

**Rebekah
Gienapp**

PAST AND PRESENT FIGHTS

FOR

VOTING RIGHTS

ACTIVITY PACK FOR KIDS & TEENS

How to use this guide

Dear families and educators,

Thank you so much for purchasing *Past and Present Fights for Voting Rights*! This resource contains a variety of activities for elementary, middle, and high school age learners about the history of voting rights and the realities of voter suppression today. There are five parts to this guide, but you certainly don't need to complete all of them. Choose the parts and activities that fit with what your family or your learners need. (Note: If you want to print out the entire document, it's designed to be printed double-sided.)

Recommended reading

For each of the five parts, you'll find a "Read/Watch/Discuss" page with recommended books, videos, and discussion questions. **While these are optional, young people will have a much greater understanding of the issues if they can choose a reading or watch a video before going on to the activities for that section.**

Below are the recommended books for each age group. If you can't find copies at your local library, used copies for almost all the titles can be found online.

Lower Elementary

- *Equality's Call* by Deobrah Diesen OR *Teaching for Change* by Yvonne Clark-Rhines
- *Lillian's Right to Vote* by Jonah Winter
- *What Do You Do With a Voice Like That?* by Chris Barton
- *Stacey Abrams and the Fight to Vote* by Traci N. Todd
- *Your Voice, Your Vote* by Leah Henderson OR *Calling All Future Voters!* by Laura Atkins

Upper Elementary

- *We Shall Not Be Denied* by Cayla Bellanger Degroat OR *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer* by Carole Boston Weatherford
- *Evicted!* by Alice Faye Duncan OR *The Teachers March!* by Sandra Neil Wallace.
- *A Woman in the House (and Senate)* by Ilene Cooper
- *Stacey Abrams and the Fight to Vote* by Traci N. Todd
- *Your Voice, Your Vote* by Leah Henderson OR *Calling All Future Voters!* by Laura Atkins

Middle School

- *Finish the Fight* by Veronica Chambers OR *Lifting As We Climb* by Evette Dionne.
- *Turning 15 On the Road to Freedom* by Lynda Blackmon OR *New York Times* article (gift link on page 14)
- *Fault Lines in the Constitution* by Cynthia Levinson (2025 edition if possible)
- *You Call This Democracy?* by Elizabeth Rusch

High School

- *One Person, No Vote (Young Readers' Edition)* by Carole Anderson
- *March (Book 3)* by John Lewis (*optional*)

If emotions are strong

Understanding all the ways that powerful groups have suppressed marginalized people's voting rights can bring up painful feelings. I have ideas and exercises you can use to process feelings as you complete the other activities in this packet on page 51.

How to use this guide (con't.)

Which activities are best for each age group?

Some of the activities are better suited to certain age groups than others. In the table of contents below I've included recommended age group codes for each activity.

Table of Contents

LE = Lower Elementary UE = Upper Elementary MS = Middle School HS= High School

	Page	Age
Why is voting such a big deal?	3	LE, UE, MS, HS
Part I: Voting Rights History (read & watch)	4	LE, UE, MS, HS
A really short history of voting rights	5	UE, MS, HS
A right isn't right coloring sheet	7	LE, UE
Timeline of voting rights gained and lost	9	UE, MS, HS
Part II: Need for the 1965 Voting Rights Act (read & watch)	21	LE, UE, MS, HS
Tactics to suppress the right to vote	22	UE, MS, HS
Protest poster: voter suppression	23	LE, UE, MS, HS
Can your adults pass this literacy test?	24	UE, MS, HS
What did the Voting Rights Act Do?	25	LE, UE, MS, HS
Things aren't so happy at Happy Land Farm	26	LE, UE
Dramatic rise in Black voter registration after VRA	27	UE, MS, HS
Part III: Why do district maps matter? (read & watch)	28	LE, UE, MS, HS
What is gerrymandering?	29	UE, MS, HS
Weirdly shaped voting districts	31	LE, UE, MS, HS
Creating districts hands-on activity	32	UE, MS, HS
The Voting Rights Act changed the face of Congress	33	UE, MS, HS
Part IV: Attacks on voting rights today (read & watch)	34	LE, UE, MS, HS
Voter suppression tactics today	35	UE, MS, HS
Investigate your state's voting rules	37	MS, HS
Tell these voting stories in emojis	38	LE, UE, MS, HS
The Supreme Court kills the Voting Rights Act	39	UE, MS, HS
Remember to vote door hangers	41	LE, UE, MS, HS
What is the SAVE Act?	43	UE, MS, HS
Part V: Protecting voting rights today (read & watch)	44	LE, UE, MS, HS
What states can do	45	UE, MS, HS
What kids & teens can do	46	UE, MS, HS
Changing the atmosphere of fear	47	LE, UE, MS, HS
Make a voting plan	48	UE, MS, HS
Voting rights glossary	49	UE, MS, HS
If emotions are strong	51	LE, UE, MS, HS

Your purchase of this document allows you to use it in 1 home or 1 classroom. Please contact Rebekah if you would like to purchase multiple licenses for your school or organization at a discount by emailing info@rebekahgienapp.com



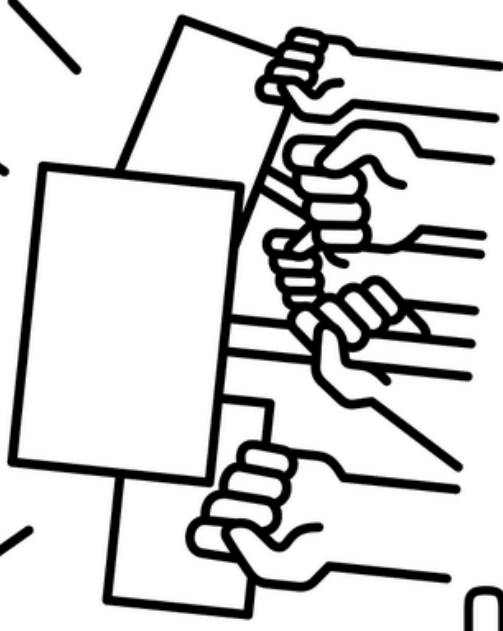
A right

isn't

R I G H T

till it's

granted to ALL!



Part II: The need for the 1965 Voting Rights Act

Read

Lower elementary

Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by Jonah Winter. Illustrated by Shane Evans.

Upper elementary (choose one)

Evicted! The Struggle for the Right to Vote by Alice Faye Duncan. Illustrated by Charly Palmer.

The Teachers March! by Sandra Neil Wallace and Rich Wallace. Illustrated by Charly Palmer.

Middle school (choose one)

Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the 1965 Selma Voting Rights March by Lynda Blackmon Lowery, pp. 10 - 29; 40 - 65; 94 - 111; 120 -121.

"Why Is There a Voting Rights Act? A Timeline," *The New York Times*, April 29, 2026.
https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/29/us/voting-rights-act-history.html?unlocked_article_code=1.yFA.DqM8.wP7fFAS00dc1&smid=url-share

High school (choose one)

March (book 3) by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, pp. 26 - 41; 174 - 246.

One Person, No Vote: How Not All Voters Are Treated Equally (Young Readers' Adaptation) by Carol Anderson with Tonya Bolden, chapters 5 and 6.

YouTube

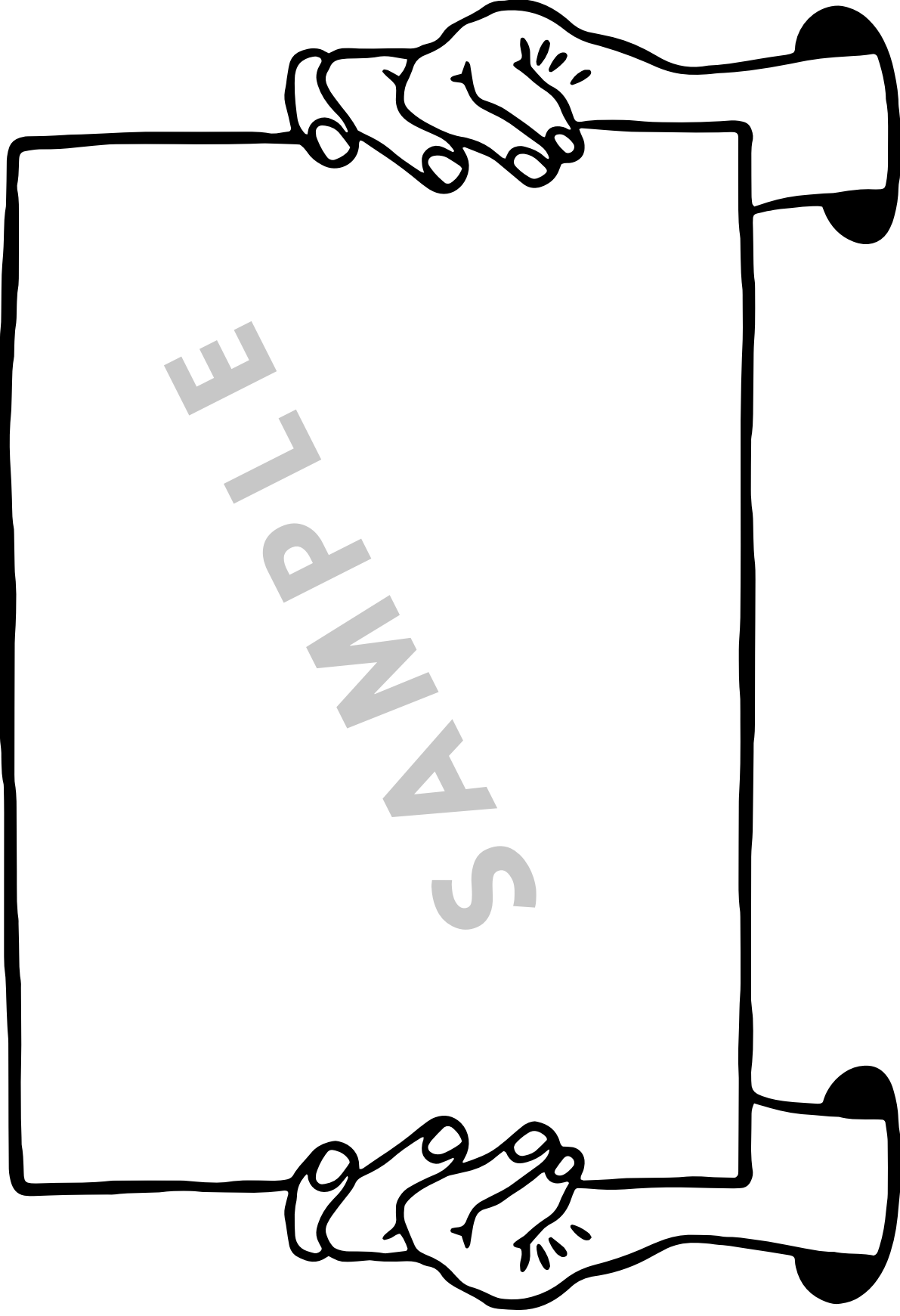
Selma to Montgomery | Yellowhammer History Hunt | Alabama Public Radio.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jShcbuGiitg>. 7 min. 27 sec. (Best for ages 8+).

A History of the Voting Rights Act After a Critical SCOTUS Decision. | NBC Chicago.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_slje6WJRuU. 2 min. 34 sec. (Best for ages 11+).

Discuss

What specific problems and events showed the need for a Voting Rights Act? How did activists work for its passage? What did you learn about how the passage of the Voting Rights Act changed things for Black voters in particular?

If you could step back in history and make a protest sign about how People of Color's right to vote was being suppressed, what would your sign look like? Draw or write it below.



What did the Voting Rights Act do?

Civil rights activists in the South spent years trying to register Black voters, but violent attacks and unjust local and state laws meant they had little success. When television news showed police brutally attacking peaceful protestors marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, this was the final push needed to get Congress to pass the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

What did the Voting Rights Act do to finally make voting accessible to Black Americans (and in later versions of the law, Latine, Native American, and Asian American voters)?

Here are some of the key pieces of the Voting Rights Act (some of these provisions were added in later versions of the legislation after 1965):

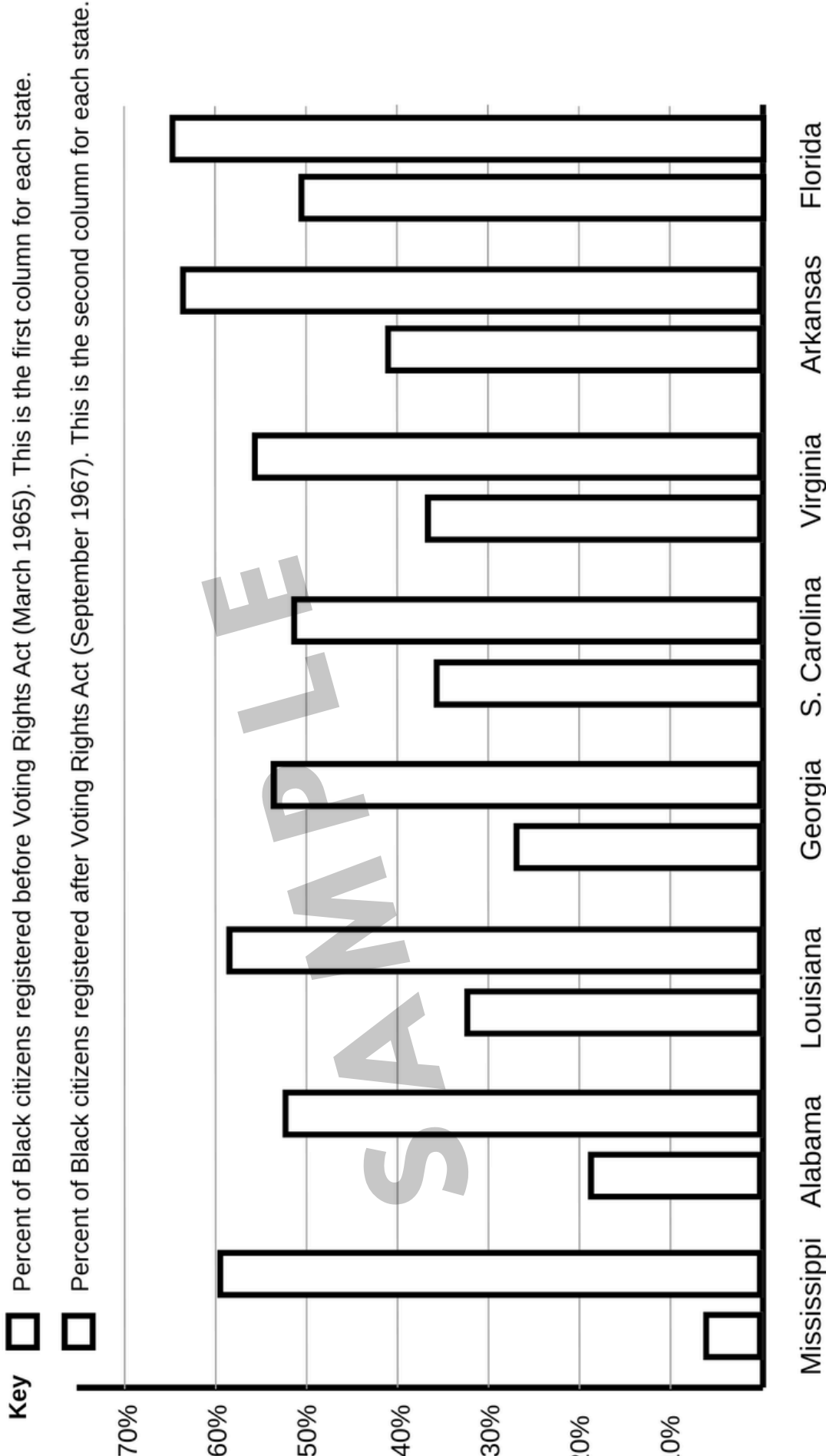
- It **banned discriminatory practices** like literacy tests and poll taxes.
- It **allowed people to sue a state or local government** for rules, laws or voting maps that would prevent people from voting (or electing the candidate of their choice) because of race or color.
- It **required states** (and later local governments) who had **racially discriminated in the past to get approval ahead of time** from the federal government for changes to their voting rules or district maps. This is called pre-clearance. Its purpose was to make sure a rule change would not discriminate against voters of color.
- It required states that have significant numbers of people who are not fluent in English to **provide translations of voting materials** and other language assistance. These languages include Spanish, 51 Native American languages, and 21 Asian languages.

After the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, it made a huge difference in the registration of Black voters.

For example, in 1965 (before the law was passed) in Alabama only 19% of Black people were registered to vote. By 1967 (after the law was implemented), 52% were registered.

The dramatic rise in Black voter registration after the 1965 Voting Rights Act

The chart below shows two sets of percentages for each state. The first column (on the left) is the percent of Black citizens registered to vote before the Voting Rights Act. The second (on the right) is the percentage just two years later. **Choose two different colors** (be sure to mark them in your key) and then **color in the before and after column for each state**.



Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 2018. Adapted from Maye 2022.

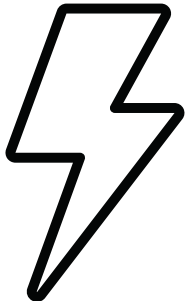
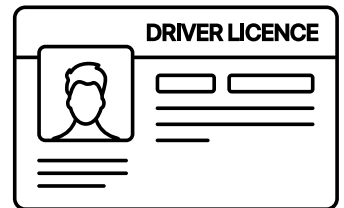
Voter suppression tactics today

If you completed the voting rights timeline that starts on page 9, you may have noticed that after 2002, there were more laws that restricted voting rights than there were laws that made it easier to vote.

For the past 25 years or so, many states (especially those that are Republican-led) have passed laws or taken actions that make it harder for people to vote. These especially tend to impact voters of color, young voters, older voters, and low-income voters. **This trend is especially upsetting because the United States already has lower voter turnout than most other wealthy countries.**

VOTER ID LAWS

As of 2025, 21 states require voters to show a photo ID. Fifteen more states require ID but it does not have to have a photo. Getting a photo ID can be complicated, expensive, and take a lot of time. This especially impacts voters who don't have flexible jobs that allow them to take off work in the middle of the day, elderly voters, disabled voters, and voters who don't have a car to drive to government offices.

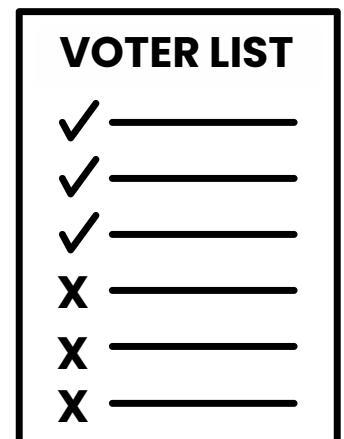


Politicians who push for voter ID laws say they're needed to stop voter fraud. However, research shows that during the **2016 presidential election, being struck by lightning was more common than voter fraud.**

PURGES OF VOTER ROLLS

In the 2010s, millions of voters were erased from the voting rolls of their states. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 includes strict guidelines about who can be taken off the voter rolls. **The law specifically says that people can't be removed just because they didn't vote in past elections.**

Yet states including Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, and Virginia used non-voting as a reason to remove millions of voters, most of who were young, poor, and/or people of color. States are supposed to notify voters if they're taken off the rolls. These voters didn't know they were no longer registered to vote until they showed up on election day and were told they couldn't cast a vote.



Investigate your state's voting rules

What can you find out about how easy or hard it is to vote in your state? Search online for answers to these questions about your state.

VOTER ID

Do voters have to show identification when they vote? Which kinds of ID are allowed? Does it have to have a photo?

VOTER ROLL PURGES

Can you find any news stories about large numbers of voters being removed from the rolls in your state?

VOTER REGISTRATION

How easy is it to register to vote in your state? Some states automatically register people to vote when they renew their driver's licenses. Others allow people to register to vote on election day. Do you have to have a street address to register? This can keep some Indigenous people who live on tribal lands from being able to register.

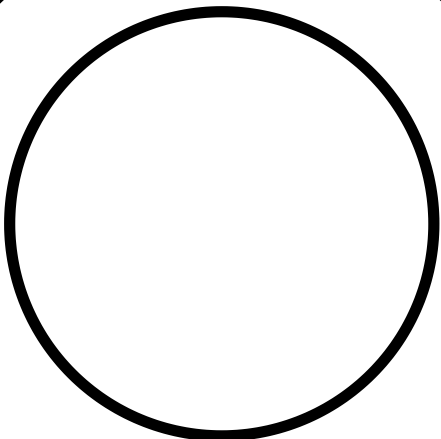
METHODS OF VOTING

Does your state offer early voting? For how many days before an election? Who can cast an absentee ballot? Is voting by mail allowed for everyone?

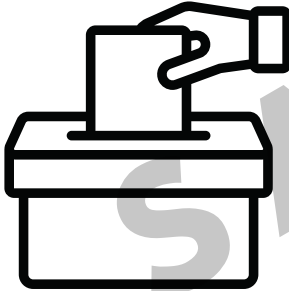
WHEN IT COMES TO HOW EASY IT IS TO VOTE, WHAT GRADE DO YOU GIVE YOUR STATE? A B C D F

Remember to vote door hangers

With rising voter suppression and unfair redistricting, it's more important than ever that adults turn out and vote. Print these doorhangers on cardstock, and after you've fill them out and decorated them, hang them on your neighbor's doors.



Your vote matters!



Remember to vote on election day:

From _____, your neighbor who's too young to vote and really hopes you will!

