

Module 8: Politics

Topic 4 Content: Suffrage Amendments

Introduction



Glover Mint: Voting is an important part of the American political process, but for many years it was a right denied to the majority of Americans. Suffrage, or the right to vote, was initially reserved for white Protestant men who owned property. The rest of Americans were disenfranchised, or deprived of the right to vote, until a series of Constitutional amendments extended suffrage. Connie Demcra y joins us in the studio to discuss these suffrage amendments.

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Concepts of Democracy

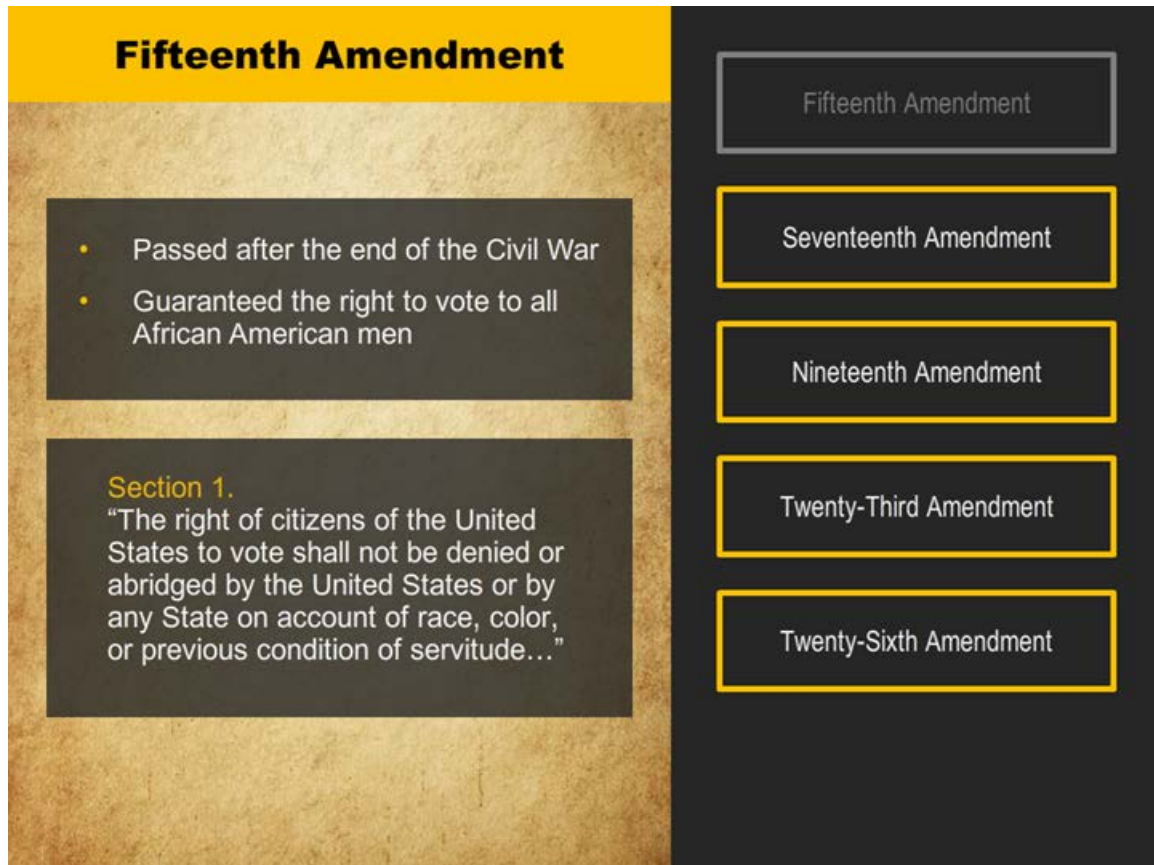


Connie Demcray: Thank you for having me on today's show. There are some core principles that a democratic government must follow in order for it to function effectively. One of these principles requires that all people be treated fairly before the law. A democratic government cannot adhere to this principle while a large portion of its population remains disenfranchised. Today, we will look at five constitutional amendments that helped extend suffrage for many Americans.

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Fifteenth Amendment



The infographic features a yellow header with the title "Fifteenth Amendment". Below the header, on a parchment-like background, are two dark grey text boxes. The first box contains two bullet points: "Passed after the end of the Civil War" and "Guaranteed the right to vote to all African American men". The second box is titled "Section 1." and contains the text: "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...". To the right of the parchment area is a dark grey vertical panel with five rectangular buttons. The top button is grey and labeled "Fifteenth Amendment". The other four buttons are yellow-outlined and labeled "Seventeenth Amendment", "Nineteenth Amendment", "Twenty-Third Amendment", and "Twenty-Sixth Amendment" from top to bottom.

Connie Demcray: The Fifteenth Amendment was passed after the end of the American Civil War. Its purpose was to guarantee the right to vote to all African American men. Section 1 of this Amendment states:

"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..."

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Seventeenth Amendment

Seventeenth Amendment

Article I, Section 3
“The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote.”

- Ratified in 1913
- Modified Article I, Section 3
- Changed procedure for filling vacant Senate seats

Fifteenth Amendment

Seventeenth Amendment

Nineteenth Amendment

Twenty-Third Amendment

Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Connie Demcray: United States Senators were not always elected by the people directly. Article I, Section 3 of the Constitution says:

“The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.”

The Seventeenth Amendment was ratified in 1913 and modified Article I, Section 3 to read:

“The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote.”

In addition to establishing the popular election of U.S. Senators, this Amendment also changed the procedure for filling vacant Senate seats.

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Nineteenth Amendment

Nineteenth Amendment

- Most women could not vote before 1920
- Women's rights movement in the 19th Century led to rights in some western states and territories
- Another push for women's suffrage began at the start of the 20th Century

"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.
Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Fifteenth Amendment

Seventeenth Amendment

Nineteenth Amendment

Twenty-Third Amendment

Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Connie Demcray: One group of Americans that has been historically discriminated against makes up half of the population. Before 1920, most women did not possess suffrage. The first major women's rights movement in the 19th Century led to voting rights for women in some western states and territories; however, without a federal law guaranteeing universal women's suffrage, many women remained disenfranchised.

Another push for universal women's suffrage began at the start of the 20th Century. This time, after years of lobbying, marching, and picketing, women's rights activists were successful. The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified by the states in 1920. It declares:

"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. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

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Twenty-Third Amendment

Twenty-Third Amendment

- American presidents are officially elected by the Electoral College
- Washington, D.C. had no electoral votes before 1961
- This Amendment granted the nation's capital three votes to allocate in a presidential election

Fifteenth Amendment

Seventeenth Amendment

Nineteenth Amendment

Twenty-Third Amendment

Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Connie Demcray: American presidents are officially elected by the Electoral College. Each state has electors who cast their votes based on the popular votes. Before the Twenty-third Amendment was ratified in 1961, residents of Washington, D.C. had no electoral votes. This meant that citizens who lived in Washington, D.C. could not vote in presidential elections. The Twenty-third Amendment granted the nation's capital electors in the Electoral College, as if it were state. Washington, D.C. currently has three votes to allocate in a presidential election.

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Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Twenty-Sixth Amendment

- Public opinion supported lowering the voting age from 21 to 18
- Activists protesting the Vietnam War helped shift public policy
- Amended Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment

Section 1.
“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.”

Fifteenth Amendment

Seventeenth Amendment

Nineteenth Amendment

Twenty-Third Amendment

Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Next

Connie Demcray: In the 1960s, public opinion strongly supported lowering the voting age in federal, state, and local elections to eighteen from twenty-one. Activists protesting American involvement in Vietnam argued that if eighteen-year-old Americans could be drafted for the war, they should be able to vote for the policymakers responsible for those decisions. Section 1 of the Twenty-sixth Amendment states:

“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 amended Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which was where the voting age of twenty-one was originally set.

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Ending of Episode



Glover Mint: Thank you, Connie. We also want to thank our viewers for tuning in for this episode. We hope you enjoyed learning about the different ways suffrage has been extended in the United States.