

A young woman with dark hair, seen from the back and side, is walking outdoors. She is wearing a blue t-shirt and a grey backpack. On the back of the backpack, there is a circular button with a red top half, a white middle section with the word 'VOTE' in blue, and a blue bottom half with white stars. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a building.

EVERY VOTE MATTERS

The Power of Your Voice,
from Student Elections
to the Supreme Court

JUDGE TOM JACOBS
NATALIE JACOBS

free spirit
PUBLISHING®

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"We are in urgent need of effective civic education, and *Every Vote Matters* is an excellent contribution that deserves wide readership."

—Rob Richie, executive director, FairVote

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DEDICATION

Every Vote Matters is dedicated to my grandchildren in the hope that Kali, Taylor, Austin, Parker, Chase, Natalia, Tiago, Levi, Hannah, Paige, Felix, Jackson, Hudson, and Tomas will engage in a positive manner, travel, and contribute to our world in any way they choose.

—Tom

To my precious little ones, Paige and Felix, may you grow with courage and strength to use your voice and to allow it to be heard.

—Natalie

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"Happiness—it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort."

—Vincent van Gogh

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Foreword

Judge Tom Jacobs is an encourager. He also cares deeply about young people and the quality, direction, and impact of their lives. The degree of his encouragement and caring fill every page of this book, *Every Vote Matters: The Power of Your Voice, from Student Elections to the Supreme Court*, by Tom and his daughter Natalie.

Tom and Natalie discuss many instances and circumstances where a single opinion—one solitary vote—dramatically changed an outcome. In turn, that change continues to affect the lives of many every day. Indeed, the impact of one vote is often more powerful and long lasting than most people realize.

You may have heard this tired excuse for not voting: “Why should I bother? It’s not going to matter anyway.” But that simply isn’t true. Regardless of the question or the candidate, your opinion matters, because *you* matter. Besides, no matter your age or circumstance, the skills of civic responsibility grow stronger *only* when they are used. So vote when there’s opportunity. It *does* make a difference.

What If You *Couldn't* Vote?

Few of us will ever face a situation where, as much as we would like to register our opinion, voting would be impossible. But if that *were* the situation, how might it affect you? That’s a good question—one that deserves a bit of thought.

That was precisely the circumstance of a friend of mine who was a Navy pilot. During the Vietnam Conflict his aircraft was shot down over North Vietnam, and he became a prisoner of war (POW) for over seven years in the dreaded Hoa Lo Prison, better known as the Hanoi Hilton.

As a POW, he was unable to vote in the elections back home, but he continued to exercise the character of citizenship. “Even with the torture and the deplorable conditions there,” he told me, “I was acutely aware of what was right and what was wrong, and that I *knew* the difference.” He was finally freed in 1973, and I’m

pretty sure he's never passed up a ballot box since. He even ran for a seat in the U.S. Senate in his home state of Hawaii.

Honoring Those Who Paid the Price

As I reflect on the rights and responsibilities that come with living in the United States, I realize that my first lesson in American citizenship came early: I was born during what historians call the Battle of the Bulge, the biggest and most costly battle involving U.S. forces in WWII Europe. These troops, desperately low on food, ammunition, and cold-weather clothing, were surrounded and subjected to a terrifying, nonstop shelling by the enemy's biggest guns. Yet they did not retreat or surrender. They held their ground with courage and fortitude. In doing so, they hastened the end of an ugly war.

It was many years later before I really understood that these soldiers took a stand for me—then just a tiny baby in Texas—as much as for anyone else. I wish I could say that since then I've honored their sacrifice in my actions every day. What I can say is that, with this book, Tom and Natalie Jacobs have restoked a fire in me, and I intend to *keep* that fire lit from now on. I wish for you that same experience.

James D. Sutton, Ed.D.

Psychologist and host of *The Changing Behavior Network*

Introduction

Statement: My one vote won't make any difference, so why should I bother to register and vote?

Response: Never doubt the power of your voice and your vote. The president of the United States can be elected by *one* vote! And once elected, the president nominates Supreme Court justices, who can sit on the Court for life and who decide cases important to all Americans—sometimes by *one* vote. Elections at all levels and ballot propositions can also succeed or fail due to just *one* vote.

Imagine having the power to cast your vote to help determine answers to society's toughest questions, the most complicated and controversial issues of the day: crime and punishment, religion, same-sex marriage, healthcare, affirmative action, and many more concerns. That is exactly the task before the nine justices on the U.S. Supreme Court. Each year, these justices hear and decide approximately eighty cases that affect every American of every age. Perhaps on the Court more than in any other setting, the power of one vote has a lasting and an extensive reach. Indeed, since majority rules in the nation's highest Court, that one vote can result in a 5–4 decision, giving immense power and responsibility to each Supreme Court justice.

Yet all citizens of the United States, once they reach age eighteen, also have the power to cast votes on issues and candidates that affect their lives and the world around them. From voting for local and state officials, to voting for ballot measures such as **referendums** or **initiatives**, to casting a vote in presidential elections, we each have the opportunity to voice our opinions when we go to the polls. And while you may not have a direct say when it comes to the larger issues that the Supreme Court grapples with, you do have some influence over who *does* have a vote.

Every four years, the president of the United States is either elected or reelected. One of his or her many duties and

responsibilities is to nominate justices to the United States Supreme Court when openings arise. Then the president's nominations must be confirmed by majority support in the U.S. Senate. The 100 senators have an opportunity to question the nominee, which can

take a few days or even weeks, depending on the candidate and the issues raised. (And by the way, some justices have received Senate confirmation by just one vote.)

IN OTHER WORDS

"The shift of a single vote would sharply alter the court's philosophical balance, on a host of issues that touch the lives of every American."

—Clint Bolick, Goldwater Institute

This means that when you cast a vote for president or for your state's two senators, you are potentially affecting the makeup of the Supreme Court, since presidents typically nominate—

and senators typically confirm—justices who share their views on important issues. In this way, every vote in presidential and senate elections counts not only toward deciding who sits in the Oval Office and Senate chambers, but also toward deciding who sits in the highest court of the land for many years (or even decades) and makes decisions about the fundamental constitutional rights of all Americans.

While many Court decisions are unanimous, some contentious issues have divided the Court. In these cases, one vote makes all the difference. Since 1946, more than 1,000 Supreme Court cases have been decided by a single vote. The lead cases in each chapter of this book all resulted in these 5–4 decisions, and all affect teenagers and children as well as adults. Had one vote gone the other way in these cases, your world might have been quite different. In this

Did You Know?

In the 2012 Supreme Court term, twenty-three decisions—nearly one-third of the Court's cases—resulted in a 5–4 vote. In the 2013 term, ten out of the sixty-seven cases heard were decided by one vote. And in the 2014 term, the Court ruled 5–4 in nineteen out of seventy-six cases.

book, we'll look at some of these cases and the thorny issues they involved, including:

- whether your school can suspend or expel you without explaining why or giving you a chance to be heard
- your rights in the **juvenile** justice system
- the authority of police to track your location without a search warrant
- whether kids and teens over eight years old can be sentenced to prison for life without parole
- the right for same-sex couples to marry under federal law
- whether religious messages and symbols can be displayed in public schools
- in the college admission process, the right to consider an applicant's race in an attempt to build a diverse student body

Other 5–4 cases in this book focus on issues such as drug testing students at school, excluding gay leaders in the Boy Scouts, flag burning, censorship at school, and your rights as a student on and off campus.

As you will read in this book, a single vote by one Supreme Court justice—or by one electoral college member, or one U.S. Senator—has the power to affect the lives of millions. Similarly, the vote of every citizen counts, whether in a school, city, state, or national election. Even before you're old enough to vote in state and national elections, your opinion matters and you can make a difference. As a teenager, you can get involved in the election process in several ways. If your school holds class elections, you can vote in these elections, support a candidate, or run for an office yourself. You can also listen to the issues discussed during the elections for student body offices. You have the right to vote, and your

IN OTHER WORDS

Former Justice William Brennan once asked his law clerks, "What's the most important law at the Supreme Court?" His answer: "Five! The law of five! With five votes, you can do anything around here."

vote may help decide what changes or improvements your school's new student leaders make. You can also make your voice heard in the clubs you join or sports you play. Club officers and team

Did You Know?

In the 2014 midterm elections, only 37 percent of eligible voters cast ballots—the lowest turnout rate since World War II.

captains have responsibilities that build skills for future pursuits. When you participate in these opportunities, you make your voice heard, and you lay the foundations of a lifelong habit of engagement and action that you can be proud of.

As an adult, your vote becomes a powerful way to voice your opinion.

Voting is often called a privilege and a right, and it's essential to a thriving democracy as a way to share your opinions and ideals. After reading this book, you'll have a better understanding of why it's so important to have a say in matters that impact your life and you'll see how you can make a difference. Your opinion counts. Silence is nonproductive. How will you use your voice?

About This Book

This book is divided into two parts. Part I discusses the history of the Supreme Court, how it works, and its role in our nation as the highest court in the judicial system. We'll also look at the election process in the United States, talk about the process of voting and how to register to vote, and discuss why your vote makes a difference. You'll learn about key events in the history of voting in the United States. Whether this information is new to you or you read it as a refresher, it will help you understand the cases that follow.

Part II presents fifteen Supreme Court cases that were decided by a vote of 5–4. Each case begins with the key issue and the facts of the case. Then the Court's ruling is revealed, along with the reasoning the justices used to reach this decision. Related cases are presented next, illustrating the ongoing debate over these issues in courtrooms across the country. Some of these related cases were Supreme Court cases, while others were heard in lower courts at the federal or state level. The decisions in some, but not all, of these

cases came down to one vote. (The case names and year can be found at the end of each related case; full citations for these cases appear in the Notes section at the end of the book on page 204.)

At the end of each chapter, you'll find discussion starters or suggestions for taking action on the issues that interest you. Each chapter closes with a list of resources.

The cases you read about in this book may spur further questions in your mind. If you want to learn more about the cases and why the U.S. Supreme Court (or a lower court) ruled the way it did, check out the section called "How to Do Legal Research" at the back of the book (page 198). You'll find lots of tips for doing your own investigation into legal decisions.

In addition, in reviewing the cases discussed in the book, you'll come across certain legal terms that may be new to you. Terms in **bold** are included in the glossary at the end of the book (pages 200–203).

We're always interested in hearing from teens about their experiences and questions. If you'd like to get in touch with us, you can reach us through our website, AsktheJudge.info. You can also email us at help4kids@freespirit.com, or contact us in care of:

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We look forward to hearing from you!

Tom Jacobs, J.D., and Natalie Jacobs, J.D.

IN OTHER WORDS

"Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting."

—President Franklin Roosevelt



PART 1

The Supreme Court, the Law, and the Power of One Vote

The U.S. Supreme Court: What Does It Do and Why Is It Important?

In 1789, Congress passed the Judiciary Act, which established the U.S. Supreme Court as the highest court in the land. The act determined that the Court would be composed of a Chief Justice and five associate justices. In the Court's first eighty years, its size changed a number of times, but since 1869, nine justices have been on the Court (eight associate justices and one Chief Justice). The U.S. Constitution (Article II, Section 2) gives the president the power—with the Senate's consent—to appoint judges to the Supreme Court when seats are open.

The Supreme Court heads the judicial branch of the federal government. The three branches of government—the judicial, executive, and legislative branches—provide checks and balances on each other's actions and authority. The Supreme Court's job is to interpret the Constitution and review lower court cases. The Court also has the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional.

Local laws and ordinances, as well as state and federal statutes, govern the actions of all U.S. citizens and others who live in the United States. Rights and responsibilities stem from the U.S.

Constitution and its amendments, particularly the first ten, which are referred to as the Bill of Rights. It is the job of the Supreme Court to interpret these founding documents while taking into account legal precedent (how earlier courts have ruled on similar issues), as well as considering current national consensus (what most citizens think about an issue).

The Supreme Court meets each year in Washington, D.C., from the first Monday in October to the end of June. Arguments are open to the public, but the limited seating is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Court receives about 10,000 petitions for **certiorari** (review) each year. At least four justices must agree to accept a case, and

Did You Know?

When the Supreme Court first met in 1790, the justices had little to do as they had no cases to consider. So they traveled the country conducting trials in lower court cases.

only 1 percent (75 to 80 cases) are accepted each term and set for oral argument. During oral argument, each side has thirty to sixty minutes to present its position. During this process, the justices frequently interrupt the lawyers' arguments to ask questions.

The Supreme Court decides what cases it will hear based on national importance and pressing legal issues of the day. The Court hears specific types of cases—for example, ones that involve disputes between states, and cases from lower federal courts that conflict with each other. It also interprets federal laws and treaties. The most common types of case it hears involve constitutional questions in civil and criminal matters. If an issue involving a federal constitutional right exists, the case may proceed to the federal courts for resolution. Otherwise, state courts are the proper **jurisdiction** to settle disputes.

Each year, the Court is petitioned to consider issues including a woman's right to choose, gun control, LGBTQ rights, campaign finance laws, voting rights, equal opportunity hiring practices, income equality, and other issues important to all Americans.

One area of law the Court is reluctant to hear is family law cases, or what's often called "domestic relations." The Court has held this view since at least 1890 when the justices wrote in *In re Burrus*, "The whole subject of the domestic relations of husband and wife, parent and child, belongs to the laws of the States and not to the laws of the United States."

The Court recognizes the importance of the decision to hear or not hear a case. In the 1936 case *U.S. v. Butler*, Justice Harlan Stone wrote that "the only check upon our own exercise of power is our own sense of self-restraint." And in 1982 Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote that the Court had a "long considered practice not to decide abstract, hypothetical or contingent questions, or to decide any constitutional question in advance of the necessity for its decision." (*Island Trees School District v. Pico*)

IN OTHER WORDS

"The most fundamental principle of constitutional adjudication is not to face constitutional questions but to avoid them, if at all possible."

—Justice Felix Frankfurter, **concurring opinion** in *U.S. v. Lovett* (1946)

(For more information about how the Court selects cases for review, see case 3: *Camreta v. Greene*.)

Although the justices do not consider evidence or arguments from anyone who is not involved in the case before them, they do pay attention to issues and trends of national concern. Sometimes, they allow organizations to file “friend of court briefs,” called **amicus briefs**, in high-profile cases. For example, when the Court legalized same-sex marriage in 2015 in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, more than 100 amicus briefs were filed with the Court. These are written arguments presenting organizations’ positions on an issue before the court.

Talk, Think, and Take Action

- If you feel strongly about an issue that is currently before the Supreme Court, make your views known. One way to do this is by contacting a national group or foundation that has taken a stand on the issue as well and is preparing an amicus brief. Express your views to such a group, so it can consider your position while preparing its amicus brief for the Court.
- What do you think of the petitioning process and the method the Court uses for deciding which cases to hear? Do you think these practices could be improved in any way? If so, how?
- Justices on the U.S. Supreme Court need to be educated in law, though they do not need to be law school graduates. What are your thoughts about this? Do you think there should be official requirements for a Supreme Court justice? If so, what do you think would best prepare someone for this important position? If you see yourself taking a seat on the Court someday, what education and career path do you plan on pursuing?
- The first African-American justice appointed to the Supreme Court was Thurgood Marshall, who served from 1967 to 1991. Justice Sandra Day O’Connor was the first woman on the Court, serving from 1981 to 2006. And in 2009, Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice; she is still on the Court. Do you think it’s ideal for the makeup

of the Court to be diverse? If so, in what ways do you think it should be diverse? How do you think issues are viewed differently by people with different backgrounds?

- New Supreme Court justices are a bit like freshmen in high school: They have not yet earned all the privileges that come with being an upperclassman. On the Court, the duties of the newest justice may include taking notes, speaking last during conferences when the justices gather to discuss a case, and answering the door if someone knocks during a conference. Unlike being a freshman in high school, however, the most recently appointed justice continues carrying out these duties for more than one year in most cases. He or she does so until the next justice is appointed—which has been as long as ten years. What do you think of this ranking system? Although being a “freshman” justice has disadvantages, what do you think some advantages might be of being in this position on the Court?
 - If you’re interested in the thought process, analysis, and discussion that go into judicial decision making, you may be able to get a taste while you’re still in high school by volunteering with a local teen court. Teen courts offer an alternative disciplinary program in the school setting and a way for minor juvenile offenses to be diverted away from, or stay out of, the justice system. To learn more about teen court and volunteer opportunities available near you, contact your local juvenile justice department or check out globalyouthjustice.org for a list of such programs around the country.
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The Election Process

The president of the United States is elected through a combination of the popular vote (votes by ordinary citizens) and the electoral vote (votes by congressional delegates). Each state is allotted a certain number of electoral votes that varies depending on the

Did You Know?

- George Washington was the only U.S. president in history elected unanimously by the Electoral College. In 1789 and 1792, he won the popular vote in each state, thereby giving him all of the electoral votes.
- In 1800, Thomas Jefferson was elected president by one vote in the House of Representatives over Aaron Burr who became vice president.
- In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes became the nineteenth president after defeating Samuel Tilden by one electoral vote. If the popular vote in any number of states had gone the other way by just *one* citizen's vote, the electoral votes might have been distributed differently, leading to a different outcome.

number of representatives the state has in Congress. So each state receives two votes for its two Senators, plus the number of members the state has in the House of Representatives. (The District of Columbia has three electoral votes.) The number of representatives for each state is based on the state's population according to the U.S. Census taken every ten years. For example, Florida has two senators, plus twenty-seven members in the House of Representatives. Therefore, Florida had twenty-nine electoral votes in the 2012 presidential election. In all states but Maine and Nebraska (which award electoral votes based on voting within its congressional districts), electoral votes are pledged to the candidate who receives the greatest number of popular votes in that state. In order to win the presidential election, a candidate needs 270 electoral votes.

IN OTHER WORDS

"Do you really want to have no say in policies that determine whether or not you have a job, what you pay for college, whether climate change ever gets addressed or even acknowledged? Voting is critical, but it is just one step in the broad spectrum of engagement required to advance real change, whatever your goals and ideology. For democracy to flourish, we need people to do it all—vote, volunteer, and raise some righteous hell."

—Professor Ann Beeson, University of Texas

In 2000, George W. Bush was elected the forty-third president by a margin of just five electoral votes. The popular vote in Florida was so close that Bush's opponent, Al Gore, requested a recount. The Florida Supreme Court ordered a manual recount of the votes. Then Bush asked the Supreme Court to get involved and stop the recount. Because the Florida court had, in essence, created new election law by ordering certain counties to conduct the recount, the Supreme Court found the recount plan unconstitutional. The Court stopped the recount by a vote of 5–4. As a result, Florida's twenty-five electoral votes went to Bush, giving him the White House by an electoral vote of 271 to 266. If the Court had decided to allow the recount to continue, U.S. presidential history might look different today.

Did You Know?

By a majority vote, senators approve or disapprove nominated Supreme Court justices. In 1861, Jeremiah S. Black was rejected by one vote. On the other hand, Stanley Matthews was confirmed by one vote in 1881. One hundred years later, Sandra Day O'Connor was confirmed as the first woman on the Court by a vote of 99–0 in 1981.

Talk, Think, and Take Action

- In what ways do you think the United States might be different if the Supreme Court had not intervened in the 2000 election?
- Think about some ways you participate in the election process. Whether you're of voting age or not, there are many ways you can make a difference in elections. Student council and class offices are a great way to learn through on-the-job efforts. You can also write a letter, email, or tweet to let politicians and candidates know your thoughts on issues that are important to you. Or you could volunteer to work on their campaign; get involved with the Young Democrats, Young Republicans, Green Party, or other organizations; or take part in get-out-the-vote efforts.

- If you aren't old enough to vote yet, think about how you *would* vote if you had the opportunity and what factors would go into that decision. What are some ways you could learn more about a proposition being brought to vote? How would you study the candidates so you can be certain that your vote reflects your beliefs and values?
 - What do you think are the best ways for candidates to communicate their plans and beliefs? Debates, interviews, written campaign literature? What about campaign commercials and “robo-calls”? You've probably heard of mudslinging campaigns. Do you think focusing on the faults or negative qualities of an opponent is beneficial in any way? If so, in what ways? Does it help voters better understand a candidate's position, or lead to a better turnout at the polls?
 - If you're interested in lowering the voting age or expanding voting rights in general, consider getting involved with organizations like FairVote and National Youth Rights Association. See their websites at FairVote.org and YouthRights.org.
 - What do you think of celebrity endorsements of candidates? (Endorsements mean a person is making his or her support of the candidate public and possibly donating to the campaign.) In what ways do you think such endorsements can help—or hurt—candidates?
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Who Gets to Vote?

The right to vote enjoyed by most Americans is the result of decades of struggle. Yet, of the 197 million registered voters in the United States, only 55 percent actually went to the polls and voted in the 2012 presidential election. Among young voters, only 11 percent of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds voted in that election. And the average voter turnout is consistently lower for state and local elections than for presidential elections.

Generally, any citizen of the United States who is at least eighteen years old may vote in local, state, and national elections. Congress and the states determine the qualifications to vote. Some states allow seventeen-year-olds to vote in primaries and caucuses. Other factors—including residency requirements, criminal history, and homelessness—vary from state to state. Contact your local elections office for information. Remember, many states require voters to register before Election Day.

Do you believe the government plays an important role in your life? If you answered yes, most people agree with you. Yet millions of eligible voters do not vote when the time comes. Why is that? A survey conducted just before the 2012 election indicated that people feel they are too busy, are not excited about the candidates, have a lack of trust in leaders, or believe that their votes don't matter and that nothing gets done regardless of who wins an election.

Yet voting is your way to make a difference and have a say in important issues that matter in your life. Otherwise, others will decide for you—and you won't always agree with the outcome.

IN OTHER WORDS

"This generation's teens feel less confident in the power of the vote. They have become disillusioned with the promise of political change and prefer to dedicate their time to volunteering. However, lasting change cannot be made without engaging in both voting and volunteering."

—Meera, 17

IN OTHER WORDS

"One who does not vote has no right to complain."

—Louis L'Amour,
American author

In the United States, voters benefit from 200 years of voting history, during which the rules about who could and who could not vote were established, expanded, and improved. Today, local, state, and federal election laws that regulate voting are generally aimed at encouraging inclusion and participation, and guaranteeing all eligible U.S. citizens the right to vote. See the timeline on page 16 for an overview of how U.S. voting rights have evolved over time.

A Timeline of Issues Affecting Voting in the United States

IN OTHER WORDS

“What’s our excuse today for not voting?”

—President Barack Obama

- 1805 York, an African-American slave, and Sacagawea, a Shoshone teenager, are permitted to vote with the Lewis and Clark expedition members on where they should spend the winter on the Pacific coast.
- 1857 The Supreme Court decides the Dred Scott case, declaring that slaves are property and have “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” The Constitution does not recognize black people as persons in the eyes of the law.
- 1863 President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order that frees slaves in ten states and becomes one factor in the Civil War (1861–1865).
- 1865 The Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery is ratified: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”
- 1868 The Fourteenth Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing all U.S. citizens equal protection and due process of law.
- 1870 The Fifteenth Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing the right to vote for all men regardless of race: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Also in this year, Wyoming becomes the first state to allow women to vote.
- 1872 Women’s **suffragist** Susan B. Anthony is fined \$100 for voting in the presidential election.
- 1920 The Nineteenth Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing all women the right to vote: “The right of citizens of the

United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

1963 In his State of the Union address, President John F. Kennedy says that “the most precious and powerful right in the world, the right to vote is not to be denied to any citizen on grounds of his race or color . . . all those who are willing to vote should always be permitted.”

IN OTHER WORDS

“The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.”

—President Lyndon Johnson

1964 The Twenty-Fourth Amendment is ratified, prohibiting poll or other taxes as a requirement to vote and thereby removing poverty as a barrier to voting.

1965 President Lyndon Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act, eliminating obstacles and racial discrimination in voter registration, such as literacy tests.

1971 The Twenty-Sixth Amendment is ratified, lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 in federal and state elections.

1993 Congress passes the National Voter Registration Act (Motor Voter Law), authorizing voter registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles when applying for or renewing a driver’s license.

2013 The Supreme Court instructs Congress to rewrite the formula used to determine which parts of the country need federal approval to change their voting procedures. This approval was a critical part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (See page 183 for *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*).

2015 Georgia representative John Lewis introduced the Voter Empowerment Act (H.R. 12) into Congress. It calls for public websites for voter registration, same-day registration, and help for those with disabilities. The bill is still under consideration.