

# SUFFRAGE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

## TEXT SUMMARY

In 1870 the 15th Amendment established that the right to vote may not be denied because of race. The amendment was ignored in some southern States, where tactics such as violence, threats, literacy testing, and gerrymandering were used to keep African Americans from voting. **Gerrymandering** is the drawing of electoral district lines in a way that limits a particular group's voting strength.

The civil rights movement pressured Congress to ensure African American voting rights. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 set up the Civil Rights Commission to investigate voter discrimination claims. The Civil Rights Act of 1960 called for federal referees to help all eligible people to register and vote in federal elections.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 emphasized the use of **injunctions**, or orders from the courts to do or stop doing something, to ensure that eligible citizens were not kept from voting.

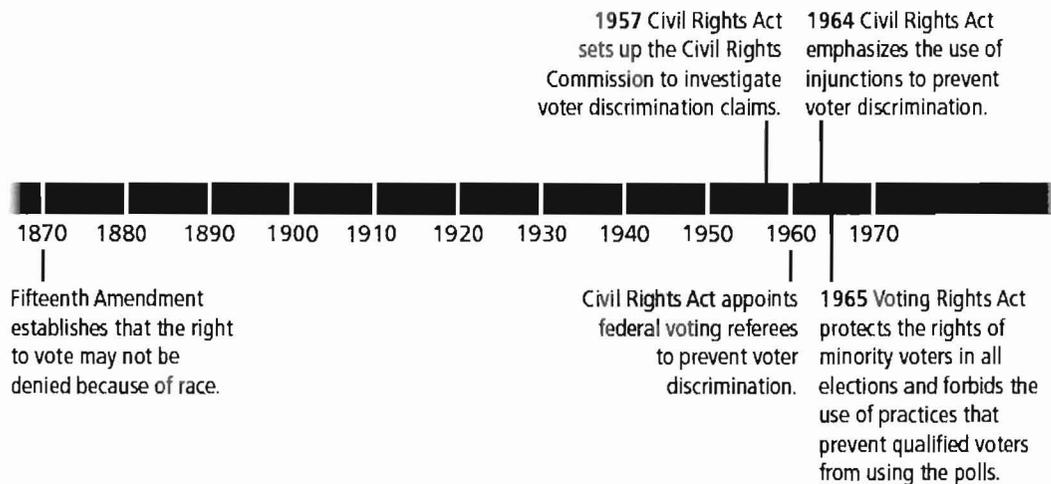
The Voting Rights Act of 1965 made the 15th Amendment truly effective by applying it to all elections—local, State, and federal. It forbade practices that prevented qualified voters from using the polls. Additionally, in those States where a majority of the electorate did not vote in 1964, this act gave the Department of Justice **preclearance**, or the right to approve new election laws, to prevent these laws from weakening minority voting rights. The act was to stay in effect for five years, but it has been extended three times and is now scheduled to expire in 2007.

### THE BIG IDEA

Civil rights laws came about to protect Americans from being disenfranchised because of race.

## GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Implementing the 15th Amendment over Time

Not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did the 15th Amendment become fully effective.



## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- How were injunctions used in the civil rights movement?
- Time Line Skills** When were minority voting rights ensured for *all* elections?

# VOTER BEHAVIOR

## TEXT SUMMARY

Millions of Americans who are qualified to vote do not. Voter turnout is low for presidential elections and lower still for **off-year elections**, the congressional elections that are held between presidential elections.

Those who choose not to vote often lack a feeling of **political efficacy**. That means they do not feel that their votes make a difference. They are convinced that “government by the people” has been taken over by politicians, powerful special interests, and the media.

Studies of voter behavior focus on the results of particular elections, polls, and **political socialization**—the process by which people gain their political attitudes and opinions. These sources show that certain sociological factors—income, occupation, education, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, region of residence, and

family—influence each person’s voting choices. For example, there are measurable differences between the electoral choices of men and women, a phenomenon known as the **gender gap**.

Psychological factors—including party identification and perception of the candidates and issues—also contribute to voter behavior. **Party identification** is loyalty to a political party. A person loyal to one party may vote only for candidates of that party, a practice called **straight-ticket voting**. Many recent voters call themselves **independents**, or people not identified with a party. They may vote for candidates from both major parties in the same election, which is called **split-ticket voting**.

### THE BIG IDEA

**While low voter turnout is a serious problem, many factors influence the Americans who do vote.**

## GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Factors Influencing Voter Behavior

### Sociological Factors

Income	Religion
Occupation	Ethnicity
Education	Region of residence
Gender	Family
Age	



Voter Behavior

### Psychological Factors

- Party identification
- Perception of candidates
- Perception of issues

All kinds of factors influence the Americans who do vote.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- How does political efficacy affect whether people choose to vote?
- Diagram Skills** Name five sociological factors that influence voter behavior.