

To the Editor January 20, 2020

It's Time that Voting Really Becomes a Birthright in America

One Person = One Vote. Right?

To achieve this however, I believe that there should be no voter registration for native born Americans, or for all Naturalized American citizens. A constitutional amendment will be needed to make this happen.

First, as you might expect from me by now, a bit of a history lesson is required here for a full understanding of the context of this essay.

When America was still a collection of British colonies, voting was extremely restricted. Only property-owning white men could vote, which left out women, poor white men, slaves and free blacks, Native Americans, and in some cities, Jews and even Catholics. So it boiled down to wealthy white Protestant men electing other wealthy white Protestant men to office. You can see this clearly visibly demonstrated in the Republican Senate chamber even today.

The Constitution as originally written did not establish any voting rights during the time period of 1787–1870.

After the Civil War, voting rights began to change. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 granted citizenship by not voting rights to **all** who were born in the United States. The Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 provided for birthright citizenship. It wasn't until the 15th Amendment ratified in 1870, that Congress included black men into their definition of **all**. Then after a bargain with Northern politicians over Northern occupation of the South, the South began a process of restricting and removing that right with Jim Crow laws literacy tests and poll taxes. This continued until the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and many others, helped bring us the Voting Rights Act in 1965, nearly a hundred years later.

Meanwhile, for much of the nineteenth century, women were working to gain the right to vote. A pamphlet from the era, published by the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, lists arguments against it, including: "Because 80% of the women eligible to vote are married and can only double or annul their husband's votes. Because in some States more voting women than voting men will place the Government under *petticoat* rule. Because it is unwise to risk the good we already have for the evil which may occur." Women were included in the **all** in 1920 with the 19th Amendment.

Voter ID law restrictions are the most recent modern-day version of a poll tax. Nevertheless, in 2013 the Supreme Court tore a chunk out of the 1965 Voting Rights Act which gave the DOJ the power to veto bad state voting laws. Their decision means that the DOJ no longer has the right or ability to clear proposed voting laws before states enact them. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/voting-history-america>

The last constitutional Amendment to address voting rights was the 26th Amendment passed in 1971, which extended the right to vote to anyone 18 years of age or older.

You say, yeah but what about all the voter fraud going on I keep hearing about?

The fears of voter fraud are actually more unsubstantiated than they are based in reality. From 2000 to 2010 there were 649 million votes cast in general elections, 47 thousand UFO sightings, 441 Americans killed by lightning, and 13 cases of in-person voter impersonation.

Out of the 197 million votes cast for federal candidates between 2002 and 2005, only 40 voters were indicted for voter fraud. Only 26 of those cases, or about .00000013 percent of the votes cast, resulted in convictions or guilty pleas. <http://voterfraudfacts.com/>

Baby Boomers Beware! I got my new Wisconsin driver's license with the new "Star" about five years ago during a normal renewal, no problems. My wife just went to renew hers last year and she needed her birth certificate, no, the one from the hospital won't work it must be the county government one, her SSN, proof of current address, and marriage papers proving her succession of names. Women got the right to vote in 1920, so why do we still discriminate against them a hundred years later? Why are only women required to demonstrate name changes and required or expected to replace their maiden names in the 21st Century and not men? Is there some remnants of misogyny and paternalism involved in this? We could save people some money by eliminating the need to inscribe née on tombstones.

Purging voter registration is all the rage these days as the Republican party seeks to rule without majority consent. There is however no evidence of fraud to justify the stated purpose of these actions.

Georgia Plans to Purge 300,000 Names From Its Voter Rolls

This is a number that amounts to almost 4 percent of those registered to vote there. The purges are targeted the young and people of color since they are often disproportionately hit by the removals because of a change of address or lack of a prior voter history. "Voters should not lose their right to vote simply because they have decided not to express that right in recent elections," said the Fair Fight Action organization, in a statement. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/30/us/politics/georgia-voter-purge.html>

Judge orders 234,000 purged from Wisconsin voter rolls

"Any time people have to go through extra steps to vote, and certainly re-registering is a significant additional step, the result is that fewer people end up voting," the state Attorney General said. Our Democratic Governor railed against the ruling. "I won the race for governor by less than 30,000 votes. This move pushed by Republicans to remove Wisconsinites from the voter rolls is just another attempt at overriding the will of the people and stifling the democratic process."

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/12/13/wisconsin-voter-registration-judge-orders-234-000-purged-rolls/2643852001/>

Minorities, many of them poor, move frequently for a variety of reasons. Young people are also quite mobile, if you remember your younger days. Many are students. Do we really believe that a student graduating from UW-Madison and accepting his first job in Milwaukee, is going to vote in Milwaukee and then drive to Madison to vote again? Not likely, but more importantly there is no evidence that this is occurring, or has even ever occurred once.

The Supreme Court Gutted the Voting Rights Act. What Happened Next Will Not Shock You.

The 1965 law required that lawmakers in states with a history of discriminating against minority voters, in 15 states most of them in the South, get federal permission before changing voting rules. Now that the Supreme Court has invalidated this requirement, GOP lawmakers across the United States are running buck wild with new voting restrictions, by passing or implementing voter ID laws, cutting voting hours, moving and making it harder to find polling places, purging voter rolls, adding new birth certificate requirements, and ending same-day registrations.

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/04/republican-voting-rights-supreme-court-id/>

Poor and minority populations already spend more time in line to vote than we would tolerate in white suburban, rural, or small town America. Gerrymandering of voting districts already ensures that Republicans can still win in many of these districts while getting less votes. There are examples of voter suppression all over this country, including Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Wisconsin vote split was closer than results

*“Republicans received **49 percent of the 2.9 million votes** cast in Wisconsin’s congressional races, yet **won five out of eight, or 62.5 percent, of the seats**. The analysis looked at unofficial 2012 results reported by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and official 2010 results from the state Government Accountability Board.”* <https://www.wisconsinwatch.org/2012/11/2012-election-analysis/>

Federal Judges: Wisconsin's GOP Redistricting Maps Unconstitutional

*A panel of three federal judges Monday struck down state house district maps drawn in 2011 by Wisconsin Republican controlled legislature, finding the resulting districts **so blatantly partisan** that they denied Democrats a fair shot at electing candidates of their choosing.*

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/federal-court-says-wisconsin-s-gop-redistricting-maps-unconstitutional-n686991>

Michigan voters approve anti-gerrymandering Proposal

Michigan voters gave a big "yes" to a ballot proposal that would significantly change the way Michigan's political lines are drawn for congressional and state legislative districts. It will create a 13-member citizens redistricting commission made up of four Republicans, four Democrats, and five people who identify with neither party. Gerrymandering is now outlawed by the Michigan state constitution. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/elections/2018/11/06/proposal-2-michigan-gerrymandering/1847078002/>

The "Iowa Model" for Redistricting Nonpartisan Staff Draw Maps in Iowa--Legislature Votes on Them

Iowa stands alone in how it handles redistricting responsibilities. Traditionally, state legislatures are responsible for redistricting. That is true for legislative redistricting in 37 states, and for Congressional redistricting in 43 states. Other states give this responsibility to a commission.

Iowa is among the states where the legislature has responsibility, but its method is unique: nonpartisan staff draw the lines with a nonpartisan approach. This webpage is a synopsis of how the "Iowa system" works. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/redistricting/the-iowa-model-for-redistricting.aspx>

A representational democracy can only work if legislators have "a habitual recollection of their dependence on the people," wrote James Madison. By making it nearly impossible to vote legislators out of office, partisan gerrymandering is "incompatible with democratic principles," wrote Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan in the Gill v. Whitford concurring opinion. President Barack Obama warned against it. So did President Ronald Reagan.

Voting Day needs to be a mandatory paid Federal holiday, and a celebration day of our participatory democracy. No school, No work, No exceptions. Critical mandatory jobs like police, military, transportation, safety, etc. could be exempted, by allowing an early voting privilege.

Want to make voting easier in Wisconsin? Here are nine ways to do it.

<https://www.htrnews.com/story/news/solutions/2019/12/20/want-make-voting-easier-wisconsin-here-nine-ways-do-it/2700442001/>

Let me ask this seemingly obvious question if I may, before I end here. We get receipts for more everything we do in our lives. Why don't we get a receipt when we vote? Why couldn't this receipt have a tracking number on it like you get you ship a package at the Post Office? Why couldn't you then go online and follow your vote (just like a package) from the town, village or city where you cast it, as it moves to the County, State and Federal election offices? This could be represented as a token, which had Federal, State and Local components. To me, this kind of confirmation equals transparency.

It is well past the time for a 28th Amendment to our Federal Constitution to enshrine citizen voting rights, and eliminate any State and local interference. This is the way that **ALL** can really mean **ALL**, as we Americans continue our quest for a More Perfect Union.