



#ELCAVotes

Fact & Activity Sheet on Race and Voting

Resolved, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon local, state and federal government to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens and to discourage or eliminate all laws, ordinances or regulations that would have the effect of racial and ethnic discrimination in the exercise of that right.

(Adapted from Voting Rights To All Citizens

ELCA social policy resolution CA13.06.29

Adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in August 2013)

Voter suppression still an issue

Despite the progress made during the civil rights movement era, voter suppression and voter restrictions still remain under attack for communities of color.

The racially blatant discriminatory laws and state sanctioned violence of the Jim Crow era that denied blacks and other people of color the opportunity to vote are gone.

However, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 decision to dismantle a key provision of the Voting Rights Act removed a critical element to combating racial discrimination in voting. Removing this protection continues to have consequences in extending to all citizens the opportunity

to exercise their right to vote. People of color, the elderly, those who speak English as a second language, those who live on tribal lands, and college students have been targeted through discriminatory voter ID laws, the termination of early voting, stopping same-day registration, purging voter rolls and restricting the voting rights of formerly incarcerated individuals.

The ELCA has stated in its social policy resolution, "Concerning the Guarantee of Voting Rights to All Citizens," that the guarantee that all citizens be able to exercise the right to vote on an equal basis is a fundamental requirement for a just society.



Photo of Bobby Simmons with other protestors at the Selma, Ala. to Montgomery, Ala. march (March 21-25, 1965). The event was a major factor in securing the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The federal law eliminated discrimination based on race in the electoral process. (by Bruce Davidson/Library of Congress, [Public Domain])

**"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
— Amos 5:24**

Discussion questions:

1. As a person of faith, how does denying access to the ballot make you feel?
2. How do you observe issues of race and racism playing out in the current electoral process?
3. Why is it important to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens?

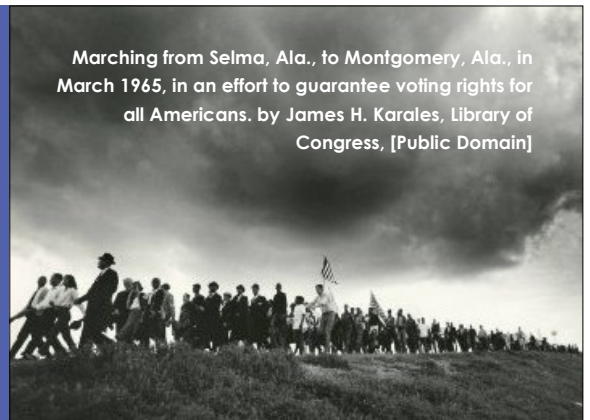
ELECTION PROTECTION

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE

866-OUR-VOTE

The Nation's Largest Non-Partisan
Voter Protection Coalition
www.866OurVote.org

Good and gracious God, bring us into deeper conversations in understanding the divisions of race, class, gender and ability in exercising the right to vote. Amen



Activity sheet

Given your current age, racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, gender and physical ability — when would you have been eligible to vote in the following time periods? Circle the year. Find someone with a different answer than yours.

1776 – White men that own property can vote.

1789 – U.S. democracy established. White men with property can vote. Poor people, women, Native Americans and enslaved African Americans cannot vote.

1866 – Citizenship granted to native-born Americans but excludes Native Americans.

1870 – The 15th Amendment establishes the right of African American males to vote.

1882 – The Chinese Exclusion Act bars people of Chinese ancestry from becoming citizens. They cannot vote.

1920 – Prior to 1920, some parts of the country let women vote. But securing the right to vote was a long, hard-fought struggle. It isn't until 1920 that all women have the right to vote.

1921 – The Sons of America is organized to fight for equality and the rights of Mexican Americans as citizens, including the right to vote.

1922 – In the case of *Takao v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court upholds the 1790 Naturalization Act that barred Asian-Americans from becoming citizens. This enforces the policy of no voting rights for Asian immigrants.

1965 – In a response to the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. and others, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is enacted. It prohibits any election practice that denies the right to vote on account of race.

1971 – The 26th Amendment gives voting rights to 18-year-olds in response to protests about males under 21 drafted for the Vietnam War.

1975 – The Voting Rights Act is amended to include language assistance for minority voters.

2013 – In *Shelby v. Holder*, the U.S. Supreme Court removes one of the most effective protections for requiring jurisdictions with a history of voting discrimination to get approval for voting changes.

1990 - The Americans with Disabilities Act requires access to the polls and to the ballot.