

A Note to Educators:

Thank you for your interest in Voting Rights, the Constitution & Representative Government for grades 6–8!

Program Objectives: After completing the Voting Rights, the Constitution & Representative Government program with the National Archives, students will be better able to:

- Make connections between representative democracy, elections, and personal freedoms
- Understand the impact of federal elected officials on the lives of Americans
- Understand the process for amending the Constitution
- Analyze primary sources and make sense of them

Program Documents: You can access all the documents and images included in this teacher guide and the National Archives presentation in this [folder](#) on DocsTeach.

How To Use This Guide: There are no required activities for this distance learning program. Instead, we've assembled a collection of activities that you can select from to share with students before or after their program with the National Archives or throughout your unit on the Constitution and voting rights as you see fit. Get started with the optional pre-program activities here or use the table of contents on the next page to navigate this guide.

Pre-Program Activities: Optional DocsTeach activities to prepare students for their National Archives program.

[The Big Ideas of the U.S. Constitution](#) (30–60 minutes) *Online DocsTeach Activity*

Identify and define seven key ideas contained in the U.S. Constitution. **Materials:** [Online](#)

[The Suffrage and the Civil Rights Reform Movements](#) (15–20 minutes) *Online DocsTeach Activity*

Compare and contrast two images of marches for freedom. **Materials:** [Online](#)

Optional Program Materials: The timeline and graphic organizer on [pages 5–6](#) will be shared during the National Archives presentation and may be shared with students in advance to allow for closer examination.

Post-Program Materials: Keep the conversation going after the program with post-program activities that start on page 6. Build on the [voting rights timeline](#) from the program, check out additional [DocsTeach activities](#), or consider additional [questions](#) related to voting rights.

We want to hear from you!

Twitter: [@USNatArchives](#)

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Pre-Program Activities

DocsTeach.org is the online tool for teaching with documents from the National Archives. We recommend the following DocsTeach activities to enhance your students' learning experience with the National Archives. While optional, these activities are highlighted here because they link thematically to the concepts of constitutional framework and representative government addressed during the distance learning program. They also provide an opportunity for students to practice analyzing primary source documents and applying historical thinking skills.

The links below will take you to each activity's teacher page, which provide additional information about the activity as well as suggested teaching instructions. From the teacher page, clicking on "start activity" will take you to the student page where the activity begins. You can project a DocsTeach activity to do as a class. Or you can create an assignment that students— in small groups or individually, in class or for homework—will turn in to you. For more on assigning student work in DocsTeach, check out this helpful reference [page](#).

[The Big Ideas of the U.S. Constitution DocsTeach Activity](#)

In this activity students will identify and define seven key ideas contained in the U.S. Constitution by making matches from the grid. They will then analyze documents that demonstrate each big idea in action. The instructions for this activity reference a field trip program in Washington, DC, but this activity can also serve as review of the foundations of American government.

Estimated time: 30–60 minutes

[The Suffrage and the Civil Rights Reform Movements DocsTeach Activity](#)

This short comparative analysis activity involves comparing and contrasting two images of marches for freedom: a 1917 Bastille Day march for women's suffrage and the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Students will consider the similarities and differences between these two images and hypothesize what major differences these photos might imply about the two social reform movements.

Estimated time: 15–20 minutes



Optional Program Materials

The timeline and graphic organizer on [pages 5–6](#) will be shared during the National Archives presentation. You are welcome to share digital or hard copies with students so that they can take a closer look at the material.

Program Vocabulary

Amendment – a change or alteration to the Constitution made according to the procedure outlined in Article 5 of the United States Constitution.

Civil Rights – rights to personal liberty established by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and certain Congressional acts, especially as applied to an individual or a minority group.

Election – the selection of a person or persons for office by vote.

Primaries – state elections of delegates to the nominating convention that chooses a major party’s presidential candidate. In some states, delegates are elected by popular vote; in other states, party caucuses or mini conventions choose delegates.

Suffrage – the right to vote in political election.

Ratify – to confirm by expressing consent, approval, or formal sanction.

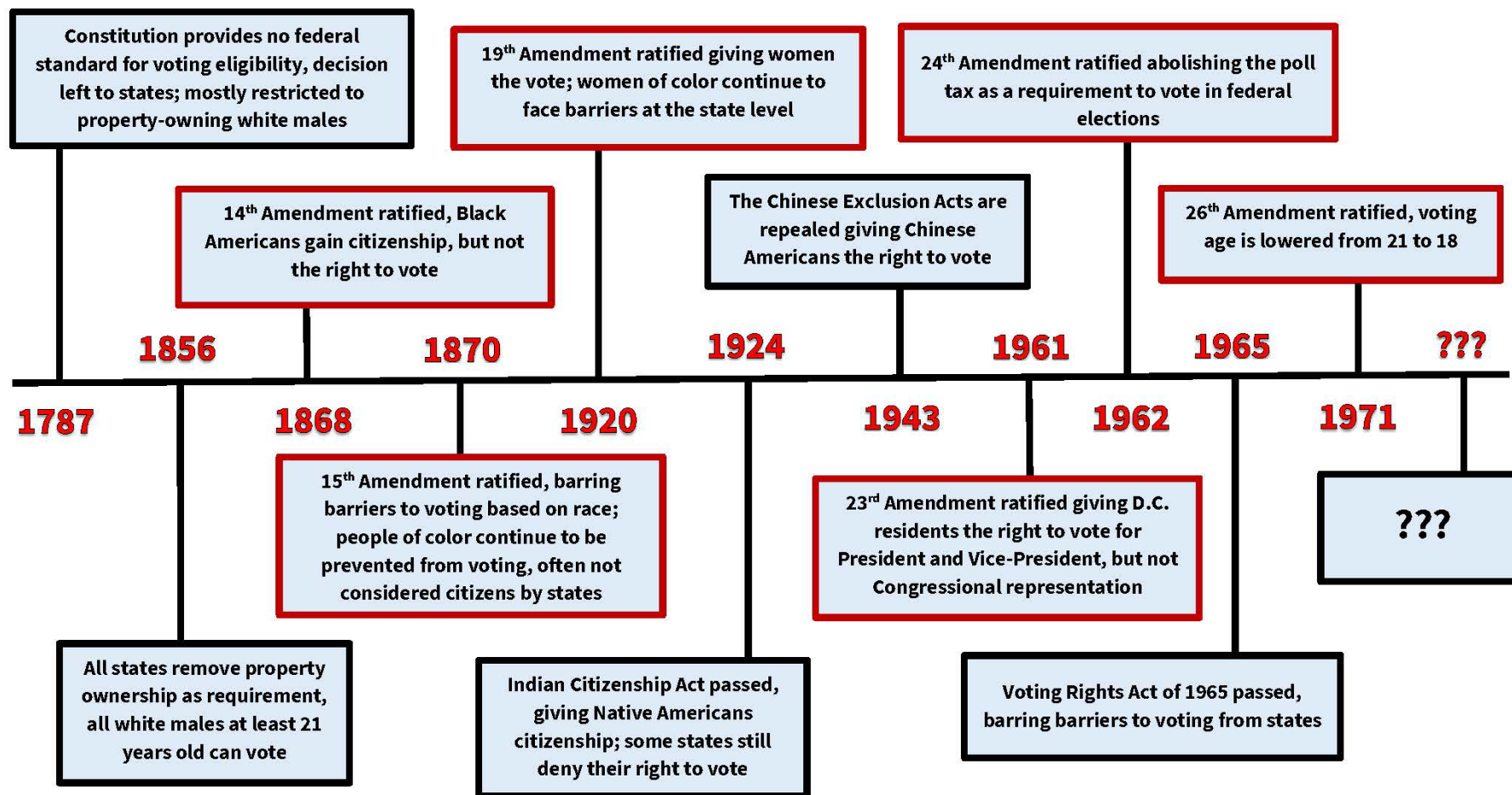
Representation – having a say in government processes like the passage of legislation, by conveying authority to deputies (like Representatives or Senators) through elections.

Vote – a formal indication of a choice between two or more candidates or courses of action, expressed typically through a ballot or a show of hands or by voice.



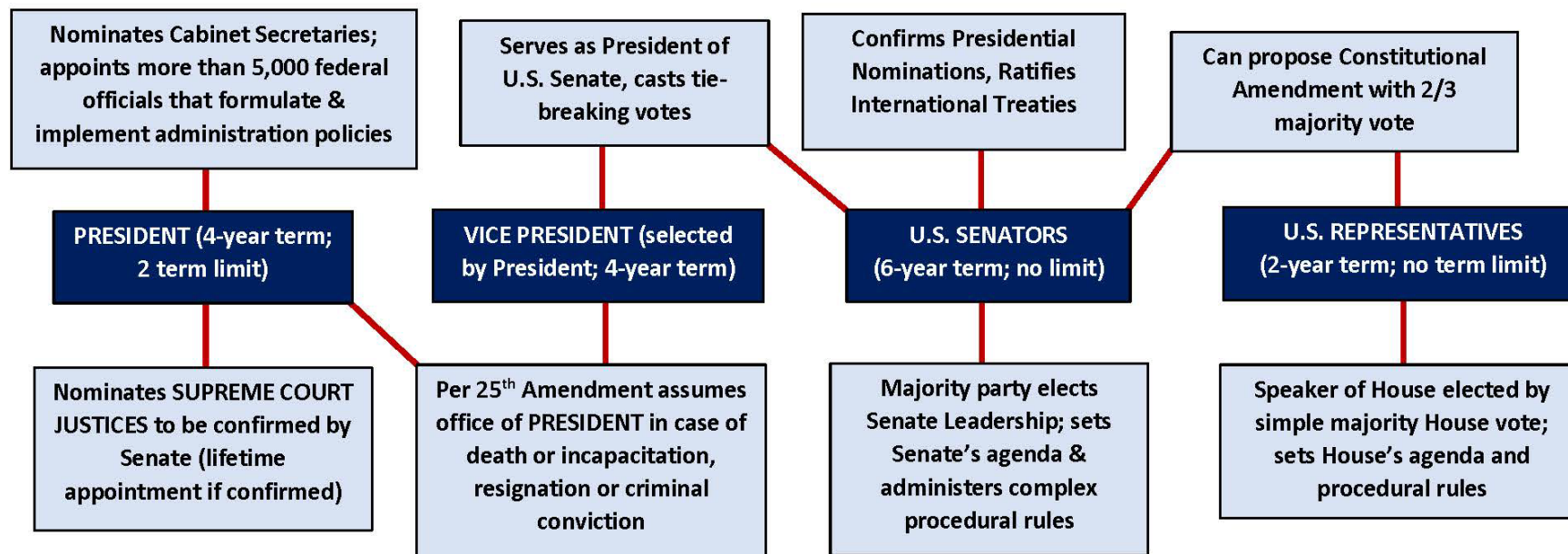
Voting Rights Timeline

Transcript of the Voting Rights Timeline is available on [page 9](#).



Impact of Federal Elected Officials

Transcript of Federal Elected Officials graphic organizer available on [page 9](#).



Post-Program Activities

Activities on DocsTeach

As with the DocsTeach activities recommended as pre-program activities, we have compiled a list of possible follow-on activities to enrich your students' learning experience with the National Archives. Our educators recommend these activities for their thematic link to concepts of constitutional framework and representative government, which were introduced during the distance learning program, and because they encourage students to explore more deeply the expansion of voting rights throughout U.S. history while also analyzing primary source documents and applying historical thinking skills.

[Election of 1800 DocsTeach Activity](#)

In this activity, students will analyze the electoral college tally for the Presidential election of 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Estimated time: 25 minutes

[Gerrymandered Districts After the 2010 Election DocsTeach Activity](#)

In this analysis activity, students will place maps of congressional districts from around the United States that were created after the 2010 Census on their corresponding state on a U.S. map. Students will explore these maps to understand the extent of "gerrymandering" that can occur in congressional representation.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

[Mrs. Bloomer's 'Political Disability' DocsTeach Activity](#)

In this activity, students will analyze and respond to one 19th-century woman's argument for her right to vote. In 1878, Mrs. Amelia Bloomer wrote a letter to the U.S. Congress stating that she should be allowed the right to vote because she was a tax-paying citizen. Students will use her letter and a letter written by the National Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage to analyze late 19th-century arguments for and against woman's suffrage and construct their own response.

Estimated time: 20 minutes

Timeline Expansion

This research project builds off the timeline on [page 5](#). Working individually or in small groups, ask students to explore one or both of the following research questions:

1. What federal actions have impacted voting rights since 1971?
2. What are the key voting milestones in your state?

Students should conduct research to create a new timeline in the medium of their choosing to answer their assigned questions. Their timeline should also include an accompanying bibliography of the sources they consulted.



Keep the Discussion Going!

While middle school students can't vote yet, they can research upcoming elections, learn about voting requirements in their state, and brainstorm how they can still participate in elections that they care about. During the program, we explored the idea of voting rights, the Constitution, and representative government. Keep the conversation in your classroom by choosing from this set of discussion prompts and extension activities:

- Discuss representative democracy and the Electoral College. Why was it established? Is it still necessary?
- Who still cannot vote and why? ([Felony Voting PBS](#); [records](#) related to felon disenfranchisement laws from the Clinton Administration Domestic Policy Council)
- Can progress look different to different people? What are some of the impediments to progress? What are some ways to achieve progress?
- What issues do you care about? What actions can you take in your local community? Make a plan!

Additional Resources

Document Analysis Worksheets

Document analysis is the first step in working with primary sources. Teach your students to think through primary source documents for contextual understanding and to extract information to make informed judgments. Use these [worksheets](#)—for photos, written documents, artifacts, posters, maps, cartoons, videos, and sound recordings—to teach your students the process of document analysis.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework Alignment

- D2.Civ.12.6-8. Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as means of addressing public problems.
- D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies and promoting the common good.
- D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.
- D2.His.3. 6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.
- D2.His.5.6-8. Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.



Transcripts

Voting Rights Timeline Transcript (from page 5)

1787: Constitution provides no federal standard for voting eligibility, decision left to states; mostly restricted to property-owning white males

1865: All states remove property ownership as requirement, all white males at least 21 years old can vote

1868: 14th Amendment ratified, Black Americans gain citizenship, but not the right to vote.

1870: 15th Amendment ratified, barring barriers to voting based on race; people of color continue to be prevented from voting, often not considered citizens by states

1920: 19th Amendment ratified giving women the vote; women of color continue to face barriers at the state level

1924: Indian Citizenship Act passed, giving Native Americans citizenship; some states still deny their right to vote

1943: The Chinese Exclusion Acts are repealed giving Chinese Americans the right to vote

1961: 23rd Amendment ratified giving D.C. residents the right to vote for President and Vice-President, but not Congressional representation

1962: 24th Amendment ratified abolishing the poll tax as a requirement to vote in federal elections

1965: Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed, barring barriers to from states

1971: 26th Amendment ratified, voting age is lowered from 21 to 18

Timeline ends in question marks to prompt additional research into voting rights.

Impact of Federal Elected Officials Graphic Organizer Transcript (from page 6)

President (4-year term; 2 term limit)

- Nominates Cabinet Secretaries; appoints more than 5,000 federal officials that formulate and implement administration policies
- Nominates Supreme Court Justices to be confirmed Senate (lifetime appointment if confirmed)

Vice President (selected by President, 4-year term)

- Serves as President of U.S. Senate, casts tie-breaking votes
- Per 25th Amendment assumes office of President in case of death or incapacitation, resignation, or criminal conviction

U.S. Senators (6-year term; no limit)

- Confirms Presidential Nominations, Ratifies International Treaties
- Majority party elects Senate Leadership: sets Senate's agenda and administers complex procedural rules

U.S. Representatives (2-year term; no term limit)

- With Senate, can propose Constitutional Amendment with 2/3 majority vote
- Speaker of House elected by simple majority House vote; sets House's agenda and procedural rules

