

B. MA Voting Rights Timeline



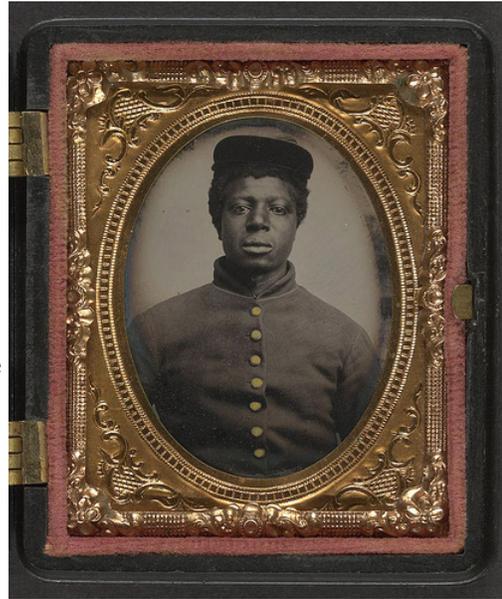
Throughout our brief history of just a few centuries, the central conflict in this country has been between those that envision a government determined by and working for all of its people, and those who dream of a country that guarantees

the rights of a select few at the expense of all others. We wanted to take this opportunity to elaborate on that history, so we made this **timeline of the legal history of voting rights in America**. Voting is central to the equality of all Americans, and we believe this timeline not only demonstrates that, but also how critical African American history, in addition to the histories of people of color and women, are to American history as a whole.

- 1776: Although the Declaration of Independence has just been signed and the United States' independent status has not yet been recognized by many countries, the right to vote begins in America as a legal privilege almost exclusively available to white, property-owning, Protestant men.
- **1788: With the ratification of the Constitution, all slaves are counted as 3/5's of a single person on the national census.**
- **1790: The Naturalization Act bars all persons of Asian descent from becoming naturalized. Only "free white" immigrants are recognized as eligible for naturalization.**
- 1792: New Hampshire becomes the first state to eliminate its property requirements, thereby extending the right to vote to almost all white men.
- **1807: Women lose the right to vote in every state in the US for the next 113 years.**
- 1828: Maryland becomes the last state to remove religious restrictions when it passes legislation enfranchising Jews. White men can no longer be denied the right to vote on the basis of their religion.
- **1848: The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo renders the lands now known as Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, and Nevada US territory. All Mexican persons within these territories are declared US citizens, but simultaneously denied the right to vote by English proficiency, literacy, and property requirements along with violence, intimidation, and racist nativism.**
- 1856: North Carolina becomes the last state to eliminate its property requirements. The right to vote is extended to all white men in America.



- **1857: In the landmark case Dred Scott v. Sandford, the US Supreme Court rules that “a black man has no rights a white man is bound to respect.” African Americans are further deprived of the right to citizenship and, by extension, the right to vote.**
- 1866: The first Civil Rights Act grants citizenship, but not the right to vote, to all persons born in the USA.
- **1869-70: The Fifteenth Amendment is passed in Congress and ratified by the states. The right to vote is now legally guaranteed to all male citizens regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”**
- **1882: Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act, which establishes restrictions and quotas on Chinese immigration while legally excluding Chinese persons from citizenship and voting.**



- 1889-1890: Poll taxes and literacy tests specifically designed to reduce African American voting power are introduced in Southern states for the first time.
- 1890: The Indian Naturalization Act allows Native Americans to acquire citizenship.
- 1896: Louisiana is the first state to implement a grandfather clause in its election policy. No male citizen whose grandparent was deprived of the right to vote may exercise that right himself.
- 1915: The US Supreme Court finds Oklahoma’s grandfather clause unconstitutional in Guinn v. United States.

- **1919-20: The Nineteenth Amendment is adopted by Congress and ratified by the states into law. The right to vote is now guaranteed to all citizens regardless of gender.**



- 1922: The US Supreme Court rules that persons of Japanese origin are insufficiently white to qualify for citizenship in Takao Ozawa v. United States.
- 1923: The US Supreme Court declares persons of Indian descent, even “high caste Hindus”, as ineligible for citizenship because they cannot be legally recognized as “white” persons.
- **1924: The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 declares all non-citizen Native Americans born in the USA to be citizens with the right to vote.**
- 1937: Georgia’s poll taxes are found constitutional by the US Supreme Court in Breedlove v. Suttles.
- 1943: The Chinese Exclusion Act is repealed, and Chinese persons are now eligible for naturalization.

- 1976: The Supreme Court rules in *Beer v. United States* that preclearance of election changes deemed unfair to minority voters are in compliance with the Voting Rights Act so long as “retrogressive” changes do not occur.
- 1982: The Voting Rights Act is extended for 25 years.
- 1986: Voting rights for people of color are strengthened by the US Supreme Court’s decision to declare multi-member state legislative districts in North Carolina unconstitutional in the *Thomburg v. Gingles* case.
- **1990: The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act ensures that election workers and polling sites provide a variety of services designed to ensure the possibility of persons with disabilities to vote.**
- 1992: The language minority provisions of the Voting Rights Act are extended for the next 15 years.
- **1993: The National Voter Registration Act requires states to permit mail-in registration, and make registration services available at DMVs, unemployment offices, and other state agencies.**
- 1995: The Supreme Court rules that race may not be the “predominant factor” in redistricting in *Miller v. Johnson*.
- **2001 – MassVOTES starts as BostonVOTES, a small group of community leaders that through their successes expanded its vision and emerged as a statewide organization advocating for political, racial and economic equality.**
- **2002: The Help America Vote Act creates minimal standards of election administration, provides for provisional ballot voting, and sets aside funds to help states improve outdated voter systems.**
- 2004: The Supreme Court found claims of partisan gerrymandering non-justiciable in *Vieth v. Jubelirer*.
- 2006: The Voting Rights Act is extended for another 25 years.
- 2009: The Military and Overseas Empowerment Act establishes more efficient means for troops stationed overseas and expatriates to request and receive absentee ballots through the mail or electronically.

<http://massvote.org/voterinfo/history-of-voting-rights/#sthash.omef4ZAm.dpuf>