented related to voting rights. Source 1.1 is an excerpt from Article I, Section 4 of the United States Constitution, which outlines the authority given to each state for determining their own election policy. The remaining sources on the panel reflect the different approaches taken by various states in terms of religious, gender, and racial eligibility requirements for voting. In particular, Sources 1.2 and 1.5 provide evidence of how these early decisions sometimes changed over time. New Jersey's legislature allowed property-owning unmarried women and free Black men to vote in the years immediately following ratification of the Constitution. However, as Source 1.5 indicates, New Jersey revoked the state's inclusive voting policies and like most other states made race and gender a condition for voter eligibility. Because the federal government did not establish a uniform national policy for voter eligibility, the resulting state requirements varied widely across the country.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. How did the Constitution's authors describe the responsibilities of the state and federal government regarding elections? Find a quote from the exhibition to support your claim.
2. According to the exhibition, which states in the early 1800s left in place - or even added - race and gender restrictions for voting even as they ended property requirements?

Panel 2: The Jacksonian Era to the Civil War, 1828-1865

Following the War of 1812, the possibility of expanded voting rights for all White men became the subject of widespread political debate. While men ineligible to vote clamored for suffrage in newspaper columns and street protests, the men who *could* vote pondered the question from within political parties. The declining Federalist Party was not keen on expanding voting rights to men who did not own property. Federalists had always asserted that property ownership made citizens deeply invested in their community's long-term well-being because property owners could not easily move away if the government was poorly run. They also suspected that the virtues of thrift and education that helped a person acquire property were less present in the propertyless class. On the other hand, the new Democratic Party, formed under Andrew Jackson's leadership, made universal White male suffrage a priority. The idea of the common man wielding more political power was exactly the dilemma James Madison pondered at the Constitutional Convention almost 50 years earlier, but this time the resolution was in favor of removing property restrictions. Cast to the sidelines, Black men, Native Americans, and women observed that race and gender were still limiting factors in terms of office-holding and voting.

Panel 2 of the exhibition focuses on widespread reform movements from the early nineteenth century. In addition to universal White male suffrage reform, the period also saw the women's movement and support for abolition increase. Source 2.2 vividly shows the broad range of people being courted for their votes in the "Stump Speaking" painting from 1854. Voters in rural areas and new Western states factored more than ever into campaign strategy, given the expansion of voting rights to the lower classes and White males who did not own property. Source 2.3 includes text from the famed Declaration of Sentiments, which resulted from the Seneca Falls, New York convention in support of women's rights. The authors' dramatic use of the Declaration of Independence as a model text for supporting women's rights emphasized the injustice of being denied natural rights and equality.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. Look closely at the paintings by George Caleb Bingham. What does the artist suggest were the benefits and problems of expanding the number of voters to include all White male citizens?
2. How did immigration start to impact voting rights in the nineteenth century?
3. During this time period, was the decision regarding extending voting rights a state decision or a national decision?

Panel 3: The Civil War and Reconstruction, 1865-1877

Since the Constitutional Convention, decisions regarding voter eligibility had been left to the states. Under this procedure, Black Americans - both enslaved and free - had been denied voting rights or had additional property requirements for eligibility. The end of the Civil War marked a turning point in the debate over voting rights. At this pivotal moment, the federal government took a step to define voter eligibility regarding race, rather than leaving each state to make its own policy. New constitutional amendments, known as the Reconstruction Amendments, were adopted at the conclusion of the war and their ratification became a stipulation for Southern states to regain representation in Congress. The Reconstruction Amendments not only ended slavery, they also extended voting rights to Black men. During a brief period following the Civil War's conclusion and the ratification of these amendments, Black men exercised political power and in many cases held elected offices at the state and national levels. By 1877, the new political participation enjoyed by Black men across the nation was once again taken away through both new state laws passed by many Southern states and targeted intimidation tactics that went unpunished by local law enforcement. The debate over which level of government - state or federal - had the power to determine voting rights was once again left unresolved.

Panel 3 of the exhibition focuses on the difficult challenges regarding protecting the rights of Black Americans during the Reconstruction era. Source 3.4 highlights some of the initial successes in the exercise of Black voting rights by showing the newly elected African American members of the US House of Representatives. Source 3.5 demonstrates how quickly the early successes of the federal government's efforts to protect African American rights were thwarted. This source is a famous 1868 Thomas Nast cartoon from *Harper's Weekly*, which shows the emerging efforts of the period to restrict African American men from exercising their newly granted voting power.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. How was the federal government able to temporarily guarantee voting rights to African Americans following the Civil War?
2. How were the new federally guaranteed African American voting rights still challenged by some states?

Panel 4: Voting in the Jim Crow Era

Violence, intimidation, and state legislative action once again began to challenge the federal government's authority to define voting rights in the United States. The shift from state authority over the issue to the federal government's establishment of the 15th Amendment's national criteria for voting related to race was short-lived. Many states quickly enacted what became known as Jim Crow laws – or laws that reinforced and protected White political power, especially in the South. Jim Crow laws circumvented the national mandate to eliminate racial discrimination against prospective voters. Not only did these state level laws find a way around implementing the Fifteenth Amendment protections of Black voters, they also legalized segregation of public buildings and facilities.

Panel 4 of the exhibition examines the state policy challenges to the Fifteenth Amendment. Source 4.1 presents examples of state laws meant to restrict Black voters from exercising their newly established national voting power. The images show literacy test documents from Mississippi and Louisiana and how the answers could be evaluated with ever changing criteria depending on who was taking the test. Therefore, the Fifteenth Amendment was not violated for denying an applicant the right to vote based on his race, instead the state was refusing to grant voting rights because the applicant failed a literacy test, which was subjectively assessed. There were many uneducated White applicants who were deemed literate in states with literacy tests because they were assessed against a comparatively lenient standard. Source 4.4 depicts American Indians as another group of people who were denied voting privileges in some states. The 1871 cartoon from *Harper's Weekly* shows large groups of immigrants ready to vote at the polls while the police turn away an American Indian. The image demonstrated how voting rights were impacted by the Fourteenth Amendment's definition of a citizen. More immigrants were able to vote after they gained citizenship, while many Indigenous Americans were barred from voting because they were not considered citizens.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. What methods did states use to suppress Black voters? What made these methods so effective?

2. How much success did the Reconstruction Amendments have in eliminating racial discrimination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? Explain the status of both Black and American Indian voter access.

Panel 5: Women's Suffrage

A few states, primarily in the emerging western frontier, granted women suffrage far earlier than the final national step of the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification in 1920. For over 150 years, women from various backgrounds, regions, and classes used a variety of strategies to press for gender equality in voting rights. Many leaders of the women's movement, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, also engaged in active support for other social causes such as abolition and prohibition.

Panel 5 of the exhibition highlights the early western state victories for women's rights and the long history of the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification. Of particular interest is a quote from Mary Church Terrell, in which she laments her situation as being subjected to both gender and racial discrimination. Sources 5.1 and 5.5 illustrate the early adoption of women's rights in the West as compared to the opposition the movement faced in the northeastern and southern United States. Of particular interest is Source 5.1's cartoon-styled map from a 1915 issue of *Puck* magazine, entitled "The Awakening." In this depiction, the march of Lady Liberty and "progress" is moving from West to East. The perception of the West as being untamed frontier land is challenged here by the progressive nature of the Western states in their passage of women's suffrage reform far earlier than the Eastern establishment. Here, some states' voting laws were notably more progressive than the federal standard. Source 5.3 emphasizes the simultaneous timing of social reform efforts in the early 1900s. The Ohio postcard shown in the source image references the various amendments being voted on in the 1914 Ohio election. Taxation, prohibition, and women's suffrage were all being considered by state voters. Please note that students may need clarification of the phrase, "two sides of the same coin," as it is used in the description of Source 5.3. The phrase should be explained as two reforms that might initially seem unrelated, but which were directed toward the same aim: better government. Reformers argued that drunken voters (see painting on Panel 2) and politicians who accepted bribes from the liquor industry made poor judgements that affected everyone else. Reformers concluded that prohibition would improve men's reasoning abilities, that women's suffrage would include sober and altruistic voters in the electorate, and that the two reforms would combine to create a government better for workers, wives, and children.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. Name two states where women could vote before the Nineteenth Amendment. Name two types of elections in which women might vote, even if forbidden from participation in presidential elections.
2. According to the Supreme Court, why didn't the Fourteenth Amendment's rule that "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States" necessarily mean that women citizens should be able to vote anywhere that men citizens were allowed to vote?

Panel 6: The Civil Rights Era

The modern Civil Rights Movement was energized by efforts to desegregate the military during World War II. Following the war, activists pressed the federal government to intervene and uphold the due process and voting rights already guaranteed to Black Americans by the Reconstruction amendments. They created organizations and funded legal challenges. By the mid-1950s the Supreme Court overturned the previous *Plessy v. Ferguson* protection of segregation by declaring segregation of public schools unconstitutional in their *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* ruling. Southern states reacted by resisting integration through outright defiance and violence. Regarding voting, the federal government and some state governments had contradictory laws; a vote could be illegally cast under state law while being protected under federal law.

Panel 6 of the exhibition depicts the protests and subsequent federal legislation that was passed to once again transfer the power to define rights and voter qualification away from restrictive state authority. Source 6.4 depicts the horrific violence in Selma, Alabama in 1965 as an event that prompted President Lyndon Johnson to put greater pressure on the national legislature to pass a voting rights bill, which would void the Jim Crow laws that prevented Black Americans from exercising their right to vote. Source 6.5 shows the successful result of Civil Rights action by organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In this source, President Lyndon Johnson is shown signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law. This law was passed the year following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which had made segregation illegal in public places and facilities. The 1964 law did not include voter discrimination in its mandate. The 1965 law specifically focused on the issue of voter qualifications and further mandated from the national level criteria states must use for voter registration.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. How did the interaction between federal and state governments complicate voting rights between the First World War and the Civil Rights Movement?
2. What obstacles did voting rights activists encounter? What new organizations did they develop to advocate for themselves?

Panel 7: Enfranchising New Voters

As the Civil Rights Movement fought to ensure voting rights for Black voters, poll taxes continued to disenfranchise those who could not afford the tax. While progress was made during the 1960s, new questions of expanding voting rights emerged and continue to be debated in the United States. Questions related to age and residency top the list of modern voting rights debates. In each of these modern instances concerning voter qualification, it has been the federal government to which activists have turned for resolution and not the states.

Panel 7 of the exhibition highlights a few of the constitutional changes that have been made since the 1960s related to voting rights. Source 7.3 introduces the 23rd Amendment, which gives people living within Washington, DC the right to vote in presidential elections. Presidential elections are decided by Electoral College delegates, who are chosen by the popular vote in each state. Because Washington, DC was purposely established in 1790 to be a special federal district and not part of any one state, there were no Electoral College votes allocated to the district. Over time, the population of people living within the district grew although the residents living there lacked representation in the federal government. The 1961 passage of the 23rd Amendment gave residents of the federal district Electoral College votes for the first time. Source 7.4 represents the changes in voting age requirements that resulted from outcry over the Vietnam War. At the time, 18 year old young men could be drafted to serve in the war but were not eligible to vote until age 21. Therefore, elected leaders were making war decisions that impacted the lives of many drafted soldiers, who were not eligible to vote. In 1971, the 26th Amendment was passed as a result of the Vietnam War and questions that arose related to the age of those men being drafted to serve.

Guiding Questions

Students should be encouraged to engage with the primary sources on the exhibition panels, and cite evidence from them in their responses.

1. How were poll taxes used by many Southern states to racially restrict African American voters?
2. Panel 7 spotlights a 1957 quote by then-Senator John F. Kennedy, in which he stresses that the question of voting age should be left for the states to decide. Why did it take

until 1971 for the 26th Amendment to be ratified if the question was already being debated over a decade earlier?

STUDENT GLOSSARY

Students may benefit from further clarification of the terms listed below as they analyze each corresponding panel. The definitions provided here are meant to be a general explanation for each term as it relates to the source used on the exhibition panel.

Panel 1: The Founding Era, 1787-1838

1. Popular Election – election in which the decision regarding a new policy or choosing a candidate for office is made directly by the people being governed; the term “popular” in this sense is an adjective meaning “of the people.” This type of election is democratic because it involves more than just a small group of people making decisions for the entire jurisdiction.
2. Poll Tax – Citizens were required in many states to pay this tax to be eligible to vote; poll taxes were applied to the cost of running elections. Poll taxes prevented economically challenged people from voting and are no longer legal.
3. Naturalization – Legal process by which immigrants become citizens. The requirements for US naturalization have at times restricted immigrants from certain nations or regions from obtaining citizenship.
4. Free State / Slave State – Some states had abolished slavery prior to the US Civil War, even though the federal government had not made a national law regarding the issue. Those states that did not allow slavery were known as free states. Those states that legally protected slavery through their state laws were known as slave states.
5. Suffrage – the right to vote
6. Disenfranchise - take away a person’s right to vote; The term “enfranchise” means to give someone the right to vote.
7. Ratified - formally approved; The Constitution did not go into effect until it was ratified - or formally approved - by the states. In the United States, treaties and amendments are examples of policy that must be ratified in order to become legal.

Panel 2: The Jacksonian Era to the Civil War, 1828-1865

1. Electorate - the voters eligible to participate in an election

2. “Stump” Speaking - a type of speech that is usually given by a candidate campaigning for votes; The term originated in the nineteenth century when candidates often campaigned in rural areas by standing on tree stumps to talk to a gathered crowd.
3. Petitioned - a group of people making a formal request for some action to be taken by government officials. The right of people to make requests of the government without being punished for making the request is protected under the Bill of Rights.
4. Grievances - complaints of being treated unfairly
5. Inalienable - can not be denied; automatic

Panel 3: The Civil War and Reconstruction, 1865-1877

1. Servitude - lacking freedom due to being bound or under the control of someone else
2. Abridged - make shorter; usage in this document means to restrict in some way

Panel 4: Voting in the Jim Crow Era

1. Vigilantes - people who decide to enforce laws or customs themselves rather than abiding by due process
2. Extralegal - an action that goes beyond what is specifically allowed by law
3. Segregation - to keep separate; In this case, people of different races were kept legally separate in public facilities and spaces.
4. Jim Crow South - refers to the southern states that legalized segregation through passing state laws nicknamed “Jim Crow Laws;” The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century term “Jim Crow” carried a negative connotation toward African Americans.
5. Loophole - a way to avoid following a rule or law without actually violating any rules or laws.
6. Bureaucratic - government procedures that are often complex and time consuming

Panel 5: Women's Suffrage

1. Elusive - difficult to obtain
2. Picketed - to have protested in front of a location to persuade others of an injustice caused by those occupying the location
3. Galvanized - convinced by others to increase one's commitment to a desired (generally collective) action
4. Prohibition - legal ban on alcohol production and distribution

Panel 6: The Civil Rights Era

1. Pan-tribal - comprised of members of many different tribes; The prefix "pan" means all or across.

Panel 7: Enfranchising New Voters

1. Catalyst - something that increases the rate or pace of a subsequent reaction
2. Felony - a serious crime that often involves violence and carries a heavy punishment

GALLERY WALK ACTIVITY GUIDE

As students interact with the *Who Can Vote?* Traveling Exhibition, this Gallery Walk Activity Guide can be used to increase their understanding of the primary sources presented on each panel and the overall message the exhibit presents. The “Glossary Terms” listed for each panel are defined in the exhibition’s Educator’s Guide. Students should try using context clues from various parts of the panel to create their own definitions of the terms. Following the Gallery Walk, students should be provided with full definitions from the glossary.

Panel 1: The Founding Era, 1787-1838

Overview: What restrictions were placed on voting rights during the colonial era?

Source 1.1: According to the US Constitution, what level of government has the power to establish voting rights in the United States?

Source 1.2: Explain why the title of the 1880 Howard Pyle engraving is “Women at the Polls in New Jersey in the Good Old Times.”

Source 1.3: According to the Naturalization Act of 1790, which groups of people would have been excluded from citizenship?

Source 1.4: According to the 1800 election map, who were the candidates from each party and in what part of the country did each carry the most votes?

Source 1.5: Which states added voter qualification restrictions rather than expanding voting rights during the early decades of the 1800s?

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Popular Election:

Poll Tax:

Naturalization:

Free State/Slave State:

Suffrage:

Disenfranchise:

Ratified:

Panel 2: The Jacksonian Era to the Civil War, 1828-1865

Overview: What does the term “common man” mean as applied to this time period?

Source 2.1: What factors led to the doubling of voter turnout between the 1824 and 1828 presidential elections?

Source 2.2: In the image *Stump Speaking*, which groups of people are depicted in the crowd listening to the candidate? Which groups of people are not included in the scene? In the second image, *County Election*, how are the voters being portrayed?

Source 2.3: Look at the text of the Declaration of Sentiments. Which important document from United States history did Elizabeth Cady Stanton use as a model for her statements? Give examples.

Source 2.4: Give a specific example of a territory acquired from Mexico following the Mexican-American War and how citizenship was defined for those residents, who suddenly were living in another country.

Source 2.5: Why was it important for the election process to allow soldiers in the field to vote with an absentee ballot in 1864?

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Electorate:

“Stump” Speaking:

Petitioned:

Grievances:

Inalienable:

Panel 3: The Civil War and Reconstruction, 1865-1877

Intro: What are the Reconstruction Amendments? What was their purpose?

Source 3.1: What steps were required of Confederate states to rejoin the United States?

Source 3.2: How were non-voters able to communicate with the government despite their lack of enfranchisement?

Source 3.3: In the image entitled “The First Vote,” what can be inferred about the experiences of the people shown voting?

Source 3.3: In the text of the 15th Amendment, which level of government is responsible for establishing any racial criteria for voting?

Source 3.4: Why were Black men suddenly being elected to hold state and federal offices from Southern states in the 1870s?

Source 3.5: How were many White citizens of the lower classes able to vote, even if they could not afford to pay a poll tax?

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Servitude:

Abridged:

Panel 4: Voting in the Jim Crow Era

Intro: Which region(s) of the United States used racially restrictive state laws to prevent Black citizens from voting after Reconstruction ended?

Source 4.1: How were literacy tests often designed for uneducated White citizens to still acquire voting eligibility?

Source 4.2: What kinds of problems were voters exposed to when there were no secret ballots?

Source 4.3: The White primary system was unique to southern states and was only used within the Democratic Party's primary election (an election to choose the party's candidate in advance of the general election). Why was the primary election typically more significant in these southern states than the general election?

Source 4.4: The men depicted as voters in the 1871 *Harper's Weekly* are stereotyped representations of immigrants. What region of the country is represented in the image? What evidence from the image suggests this region?

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Vigilantes:
Extralegal:
Segregation:
Jim Crow South:
Loophole:
Bureaucratic:

Panel 5: Women's Suffrage

Intro: In what ways did women's suffrage highlight the dynamic between the state and federal government as it relates to voting rights?

Source 5.1: What is distinctive and interesting about the image's depiction of progress and its movement across the United States?

Source 5.2: What was Virginia Minor's claim against Missouri in the 1872 Supreme Court case?

Source 5.3: In what other reform efforts were women involved during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

Source 5.4: Based on the image text, why was the proposed amendment to protect women's voting rights rejected in 1879?

Source 5.5: According to the map, what year did your home state extend suffrage to women? If your state does not have a date, when does that mean women would have gained the right to vote?

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Elusive:
Picketed:
Galvanized:
Prohibition:

Panel 6: Civil Rights Era

Intro: How did the United States' participation in World War II influence the emergence of the modern Civil Rights Movement?

Source 6.1: What provisions did the Snyder Act carry and what events prompted the law's passage?

Source 6.2: In what ways did American Indian tribes work together to improve their treatment in the United States?

Source 6.3: The poster depicted with this source suggests the three murdered students in Mississippi were martyrs for the cause of freedom. Explain the basis for this claim.

Source 6.4: What are some key events in the history of the Civil Rights Movement?

Source 6.5: With the passage of the bill referenced in this source, which level of government became most responsible for determining American voter qualifications?

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Pantribal:

Panel 7: Enfranchising New Voters

Intro: What topics became the focus of voting rights expansion in the 1960s and 1970s?

Source 7.1: Explain the meaning of the two cartoons shown with this source.

Source 7.2: In what way was the federal government claiming more power over the states with the passage of the 24th amendment?

Source 7.3: Explain the meaning behind the phrase "Mend the Crack" used on the DC Voting Rights Amendment bumper sticker?

Source 7.4: Why did Congress lower the voting age to 18 when it did? What other historical events contributed to their decision to act?

Source 7.5: What group of Americans are not allowed to vote according to the 1974 *Richardson v. Ramirez* ruling?

Source 7.6: Explain the complex result of the 2000 presidential election, and why this is related to the history of voting rights.

GLOSSARY TERMS:

Define the following Glossary Terms in your own words using context clues from the exhibit panel.

Catalyst:

Felonies:

TIMELINE ACTIVITY

Voting Rights Decision Making: Federal vs State Power

Develop a timeline of key events from United States voting rights history. Use the timeline below to complete the following steps:

1. Label key voting rights decisions found on the various panels of the Traveling Exhibition on the corresponding sections of the timeline. Include at least 14 laws or policy decisions related to voting rights.
2. Color code the different sections of the timeline bar based on which level of government most controlled voting rights decisions during each period. Shade the bar RED to identify greater federal power or BLUE to identify greater state power.

1787	
1810	
1850	
1890	
1930	
1970	
2010	

DEBATE ACTIVITY

“Should the Voting Age in the United States Be Lowered to 16?”

Procedure:

2010

1. Students should investigate the issue on the Internet using reliable and credible sources. What, if anything, makes sixteen year olds different from eighteen year olds?
2. Students will formulate an argument based on evidence and reasoning to support either keeping the voting age at 18 or lowering it to 16 for the entire nation. Does any point of difference between a typical eighteen year old and sixteen year old suggest that sixteen year olds would be inferior voters? Would some criteria other than age be a better way to distinguish maturity, autonomy, or other virtues necessary to vote responsibly?
3. Each student will present their argument by choosing one of the following formats:
 - Persuasive infographic to support their argument
 - 2-3 minute persuasive video
 - Campaign style speech to support their argument
 - Develop a marketing strategy to promote their perspective – include slogans, social media, and graphics

Alternative Class Discussion Format for Debating a Modern Voting Rights Issue

This activity can be conducted as a “Fishbowl” style discussion, as outlined below, instead of using the individual investigation options presented above.

A Fishbowl discussion requires students to investigate the topic prior to participating in the activity.

Procedure

1. On the appointed day for the Fishbowl discussion, arrange the classroom with seating in two circles – one inner circle and one outer circle.
2. Be sure to establish the rules for civil discussion with the class prior to conducting the Fishbowl student-led discussion.
3. The inner circle is the Fishbowl and will ideally have 6-8 students at a time actively discuss the issue using their prepared research evidence. It is important to emphasize that when students provide evidence in the Fishbowl discussion, they should also emphasize the source of the evidence to ensure credibility.
4. Students in the outer circle should listen to the debate taking place in the Fishbowl and formulate questions or responses to the discussion taking place in the Fishbowl.

5. There are many variations of this discussion format that can be applied to this activity. One variation that will work well is to keep an “Open Chair” in the Fishbowl. Students from the outer circle can enter the Fishbowl and take the Open Chair to pose a question or challenge a point made in the Fishbowl. The teacher can set expectations for how long students in the Fishbowl and/or Open Chair can remain there before members of the outer circle must tap in.

6. All students in the class should prepare a written debrief response to the debated issue based on arguments and evidence they heard in the Fishbowl discussion. Having emphasized the researched evidence aspect of the discussion during the Fishbowl activity will allow students in their written debrief responses to be more persuasive.