

Chapter 6: Voters and Voter Behavior  
Opener  
Lecture Notes

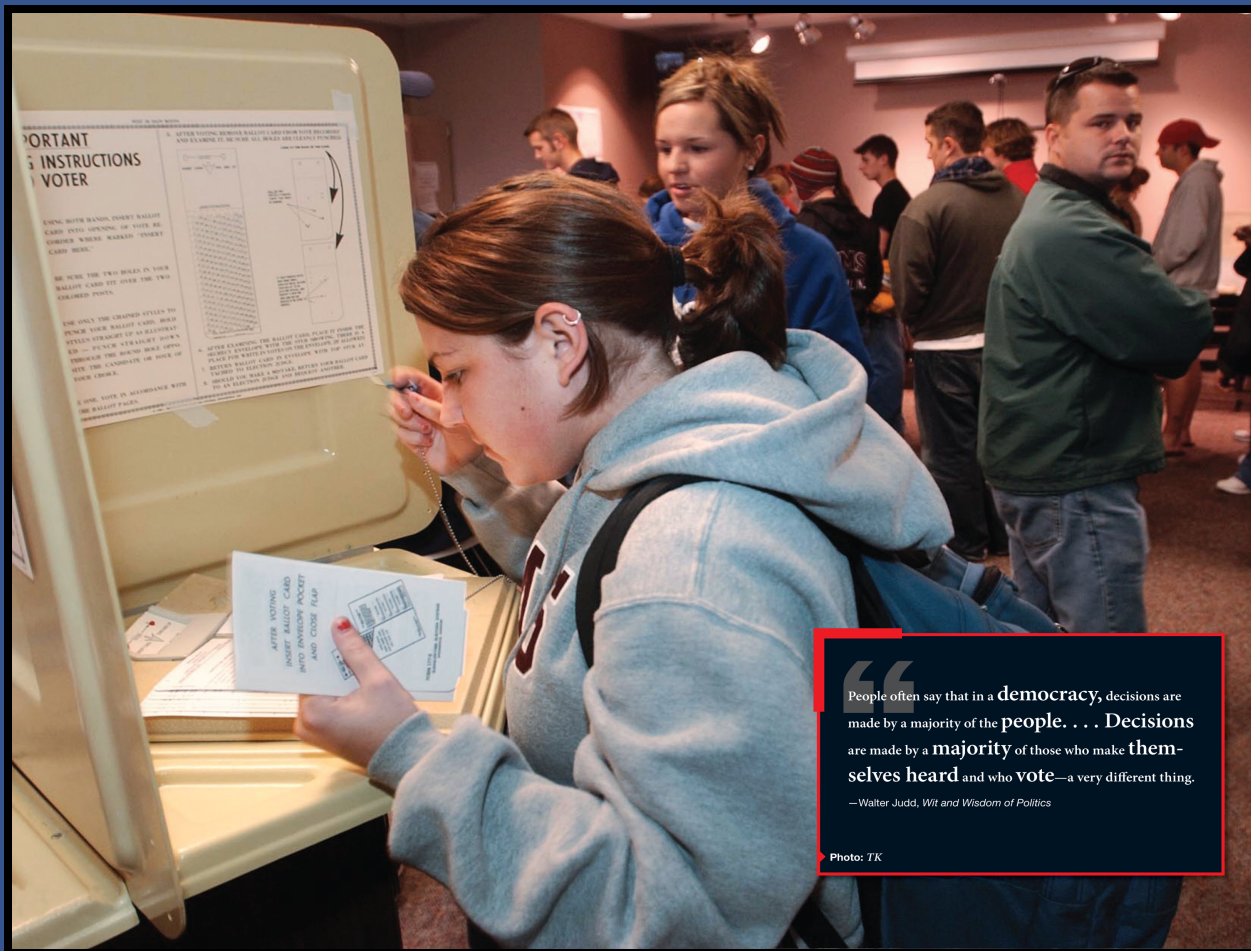
The background of the slide features a stylized American flag. The top half has a blue field with white stars, and the bottom half has red and white wavy stripes. The title 'AMERICAN GOVERNMENT' is centered over this background. 'AMERICAN' is in white serif font with a black outline, and 'GOVERNMENT' is in a larger, bold, yellow sans-serif font with a black outline.

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

People often say that in a **democracy**, decisions are made by a majority of **people**....Decisions are made by a **majority** of those who make **themselves heard** and who **vote**—a very different thing.

*-Walter Judd, Wit and Wisdom of Politics*



“People often say that in a **democracy**, decisions are made by a majority of the **people**. . . . Decisions are made by a **majority** of those who make **themselves heard** and who **vote**—a very different thing.

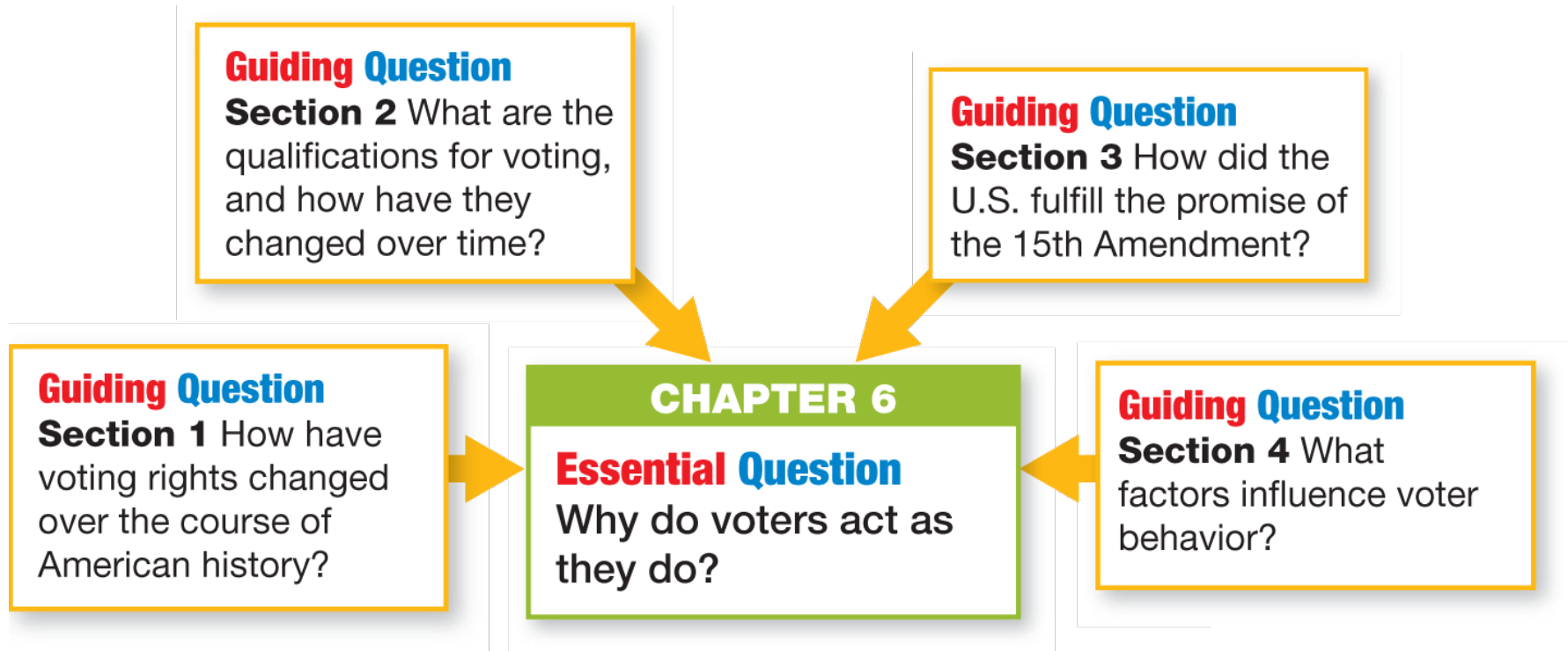
*—Walter Judd, Wit and Wisdom of Politics*

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# ► Essential Question

- Why do voters act as they do?



# ► Guiding Questions

- Section 1: The Right to Vote
  - How have voting rights changed over the course of American history?
    - Voting rights have been extended to more Americans as voter qualifications based on property ownership, religion, race, and sex have all been eliminated and age requirements have been lowered.

# ► Guiding Questions

- Section 2: Voter Qualifications
  - What are the qualifications for voting, and how have they changed over time?
    - The basic requirements are to be a U.S. citizen, have established residency in the State where one is casting a vote, and to be at least 18 years of age, with both age and residency requirements having been lowered over time.



# ▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 3: Suffrage and Civil Rights
  - How did the U.S. fulfill the promise of the 15th Amendment?
    - After many years, Congress passed a series of federal civil rights and voting acts, most of them adopted in the 1960s. These acts outlawed practices such as blocking African American voter registration, levying poll taxes, and requiring voter examinations.

# ► Guiding Questions

- Section 4: Voter Behavior
  - What factors influence voter behavior?
    - Voters are influenced by sociological factors, such as income, religion, gender, age, and ethnic background, as well as by psychological factors, such as party identification, candidates, and issues.

# Chapter 6: Voters and Voter Behavior

## Section 1

### Lecture Notes

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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# ► Objectives

1. Summarize the history of voting rights in the United States.
2. Identify and explain constitutional restrictions on the States' power to set voting qualifications.

## ► Key Terms

- **suffrage:** the right to vote
- **franchise:** a synonym for the right to vote
- **electorate:** the potential voting population
- **disenfranchised:** denied the right to vote
- **poll tax:** a fee charged before allowing someone to vote

# ► Introduction

- How have voting rights changed over the course of American history?
  - Over time, voting rights have been extended to more Americans.
  - Voting qualifications based on property ownership, religion, race, and sex have all been eliminated through federal laws and constitutional amendments.
  - The age requirement for voting has been reduced.



# ► The Electorate

- The Constitution originally gave the power to decide voter qualifications to the States.
  - At first most States allowed only white male property owners to vote.
- Since 1789, many restrictions on voting rights have been eliminated.
- At the same time, the power to decide who has the right to vote has been shifting from the States to the federal government.

# ► Stage 1

- Checkpoint: What was the first voting qualification to disappear?
  - Religious qualifications for voting were eliminated by 1810.
  - This was followed in the early 1800s by the gradual elimination of property ownership and tax payment qualifications.
  - By 1850, almost all white males could vote in every State.



## ► Stage 2

- After the Civil War, the **15<sup>th</sup> Amendment** made it illegal to deny any citizen the right to vote based on their race or color.
  - In theory, this amendment gave African Americans the right to vote.
  - However, the spirit of this law was violated for nearly 100 years as African Americans were denied the vote in many places.

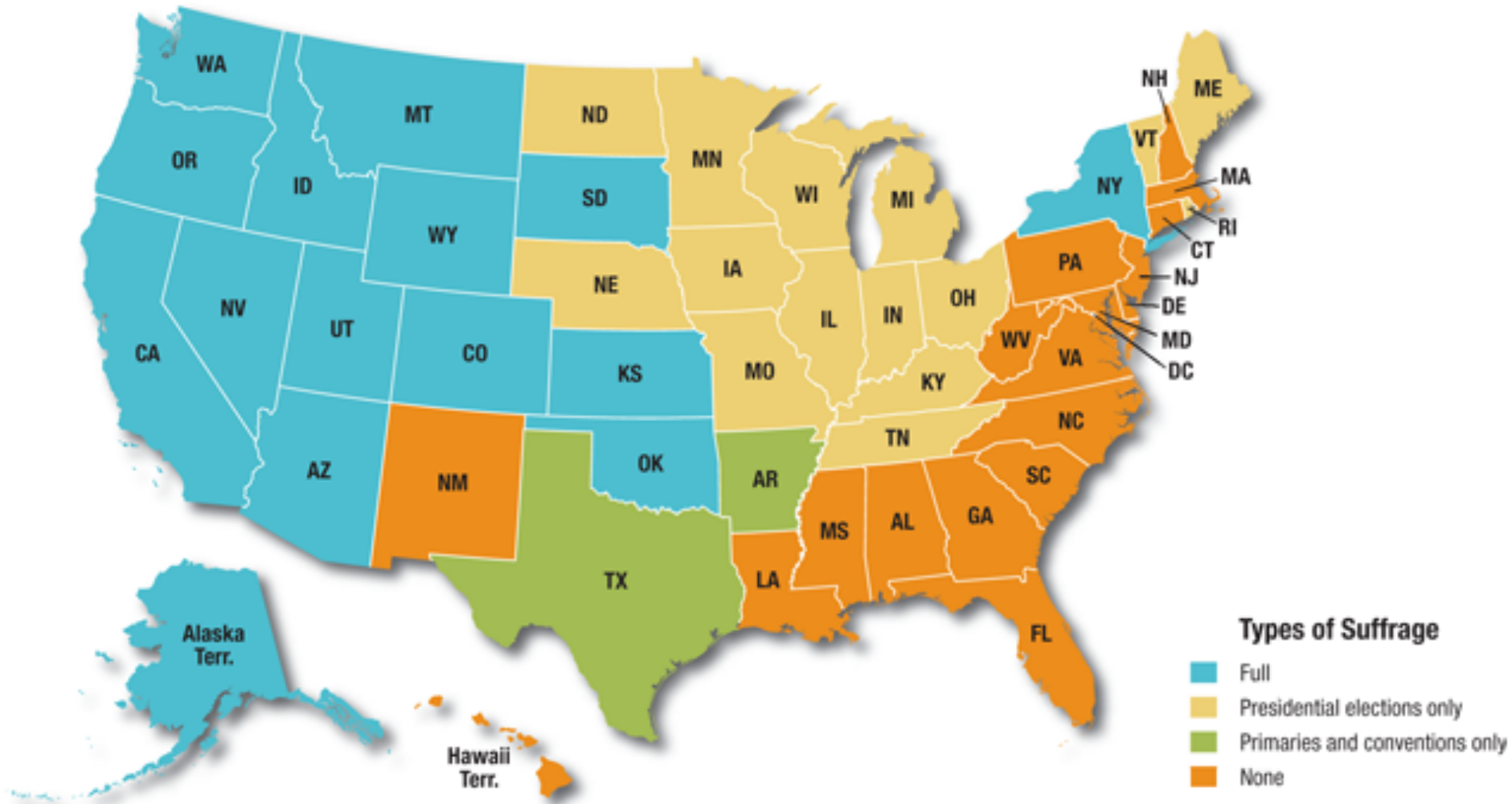


## ► Stage 3

- In 1920, the ratification of the **19<sup>th</sup> Amendment** gave women the right to vote.
  - By 1920, more than half the States had already followed the example set by Wyoming in 1869 and given women the vote.



# ► Women's Suffrage in 1919



## ► Stages 4 & 5

- During the 1960s, the civil rights movement led to new protections for African American voting rights.
  - **The Voting Rights Act** of 1965 defended racial equality in voting.
  - The **24<sup>th</sup> Amendment** eliminated the poll tax in federal elections.
- In 1971 the **26<sup>th</sup> Amendment** gave those 18 and older the right to vote.



# ► Voting Qualifications

- The Constitution sets five restrictions on the ability of the States to set voter qualifications.
  - Anyone allowed to vote for members of their State legislature must be allowed to vote for members of Congress.
  - The **15<sup>th</sup> Amendment** bans the States from depriving any person of the right to vote on account of their race, color, or having once been enslaved.

# ▶ Voting Qualifications, cont. **AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

- Under the **19<sup>th</sup> Amendment**, no State can deprive any person of the right to vote based on their sex.
- No State can levy a tax on the right to vote for President, Vice President, or members of Congress.



# ▶ Voting Qualifications, cont. **AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

- Under the **26<sup>th</sup> Amendment**, no State can deprive any person who is at least 18 years of age of the right to vote because of their age.



## ▶ Voting Qualifications, cont. **AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

- In addition, no State can violate any other provision in the Constitution when setting its voting qualifications.
  - For example, a State cannot set suffrage qualifications that violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

## ► Review

- Now that you have learned about how voting rights have changed over the course of American history, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
  - Why do voters act as they do?



Chapter 6: Voters and Voter Behavior  
Section 2  
Lecture Notes

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# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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# ► Objectives

1. Identify the universal qualifications for voting in the United States.
2. Explain the other requirements that States use or have used as voting qualifications.

# ► Key Terms

- **alien:** foreign-born residents who have not become citizens
- **transients:** people who plan to live in a State for only a short time
- **registration:** a method of voter identification intended to prevent fraud
- **purging:** the process of removing the names of voters who are no longer eligible to vote
- **poll books:** the official lists of qualified voters in each precinct
- **literacy:** a person's ability to read and write

- What are the qualifications for voting, and how have they changed over time?
  - The basic requirements for voting are that you must be a U.S. citizen, have established residency in the State where you are casting your vote, and be at least 18 years of age.
  - The minimum voting age and minimum length of residency have both been lowered over time.

- In most States, foreign-born residents who have not become citizens cannot vote.
  - Citizenship is up to each State to decide.
  - States can also distinguish between native-born and naturalized citizens, requiring that voters become citizens of that State for a minimum period of time before being allowed to vote.



# ► Residency

- A person must also be a legal resident of the State in which he or she votes.
- In the past, this meant a person had to be a State resident for at least a year to vote in that State.
- Due to federal law and a Supreme Court ruling, most States now set no time requirement for legal residency, or have cut it to 30 days.



## ► Residency, cont.

- Transients cannot vote in the State where they are living temporarily.
  - Voters living outside their State, such as soldiers, can cast absentee ballots in their *home* State.



## ► Age

- Under the **26<sup>th</sup> Amendment**, the minimum voting age cannot be older than 18.
  - Before the passage of this amendment, the minimum age had been 21 in most States.
  - Some States allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections.
- Historically, young voters have been less likely to vote than any other age group of eligible voters.

## ► Age, cont.

- Checkpoint: What event was significant to lowering the voting age?
  - The service of 18-year-olds in the Vietnam War helped mobilize public opinion to lower the voting age.





# ► Voter Registration

- In almost all States, one must be registered in order to vote.
- A prospective voter typically provides their age, name, place of birth, address, and length of residence to a registrar or county clerk, who keeps a record of all eligible voters.





## ► Voter Registration, cont.

- Voter registration can take place at rallies, fairs, school campuses, and other public places.
- In other democracies, voters must be registered by law. Only in the United States is it voluntary.



# ► Voter Registration, cont.

- The Motor Voter Act requires all States to:
  - Let eligible citizens register when they apply for or renew a driver's license
  - Provide voter registration by mail
  - Make registration forms available at many State offices



## ► Should You Need an ID to Vote?

- In 2005, Indiana passed a law requiring voters to present photo ID to vote.
- In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that the law was constitutional and did not create a barrier to voting.
  - This ruling allowed other states to add stronger ID requirements to election laws.



# ► Tests and Taxes

- Literacy tests for voting were once common, but are no longer used.
  - These tests were often aimed at denying African Americans the vote, with grandfather clauses allowing whites to vote without being tested.
- Some States, particularly in the South, also charged a poll tax to vote.
  - In 1964 the 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment banned the use of any voting taxes.



# ► Persons Denied the Vote

- Every State denies the vote to some people.
  - Few States allow people found mentally incompetent to vote.
  - Most States disqualify people convicted of serious crimes from voting, although it is often possible for convicted felons to regain their voting rights.
  - Some States also ban those dishonorably discharged from the armed forces from voting.



## ► Review

- Now that you have learned about the qualifications for voting and how they have changed over time, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
  - Why do voters act as they do?

# Chapter 6: Voters and Voter Behavior

## Section 3

### Lecture Notes

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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# ► Objectives

1. Describe the tactics often used to deny African Americans the right to vote despite the command of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment.
2. Understand the significance of the civil rights laws enacted in 1957, 1960, and 1964.
3. Analyze the provisions and effects of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

# ► Key Terms

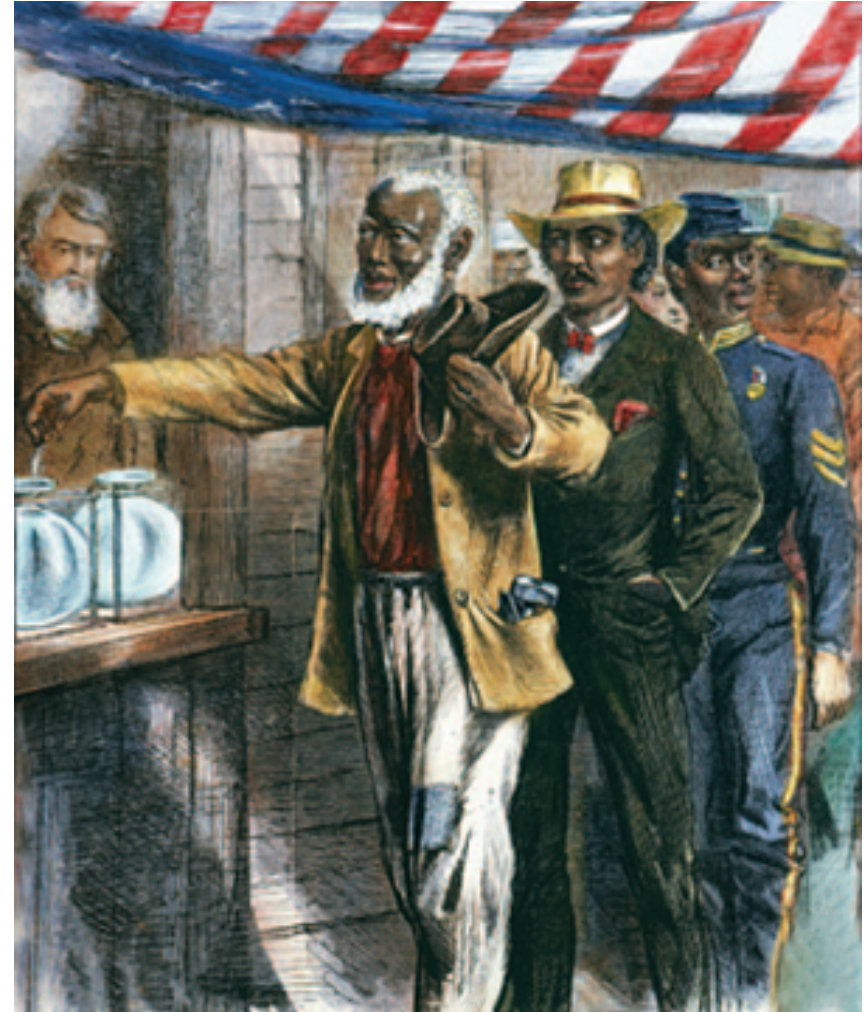
- **gerrymandering:** the practice of drawing electoral district lines in order to limit the voting strength of a particular group or political party
- **injunction:** a court order that compels or restrains the performance of some act by a private individual or a public official
- **preclearance:** the requirement that all changes to State election laws be approved by the Department of Justice before going into effect

- How did the U.S. fulfill the promise of the 15th Amendment?
  - After many years, Congress passed a series of federal civil rights and voting acts, most of them adopted in the 1960s.
  - These laws outlawed practices such as:
    - Blocking African American voter registration
    - Levying poll taxes
    - Requiring voter examinations.



# ► 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment

- In 1870, the ratification of the **15<sup>th</sup> Amendment** gave African Americans, mostly former slaves living in the South, the right to vote.
  - However, this principle had no effect if Congress failed to enforce it.



## ► 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, cont.

- White authorities used several methods to keep African Americans from voting or to limit their votes.
  - **Poll taxes** were charged to keep poor African Americans from voting.
  - **Literacy tests** were rigged and used to disenfranchise African Americans.

## ► 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, cont.

- The Democratic Party, which controlled southern politics, also banned African Americans from taking part in so-called “white primaries” to nominate candidates.
- In 1944, the Supreme Court outlawed the white primary.
- In 1960, the Supreme Court outlawed gerrymandering based on racial discrimination.

# ► Civil Rights Acts

- Pressure from the civil rights movement led Congress to act.
- The **Civil Rights Act of 1957** created the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, which investigated voter discrimination.
- The **Civil Rights Act of 1960** allowed federal voting referees to help qualified people register and vote in federal elections wherever federal courts found voter discrimination.

## ► Civil Rights Acts, cont.

- The **Civil Rights Act of 1964** outlawed racial discrimination in job related-matters and banned unfair voter registration practices and literacy requirements.
- Federal court orders were used to enforce these provisions.





## ► Civil Rights Act, cont.

- In 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a voter registration drive in Selma, Alabama.
- National television showed peaceful civil rights marchers being attacked by State police, shocking the country.



# ► Voting Rights Act of 1965

- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 protects African Americans against various tactics intended to prevent them from voting.
- It led to State poll taxes being overturned in the federal courts.
- This Act applies to all elections: federal, State, and local.
- The law has been extended four times and will not expire until 2036.



## ► Voting Rights Act, cont.

- Checkpoint: What provision about literacy tests was in the Voting Rights Act of 1965?
  - The Act ended the use of literacy tests in places where less than half the eligible electorate had registered or voted in 1964.
  - It also allowed federal voting examiners to oversee elections and register voters in these areas.

# ► Preclearance

- Preclearance states that no new or changed election laws can take effect in a state where less than half the eligible electorate had registered or voted in 1964, unless first approved by the Department of Justice.
- Preclearance has led to many court cases.
  - These cases most often involve changes to the location of polling places, the boundaries of election districts, election deadlines, qualifications of candidates, or shifts from district elections to at-large elections.



# ► Amendments to the Act

- The voter-examiner and preclearance provisions now apply to every community with a minority language population of 10,000 or more.
  - In these areas, ballots and other official election materials must be printed in English and the languages of the minorities involved.





## ► Amendments to the Act, cont.

- The ban on literacy tests now applies to all elections.
- Some States and counties have been removed from the law's coverage through the bail-out process.
  - To be removed, a State or county must show that it has not applied any voting procedures in a discriminatory way for at least 10 years.
  - Today the law still applies to everywhere in eight States, as well as parts of eight others.

## ► Review

- Now that you have learned about how the United States fulfilled the promise of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
  - Why do voters act as they do?

# Chapter 6: Voters and Voter Behavior

## Section 4

### Lecture Notes

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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# ► Objectives

1. Examine the problem of nonvoting in this country.
2. Identify those people who typically do not vote.
3. Examine the behavior of those who vote and those who do not.
4. Understand the sociological and psychological factors that affect voting and voter behavior.

## ► Key Terms

- **off-year election:** a congressional election held in the even years between presidential elections
- **ballot fatigue:** a phenomenon that results in fewer votes being cast for offices at the end of an election ballot
- **political efficacy:** having an influence on politics
- **political socialization:** the process by which people gain their political attitudes and opinions



## ► Key Terms, cont.

- **gender gap:** the difference between the political choices of men and women
- **party identification:** the loyalty of people to a specific party
- **straight-ticket voting:** the practice of voting for candidates from only one party
- **split-ticket voting:** the practice of voting for candidates of more than one party
- **independent:** a person with no party affiliation

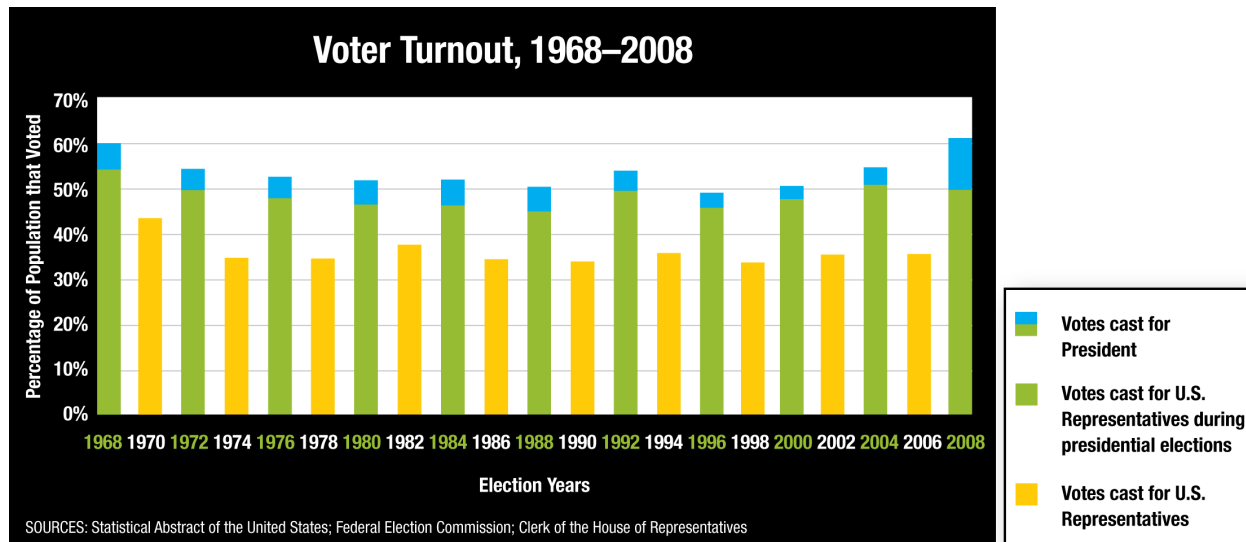
- What factors influence voter behavior?
  - Voters are influenced by sociological factors such as income, occupation, education, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, geography, and family.
  - Voters are also influenced by psychological factors such as political party identification, specific candidates, and key issues.

# ► Nonvoting

- Millions of Americans do not vote.
- Many people who *do* vote do not cast votes for every candidate on the ballot.
  - These people are called “nonvoting voters.”
  - Statewide offices and the presidency receive the most votes.
- Voter turnout is highest in presidential election years.
  - More people vote in general state elections than in primaries or special elections.

# ► Voter Turnout

- Voter turnout varies from election to election, but presidential elections always draw more voters than off-year elections.
  - What factor does the blue at the top of each bar represent, and what is that factor called?



# ► People Who Cannot Vote

- Many people cannot *legally* vote.
  - This includes resident aliens, people with disabling mental conditions, and adults in prison.
- Many others simply cannot vote.
  - Some 5-6 million people are too ill or disabled to vote.
  - Other people do not vote due to their religious beliefs or because they are traveling.
- Others may not be able to vote due to discrimination aimed at them.

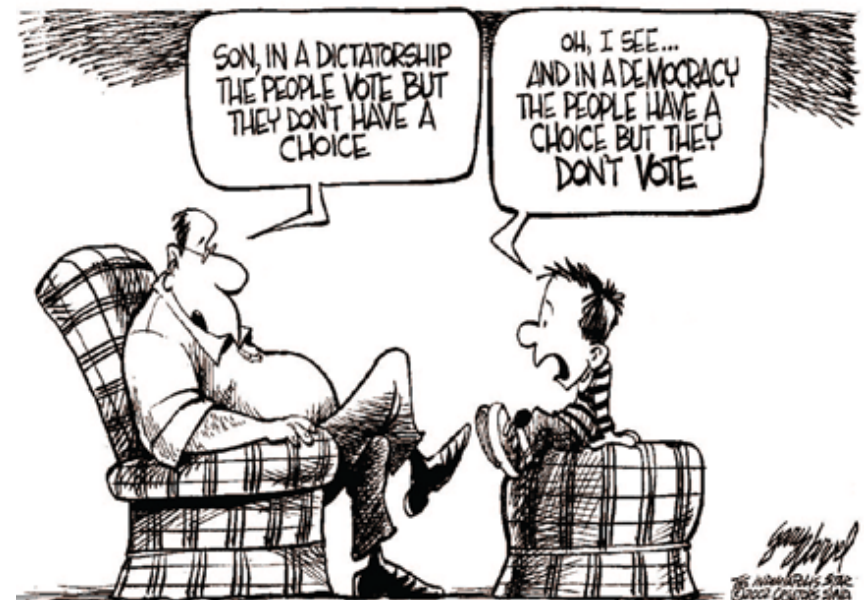


## ► Actual Nonvoters

- Checkpoint: Why do people choose not to vote?
  - They may feel that their votes will not influence local or national government or they may not trust political institutions.
  - They may believe that conditions will remain fine even if they do not vote.
  - Western voters in presidential elections may feel that the election has been decided by eastern and central states before they can vote.

# ► Voters vs. Nonvoters

- The people **most likely to vote**:
  - Have higher levels of income, education, and status
  - Are older, married, long-time residents with strong party affiliation
  - What does this cartoon suggest about voter apathy?

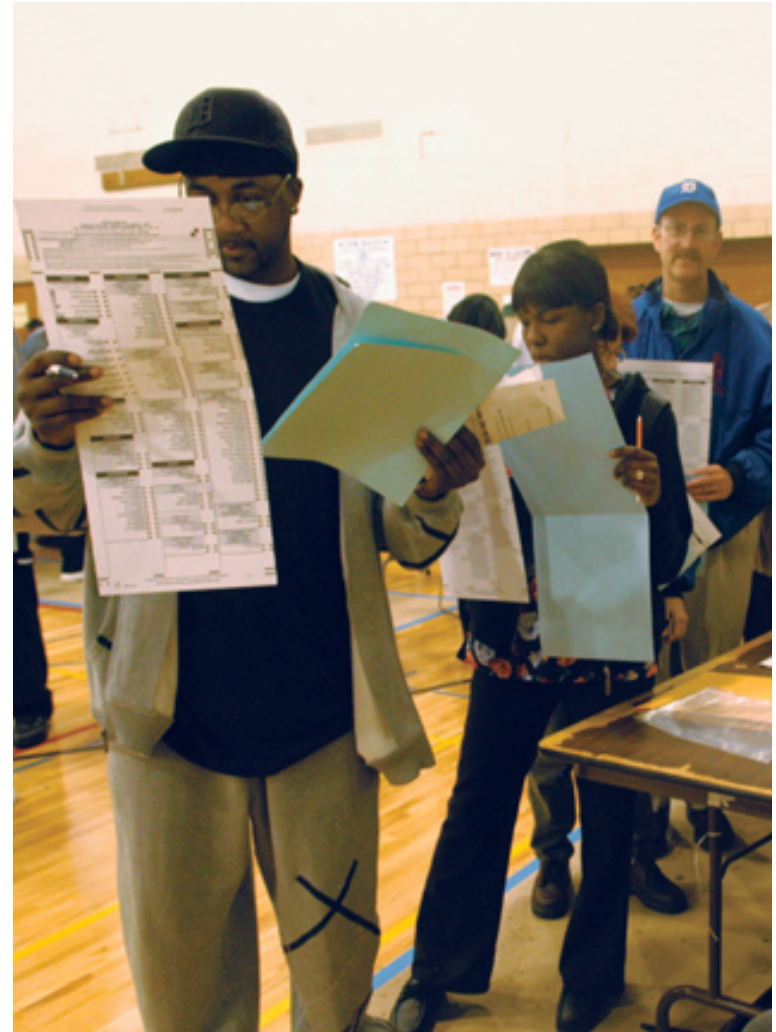


# ▶ Studying Voting Behavior

- Checkpoint: What three sources are used to gather data about voter behavior?
  - The results of specific elections
  - Scientific polls and surveys of public opinion
  - Studies of political socialization—how people gain political attitudes and opinions

## ► Studying Voter Behavior, cont.

- Voters are influenced by a combination of sociological and psychological factors.
  - **Sociology** includes a voter's personal qualities and their group affiliations.
  - **Psychology** includes how a voter sees politics.



# ► Sociological Influences

- Every voter has several qualities that combine to influence their votes.
- A majority of the following groups *tend* to vote **Republican**:
  - Voters with higher incomes (such as professional and business people)
  - Voters with higher levels of education
  - Older voters (though this has varied in the past 30 years)
  - Protestants



## ► Sociological Influences, cont.

- A majority of the following groups *tend* to vote for **Democrats**.
  - Women (by a 5-10 percent margin)
  - African Americans (by large margins since the 1930s)
  - Latinos (this varies among Latino groups)
  - Catholics and Jews



## ► Sociological Influences, cont.

- **Geography** affects voting:
  - Southerners once voted heavily Democratic, but now Republicans win many southern elections.
  - A majority of voters in big cities tend to vote for Democrats.
  - A majority of voters in the suburbs, small cities, and rural areas tend to vote Republican.
- In general, family members tend to vote in similar ways.

# ► Party Affiliation

- Party identification is the strongest predictor of how a person will vote.
- Party loyalists are likely to vote for all of their party's candidates in any election.
  - This tendency has decreased recently as more people identify themselves as independents with no party affiliation.
  - More people are also willing to vote for some candidates from the opposing party, “splitting” their ticket.

# ► Independents

- It is estimated that from one fourth to one third of all voters today are independents.
- Independent voters once tended to be less concerned, less informed, and less active in politics than Democrats or Republicans.
- In recent years, a rising number of independents are young people with above average levels of education, income, and job status.

# ► Candidates and Issues

- Short-term factors such as particular candidates or key issues can swing voters in any specific election.
  - The image projected by a candidate—personality, style, character, appearance, and ability—influences voters.
  - Emotional, publicized issues such as civil rights, war, scandals, or the economy can also sway voters.



# ► Why Vote?

- Is it really true that only those persons who vote have a right to complain? Why or why not?



## ► Review

- Now that you have learned about the factors that influence voter behavior, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
  - Why do voters act as they do?