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Course

Date

Voting in America

Voting is a democratic process of electing leaders in a country. The United States has a broad history with regards to how they have handled their voting regarding the participants and the process. The discussion will critically analyze the voting history in America, and secondly the constitutional progressions that occurred concerning voting and why they were necessary.

***History of Voting In America***

In 1776, voting was subject to control by legislatures of individual states. Voting was strictly reserved to white men who had attained the age of 21 and older who owned land. In 1968, several changes were made including the 14th Amendment to the Constitution that offered voting rights to men who were born in the country. Other than the right to vote, the amendment also granted the men full citizenship rights. The 15th Amendment came into action in 1870. It removed racial barriers in the voting process, but not completely as some states were culpable of carrying out voter discrimination. The bias came in various forms such as literacy tests, intimidation, poll taxes, and fraud among others. The native Americans were still not allowed to participate in the voting process.

A major landmark in the history of the America’s voting was witnessed in 1910; the state constitution in Washington was amended, hence allowing the participation of women in the voting exercise and also their subsequent running for various elective posts. Two years later in 1912, the State Constitution was further amended by the Washington voters enabling the citizens to have the power to suggest various initiatives and referenda. Further changes were made in the 19th Amendment of the Constitution enabling the women to participate in the voting exercise across the entire country. This was in the year 1920. In 1923, the Initiative 40 Bill was passed by voters in Washington State. The Initiative 40 was meant to remove the poll tax which was used in many states as a basis for discrimination. 1924 was a big year for the Native Americans as the Indian Citizenship Act was passed enabling the Native Americans to exercise their voting rights fully.

The passing of the Federal Civil Rights Act in 1964 guaranteed that all males and females who have attained the 21 years threshold and above could participate in the voting process irrespective of race, education, and religion. Changes were also made in the 24th Amendment, hence removing poll taxes across the entire nation. In 1965, literacy tests were suspended by the initiation of the Federal Voting Rights. In 1971, another major landmark in the voting history was witnessed as the voting age was reduced to 18 years due to the 26th Amendment to the Constitution. The literacy tests were fully banned in 1975 as the Federal Voting Rights were implemented. Translated voting materials were availed to areas with citizens with a significant number of people with limited knowledge in the English language. 1984 saw further initiatives that provided for accessibility in the polling stations for people with disabilities and the elderly. The Supreme Court intervened in deciding the fate of the Presidential Election after several cases of malpractices in 2000. Eight years later, Washington implemented the ‘'Top 2 Primary" that gives the voters the privilege to choose a candidate irrespective of party affiliation. In 2009, Washington made history by becoming the first state to have the entirety of its citizen vote via email (History of voting in America, *Office of the secretary of state* 8-9).

***Constitutional Progression Concerning Voting***

The first major constitutional progression with regards to voting was referred to as “Race No Bar to Vote’’. It was included under the 15th Amendment and stated that no citizen can be disallowed to vote on account of their color or the initial servitude condition. Issacharoff asserted that the 15th Amendment was passed in a bid to secure the freedom of the freed slaves to vote (95-96). The blacks considered this as one of the most fundamental rights they could be accorded. Therefore, the 15th Amendment was reformed in the best interest of the black citizens. The bill was passed in the year 1869 and took very many years for states to take full effect, e.g. 128 years for Tennessee.

The second major constitutional progression was concerning what was known as the woman's suffrage as asserted by Dudden. Women activists were upset that the 15th Amendment did not recognize their position as voters. They, therefore, went on with their campaigns to fight for equality with their male counterparts on the facets of politics, economy, and education. On top of their agenda was the right to vote. Their bid was met with resistance from American politicians who did not welcome the move. The 19th Amendment was passed in 1920 eventually, and it signified a big win on the part of the women who were accorded the right to vote (70-73).

The third major constitutional progression that marked voting in America was the change in the voting age. The first voting age was 21 years, but many recommendations were made to lower it to 18 years. The change was made under the 26th Amendment to increase the number of the electorate. The Congress and the Senate argued that the age of 18 years was enough for an individual to make a democratically informed choice.

In conclusion, the history of voting has come a long way. With the help of the various amendments, the process has become more inclusive and lesser discriminative. The three major constitutional changes that promoted this include the lowering of age, women’s suffrage, and finally the “Race No Bar to Vote’’.

Works cited

Dudden, Faye E. *Fighting chance: the struggle for woman suffrage and black suffrage in Reconstruction America*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

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Issacharoff, Samuel. *Beyond the Discrimination Model on Voting.* Harv. L. Rev. 127, 2013, p. 95.