

New Frontiers

A newsletter for ★ educators

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Selected JFK Library Resources on Voting Rights

1963: The Struggle for Civil Rights “The Right to Vote in Mississippi”
civilrights.jfklibrary.org/chapter-read-more/to-vote-in-mississippi.html

Have students explore this interactive online exhibit independently. Help them understand why the Voting Rights Act was needed using a lesson based on “The Right to Vote in Mississippi” – one of seven sections in this extensive interactive from the JFK Library. An introductory essay, documents, photographs, and film footage show the voting registration efforts of Bob Moses and SNCC workers, the violent backlash, and the response of the Kennedy Administration.

Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at Reception, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, March 20, 1960.

jfklibrary.org/assetviewer/archives/JFKSEN/0907/JFKSEN-0907-020

In this speech, Senator Kennedy defends the Civil Rights Commission’s proposal for Voting Registrars and criticizes some components of the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first civil rights legislation passed since the reconstruction era. (The Act had created the Commission in the executive branch, which was tasked with investigating voter discrimination and providing reports and recommended improvements to the president and congress. It also gave the attorney general the power to get a court order mandating that those who had been denied their right to vote due to discrimination be allowed to vote.) He states that the attorney general and the court system coupled with solving issues on a case-by-case basis was too slow a process for something as time-sensitive as voting. He highlights three conditions that should be met for any effective action to take place.

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Fighting Barriers to Voting

Sixty years ago, Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard M. Nixon campaigned for president of the United States in a world dominated by the Cold War. This election year, President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joseph Biden are making their case to the American public while the country is facing many challenges including a

global health pandemic, social unrest focusing on demands for racial justice and human rights, and an uncertain economic landscape. As classrooms across the nation incorporate the election into the curriculum – helping students understand the vital role voters play in a representative democracy in shaping the direction of the country – it is an optimal moment to help students appreciate that not all people have had equal access to voting rights throughout US history.

This past August marked the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment making it possible for women to vote and the 55th anniversary of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965, removing racially discriminatory barriers to voting. This fall, help students understand how individuals and groups have used the tools of democracy, laboring over long periods of time, to secure the right to vote and to demand laws protecting these rights. This is also a time to encourage students of all ages to actively embrace their own important role in civic life as well as to consider barriers faced by voters today.

Students might begin by reading a letter to President Kennedy from Charles McLaurin (civilrights.jfklibrary.org/media-assets/the-right-to-vote-in-mississippi.html#State-of-the-State--Vote-at-Your-Own-Risk). “The people of Ruleville, Mississippi want to vote,” he writes, “but they are afraid of economic reprisal. The mayor of Ruleville rides around and tells the Negroes that if they go to

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Poll Tax sign at Mineola, Texas. 1939.

COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

HIGHLIGHTS

3 Elementary & Middle School Lesson

7 High School Lesson

9 Electoral Maps Activity

10 Suffrage Conference Invitation

Selected JFK Library Resources on Voting Rights *continued from page 1*

With this speech, students can explore the complexity of voting rights issues following the passage of the Act and expand their understanding of how the federal government works.

Making the March on Washington, Aug. 28, 1963.
jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/BMPP/061/BMPP-061-015

This Kennedy Library Archives blog focuses on records in the collections showing how the organizers faced behind-the-scenes challenges that made producing a successful March even more complicated than it seemed. As the largest protest of its time, the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* is remembered now as a landmark moment in American history with roughly 250,000 people attending the event on August 28, 1963.

Map of Voting Rights Cases and Activity, 1965.
jfk.blogs.archives.gov/2020/08/27/making-the-march-on-washington

This map documents voting rights violations in the South. Beginning in 1961, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department moved into uncharted territory. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy vastly expanded the size of the staff, including a field operation of lawyers who spent weeks at a time in the South investigating and challenging voting barriers. At his direction, the Division used maps like this one to track voting rights cases and monitor reported voting rights violations. The map dates to 1965 and was used by Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall for this purpose. ★

Fighting Barriers to Voting, *continued*

register they will be fired from their jobs.” The letter also reports the shooting of two Black girls on September 10, 1962. At his news conference three days after this incident, President Kennedy was asked to comment about “anti-Negro terrorism in the South.” JFK condemns the violence, stating: “The United States Constitution provides for freedom to vote and this country must permit every man and woman to exercise their franchise.”

The Constitution had no specific protections for voting rights until the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870. Many states, especially former Confederate states, strongly resisted extending the vote to Blacks, using a variety of strategies including poll taxes and phony literacy tests. Along with these obstacles, African Americans were discouraged from voting by economic coercion and the continuing threat of violence. Consequently, nearly all Black citizens were disenfranchised in the South by the early 1900s. When the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, many of the women of color who fought to gain the passage of suffrage were barred from voting through racially discriminatory practices. Indigenous communities were not legally recognized as full citizens until 1924 and continued to be disenfranchised by practices similar to those used against Black voters.

The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 allowed for injunctions against voting rights violations and other protections, but stronger tools were needed to address the most common forms of abuse by local election officials. In a special message to Congress, JFK proposed remedies that would become Title I of the administration’s 1963 Civil Rights Bill. In the political fight to win passage, however, Title I was narrowed to cover only federal elections. Nonetheless, when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the bill into law on July 2, 1964, it was a major victory for proponents of civil rights.

At the same time, White resistance to change became even more entrenched and violent in the Deep South, most shockingly with the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi during the 1964 “Freedom Summer” voter registration campaign. In March 1965, after mounted state troopers charged and brutally clubbed peaceful demonstrators in Selma, Alabama, President Johnson announced that the time had come “to strike down restrictions to voting in all elections – federal, state and local – which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote.” The bill that President Johnson submitted to congress passed with strong bipartisan support, and he signed the Voting Rights Act (VRA) on August 6, 1965. By the year’s end, a quarter million new Black voters were registered.

The VRA was readopted and extended four times from 1970 to 2006, including protections for language minority citizens. In 2013, the US Supreme Court, ruling in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, nullified a crucial section of the Voting Rights Act in a controversial 5-4 decision. The majority asserted that the formula in that section of the law, which applied to certain states and localities where patterns of voter discrimination were evident in the 1960s, was no longer relevant – a view strongly contested by the four dissenting justices. Acknowledging that violations of voting rights are still a problem today, the Court invited Congress to amend the VRA to address current inequities. But will today’s highly polarized Congress be able to meet that challenge?

Explore the two lessons in this issue featuring case studies of barriers to voting rights during the Kennedy administration with teaching strategies for applications to voting rights issues today. For lessons on the 19th Amendment, visit docsteach.org/topics/women. ★

Addressing Racial Discrimination in Voting

With the 2020 election quickly approaching, and the unique challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic presents to the electoral process, it is critical that elementary and middle school students understand the importance of voting and the tools available to protect this most basic of democratic rights. In addition, the renewed and urgent call for racial justice makes it paramount that students learn how voting rights have been denied to African Americans and other underrepresented groups. This lesson empowers students to identify tools that can be used to help ensure voting rights for all.

This lesson is part of a longer lesson that includes a digital picture book and a telegram to President Kennedy from a civil rights leader. You can access the lesson at jfklibrary.org/VotingDiscriminationLesson.

Goal

Students understand the importance of protecting the right to vote. They learn how racial discrimination has limited voting rights of African Americans and how the tools of a democracy, such as the judicial system and the First Amendment, have and can be used to protect voting rights.

Essential Question

Why is the right to vote essential in a democracy and what tools can be used to protect voting rights for all?

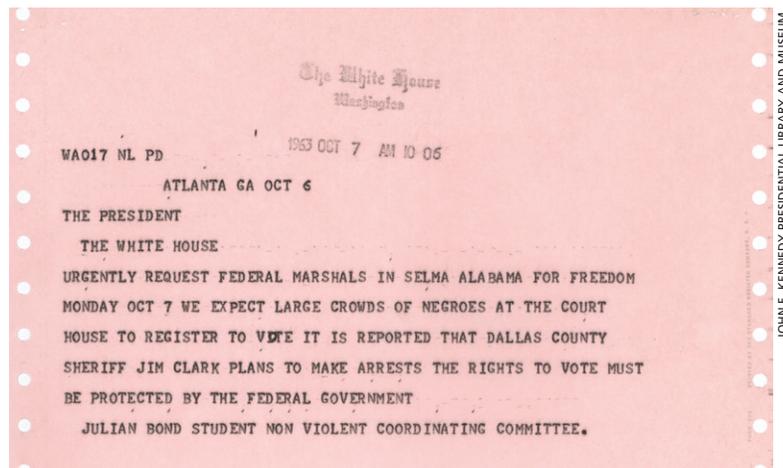
Objectives

Students will be able to:

- explain why voting is essential to our democracy.
- analyze archival voter registration data to identify racial inequities in voting.
- describe how court cases can change racial discrimination in voting.
- describe a tool used today to protect voting rights for all.

Historical Background

Voting is a cornerstone of representative democracy. However, it was not until 1870, with the ratification of the 15th amendment, that the US Constitution provided specific protections for voting rights. Former Confederate states strongly resisted extending the vote to Blacks. In 1890, states and localities began passing legislation that led to voter discrimination. These rules included poll taxes, phony literacy tests, complicated identification procedures, and limited voting registration hours. Along with these obstacles, African Americans were discouraged from voting by economic coercion and the continuing threat of violence.



Telegram from Julian Bond of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) asking for federal marshals to protect voters in Selma, Alabama. October 7, 1963.

When President Kennedy began his term, civil rights organizations were engaged in widespread non-violent direct action to end segregation and achieve equal rights, including voting rights. The president and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy were concerned about the consequences of actions such as the Freedom Rides, demonstrations, and sit-ins, and believed that working to extend voting rights to Blacks would be the most effective way to address racial discrimination. Although some civil rights advocates did not agree with limiting the focus, they joined with the administration in these efforts while continuing to use direct action to end segregation.

In the summer of 1961, talks between civil rights leaders and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy led to the creation of the Voter Education Project (VEP). Funded by private foundations, the program provided grants to civil rights groups to help coordinate and increase the registration of Black voters in southern states. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was one of the groups to receive funds. Soon after SNCC Field Secretary Bob Moses initiated a voting registration drive in Mississippi, Black voters were beaten and a SNCC field worker, Herbert Lee, was killed. In 1963, SNCC, then led by John Lewis, launched a voting drive in Selma, Alabama. After Lewis was arrested and jailed, high school students volunteered to organize voters to register en masse, though most were turned away.

Meanwhile, as head of the Department of Justice (DOJ), Robert F. Kennedy used key tools of democracy, the justice department of the executive branch, and the judicial system, to rectify racial inequities in voting rights. He directed

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Addressing Racial Discrimination in Voting

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Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall, head of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, to use the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 to aggressively file legal cases against counties that were disenfranchising African Americans. Lawyers for the Division traveled to southern counties to comb through thousands of voting registration records, enlist both Black and White witnesses, and investigate harassment of and violence against Black citizens. Charts such as the one included in this lesson were used as evidence in these cases.

Civil rights organizations continued to take great risks as they organized key efforts such as Freedom Summer in 1964 and the march from Selma to Montgomery in March 1965. Their achievements and the extensive legal work of the DOJ’s Civil Rights Division laid the groundwork for the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965.

In 2013, the US Supreme Court, ruling in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, nullified a crucial section of the Voting Rights Act in a controversial 5-4 decision. The majority asserted that the formula in that section of the law, which applied to certain states and localities where patterns of voter discrimination were evident in the 1960s, was no longer relevant – a view strongly contested by the four dissenting justices. The Brennan Center, a nonpartisan law and policy institute, reports that since 2010, twenty-five states have instituted voting restrictions including ID requirements and making early voting and registration more restrictive. To make it safe for as many voters as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic, many states have expanded mail-in voting and extended early voting opportunities. Other states have instituted restrictions that disproportionately impact communities of color, making it more difficult for people to exercise their right to vote.

Materials

Student Handouts

- Document: *Voting Registration in DeSoto County, Mississippi, 1890 – 1962*
- Photograph: *One Man, One Vote SNCC button*
- *Voting Rights Photo Book*

In this lesson, students examine primary source material from the Kennedy Administration to consider how citizens and government officials used the tools of democracy to challenge racial discrimination in voting. After this

historical investigation, students research current strategies to protect voting rights and identify actions they can take to ensure this most basic of rights.

Teaching note about the word “Negro” to share with students: Language is important and changes over time. Until about 1967, “Negro” was one of the acceptable words used by Americans of all races to identify Black or African American people. When John F. Kennedy was president, the word “Negro” was not thought of as a negative word by most people. However, in the late 1960s, some Black leaders and thinkers criticized the word and believed it was important for Americans of African descent to choose their own way to describe themselves. They preferred the words “Black” and then “Afro-American.” Now we use “Black,” “African American,” or “a person of color” to describe Americans of African descent.

For online learning, use digital documents and share your screen with students.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) button to promote voter education and registration. ca 1965.



COLLECTION OF THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE.

Part I: Examining Voting Registration Records from Department of Justice

1. Show students the image of the “One Man, One Vote” SNCC button and use the suggested questions below to launch the lesson:
 - What is the meaning of “One Man, One Vote”? (*Every citizen who is of voting age has the right to vote. The voting age when Kennedy was president was 21; now it is 18.*)
 - Why is it important for each person to have the right to vote? What happens if you are not allowed to vote? (*We vote to elect leaders who represent our values, priorities, and the policies we believe best meet the needs of the people. If someone is denied the right to vote, they lose the ability to participate in the political process.*)
 - Why do you think this button was produced? Why did people wear it? (*Student opinions*)
 - How would distributing and wearing the button reflect “freedom of speech” – an important tool of

DE SOTO #3

Date Current Registration Began:

	Whites Over 21	Whites Reg'd	%	Negroes Over 21	Negroes Reg'd	%
Jan. 1, 1890	1,640			3,547		
Jan. 1, 1899	1,935	1,909	99%	4,001	212	5.3%
Jan. 1, 1954	4,775	2,732	57%	8,013	13	.16%
Mar. 24, 1955	4,775	3,210	67%	8,013	13	.16%
Jan. 1, 1960	5,338	3,545	66%	6,246	10	.16%
June 1, 1962	5,338	4,030	75%	6,246	11	.18%

TOTAL VOTES CAST IN FIRST GUBERNATORIAL PRIMARY

1951	3,187	1959	3,555
1955	3,223	1963	(incomplete)

SOURCE AND EXPLANATION OF REGISTRATION STATISTICS

Race Identification

The current registration books indicate race of all electors through March, 1955.

January 1, 1954

Negro: 13
Source: Current Registration Book

Explanation: All Negroes registered prior to January 1, 1954 were counted. Of a total of 19 counted, thirteen were 80 years old or less as of January 1, 1954. Since there is no indication of systematic or accurate elimination from the registration

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Chart used by Civil Rights Division of the US Department of Justice to prove racial discrimination in voting in Mississippi. Burke Marshall Papers.

democracy? (The button expresses an opinion. People are allowed to express their opinions in a democracy.)

- Explain that SNCC stands for Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the button dates from the early 1960s. When John Lewis, chair of SNCC from 1963 - 1966, learned that people in South Africa used the slogan "One Man One Vote," he adopted it for SNCC's voter registration campaign. Is the message still relevant today? (Many people are concerned that voting restrictions passed in the last 10 years are negatively impacting people of color. Include a discussion about the language on the button and discuss whether the language would be different today – it most likely would have "one person" instead of "one man".)

JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

- Explain that they will be reading a *Voting Rights Photo Book* to learn more about the purpose of the button and its connection to voting rights today. Explain that the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum is an archive; it has millions of pages of documents, including evidence about voting rights history. They will be reading a digital photo book with many documents and photographs from the JFK Library and other archives to learn about racial discrimination in voting and how citizens and government officials used the tools of democracy to address racial discrimination in voting.

- After reading the *Voting Rights Photo Book*, explain that students will examine historical evidence to learn how, during the Kennedy presidency, the tools of democracy were used to protect voting rights for all, including Black citizens who were being prevented from voting.

2. Show students the DeSoto County, Mississippi voting registration chart.

- What dates can you find on the document? (*Dates on the left side of the chart*)
- What do you think "reg'd" stands for? (*registered*) What is your evidence? (*The word registration appears at the top of the page.*)
- What does it mean to be registered to vote? (*The person is eligible to vote and has signed up to vote. You have to be registered before you can vote.*)
- What does "Whites Over 21" mean? (*White citizens who are over age 21.*) Negroes over 21? (*Black citizens who are over age 21*) Why is the number 21 used? (*That was the voting age at the time.*)
- What do you notice about the number of "Whites" who are registered compared to the number of "Negroes"? (*It is a much higher number. There are thousands more Whites than Negroes who are registered.*)
- What does this evidence reveal about the number of African Americans who were voting? (*There are hardly any African Americans who were able to vote because they are not registered.*)
- Why do you think the numbers are so different? (*Brainstorm ideas.*)
- How can we gather more information about that? (*Research.*)

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Addressing Racial Discrimination in Voting

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- What questions do you have about this document or the information in it?

Explain that this chart was created by the Department of Justice. Lawyers in the Civil Rights Division filed cases against counties that were discriminating against Black citizens. The chart was used as evidence in a 1964 court case against the state of Mississippi to show racial discrimination in voting. The Department of Justice during the Kennedy Administration collected evidence to prove that African Americans, then called Negroes, were being prevented from voting. The Department of Justice used courts, or the judicial system, to show that African Americans were being denied one of the most basic rights in a democracy, the right to vote, because of the color of their skin.

- How would this chart be used as evidence for a court case on racial discrimination in voting?
- What other evidence would lawyers in the Department of Justice need to prove that African Americans were being denied the right to vote?
- How can winning a court case protect the right to vote? (*It can prove racial discrimination which is illegal. There would be consequences for counties and states that restrict people's right to vote.*)

Assessment:

Review the tools that government officials and citizens used to address racial discrimination in voting (additional tools and evidence are included in the full lesson plan): court cases (the judicial system) and freedom of speech (the button). Explain that students will be researching voting today to discover if these same tools (and others) are being used to ensure voting rights for all. Present the following topics:

- voter ID laws
- early voting restrictions
- absentee and mail-in voting restrictions
- closing polls in cities
- voter registration restrictions
- laws restricting felons from voting

Have students work individually or in groups to research current laws regarding one of the topics. They can create a poster, podcast, or slideshow that should include:

- a definition of the topic
- how it impacts voters
- different opinions about the policy
- explanation of why the policy should be changed or why it is important to keep it in place
- tools people are using to challenge the restriction or maintain it
- steps students think are important to take to address the policy

Extension:

Have students choose one of the topics and take an action as recommended in the presentations.

Additional Resources:

Voting Rights in the Kennedy Administration

jfklibrary.org/events-and-awards/forums/2010-11-29-voting-rights-in-the-kennedy-years

A video and transcript of a JFK Library forum held on November 10, 2010 features two lawyers who worked in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice in the Kennedy Administration and how they built legal cases to dismantle entrenched racial discrimination in voting in several southern states. Includes archival film footage from 25:50 to 34:25 that shows obstacles faced by two young African Americans who try to vote.

SNCC Digital Gateway

snccdigital.org

Organizers from the Student Non-Violent Organizing Committee (SNCC) collaborated with historians, archivists, and students to create this documentary website that tells the story of the organization's role in voting rights history.

See pages 1-2 of this issue for Selected JFK Library Resources on Voting Rights. ★

Barriers to Voting: Poll Taxes

The framers of the US Constitution left voter qualifications, for the most part, to individual states. In the late 18th century, many states limited voting to property owners. Some of these states moved from property ownership to a poll tax requirement for voting. By the mid-19th century, however, most states did not limit voting by property ownership or poll taxes. After the ratification of the 15th Amendment, to limit Black voter registration and turnout, many states re-established poll taxes. The combination of poll taxes, literacy tests, White primaries (permitting only Whites to vote in primary elections), intimidation, violence, and disqualification of people convicted of felonies succeeded in reducing Black voter participation.

Though the re-establishment of poll taxes was meant to disenfranchise Black voters, it also affected participation of all people with limited means. A poll tax of \$2 in 1962 would convert to approximately \$17 in 2020 dollars. If two heads of a household were to vote, that would mean the household would have to pay \$34 in current dollars. This would be a major burden for people with low incomes.

By 1962, only five states continued to require poll taxes: Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia. In his 1962 State of the Union Address, President Kennedy put the issue on the national agenda when he called for the elimination of poll taxes and literacy tests, stating that voting rights “should no longer be denied through such arbitrary devices on a local level.” The proposal to ban literacy tests did not make it past a Senate filibuster, but after debating the substance of the proposal to end the poll tax and whether or not the tax should be eliminated by a Constitutional amendment, Congress passed the 24th Amendment, abolishing poll taxes in federal elections on August 27, 1962. Kennedy then urged governors and legislators to move ahead with ratification. The Amendment was ratified after his death, on January 23, 1964.

However, even with the passage of the 24th Amendment and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed discriminatory voting practices such as literacy tests, African Americans experienced impediments to voting. In January 1966, civil rights activist Vernon Dahmer was killed after publicly offering to help African Americans in his hometown in Mississippi pay their poll taxes, legal in state and local elections, at his store. Mr. Dahmer had been working to secure African Americans’ voting rights for many years, including his role as a witness in the 1961 voting rights case *United States v. Theron Lynd*.

On March 24, 1966, the Supreme Court ruled in *Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections* that poll taxes could not be collected in any election, including state and local elections, since they violated the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause.

In this lesson, students consider the impact of the poll tax on people’s lives by examining four primary sources: (1) a 1955 poll tax receipt from an African American Texan, (2) an oral history excerpt from Ellie Dahmer, a Mississippi civil rights activist and the widow of slain civil rights activist Vernon Dahmer, (3) a 1962 letter to President Kennedy by a 26-year-old woman residing in Texas regarding the poll tax, and (4) the response to her letter by a special assistant to President Kennedy.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- discuss how poll taxes created an impediment to voting.
- analyze a primary sources relating to poll taxes.
- do a close reading of a primary source with cursive writing.
- discuss whether voting is a right or a privilege.
- describe the impact of current local, state and federal laws that might limit voter participation and make an argument either for or against those limitations.

Materials

All materials available with the complete lesson plan at jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/high-school-curricular-resources/barriers-to-voting-poll-taxes.

- Background reading: “Barriers to Voting: Poll Taxes”
- 1955 poll tax receipt from Lee Carr
- Excerpt of a 2015 oral history interview with civil rights activist Ellie Dahmer, who recalls her husband’s actions to help African Americans in his community pay their poll taxes at his store, leading to his subsequent murder by the KKK
- February 24, 1962 letter from Janet Ciaccio to President Kennedy
- March 21, 1962 response to Janet Ciaccio from Ralph Dungan, special assistant to the president

LESSON PLAN ★ High School, Grades 8–12

Barriers to Voting: Poll Taxes

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Procedure

1. Have students read for homework “Barriers to Voting: Poll Taxes” and answer the reading comprehension questions.
2. As an ice breaker for the entire class, ask students if they think voting is a right or a privilege for US citizens. What would it mean to citizens if voting is a right? What would it mean to citizens if voting is a privilege? Ask them to consider whether or not they believe people convicted of felonies should be allowed to vote or whether or not the voting age should be lowered to 17.
3. Provide students with the poll tax receipt from Mr. Carr with these guiding questions:
 - a. What information is being collected by the State of Texas on this form? (*date, name, address, sex, race, age, occupation, number of years in residence, whether voter was born in the US or naturalized, place of birth, who paid, precinct, who received payment*)
 - b. How much did Mr. Carr pay to vote? *Have students use the internet to translate what that would mean in current dollars. (\$1.50 in 1955 is approximately \$14.50 in 2020 dollars.)*
 - c. What do you know about Mr. Carr from this receipt? (*He was a 34-year-old African American male railroad worker who lived in the same county and city in Texas his whole life. He paid \$1.50 on January 31, 1955 in order to vote.*)
4. Provide students with a transcript excerpt from a November 30, 2015 oral history with Ellie Dahmer, widow of Vernon Dahmer, and have them watch the video from 35:20 to 39:03.

Guiding questions:

- a. When Mrs. Dahmer said that African Americans would be more comfortable paying their poll tax at her husband’s store than “going into Hattiesburg,” what do you think she meant? (*Answers might include: At that time in Mississippi, African Americans were intimidated when they tried to vote. Paying the poll tax at an African American-owned store with an African American store clerk whom they might know would make that step less intimidating.*)
- b. What does Mrs. Dahmer say that shows she and her husband understood the risks of promoting voting

PRECINCT NUMBER		RECEIVED OF		ADDRESS		STREET AND HOUSE NO.		WARD		DATE		No.	
14		Lee Carr		609 Spring St				1		1-31-55		1176	
AGE		Length of Residence			CITIZEN		Naive-Born		Born in (State or Foreign Country)			Occupation	
34		34 34 34			Naturalized		Yes		Texas			Rail Road	
SEX		RACE		Paid by		Agent							
Male		Colored		Self									

The sum of ONE and 50/100 Dollars, in payment of POLL TAX for the year shown above. The said Taxpayer being duly sworn by me says that the above is correct; all of which I certify.

By *Stout Collier* Deputy, **STOUT COLLIER** Tax Assessor and Collector

Hardin County, Texas poll tax receipt for Lee Carr. The information is filled out by hand with set fields including Age, Length of Residence, Occupation, Sex, and Race. The receipt provides that the voter has paid the \$1.50 poll tax, issued in 1955.

- a. among African Americans? (*She and her husband had been threatened with physical violence for a while and had been preparing themselves should their home be attacked. Those threats escalated when Mr. Dahmer spoke about the poll tax on the radio.*)
 - c. Mrs. Dahmer shows a copy of the poll tax receipts that she paid for her son Harold and herself on January 25, 1966. What is significant about when she paid the tax? What are some reasons she might have saved a copy of these receipts for so many years? (*Mr. Dahmer was killed 1/10/1966, so she paid the poll tax 15 days after his death – a death caused by promoting voting among African Americans. Mrs. Dahmer paid the poll tax for herself and her son to vote. This appears to have been a very brave act, and the symbol of that act – the poll tax receipts – she may have deemed worthy of keeping.*)
5. Provide students with the letter from Mrs. Ciaccio to President Kennedy with these guiding questions:
 - a. At what age did Mrs. Ciaccio become eligible to vote? (*age 21*)

Additional points for research and discussion: When did the minimum voting age change in the US? (*1971*) What was happening in the world at the time the 26th Amendment was ratified? (*Vietnam War*) Why do you think the voting age changed at that time? Research the history of the 26th Amendment to provide an answer.

- b. Does Mrs. Ciaccio call voting a right or a privilege? Based on this letter what do you think the word “privilege” means to her? (*She calls it a privilege. She mentions that, as a child, when she saw her parents voting she looked forward to reaching the age when she would have the privilege to vote. So, she sees voting as a privilege for Americans who reach the current voting age of 21, but she also sees it as an important act that should be free of charge.*)

Student Activity: Mapping the Presidential Election

Use electoral maps to analyze the results of the 1960 election, then collect and analyze data for the 2020 presidential election. For a complete lesson plan, visit jfklibrary.org/ElectionMapLesson. ★

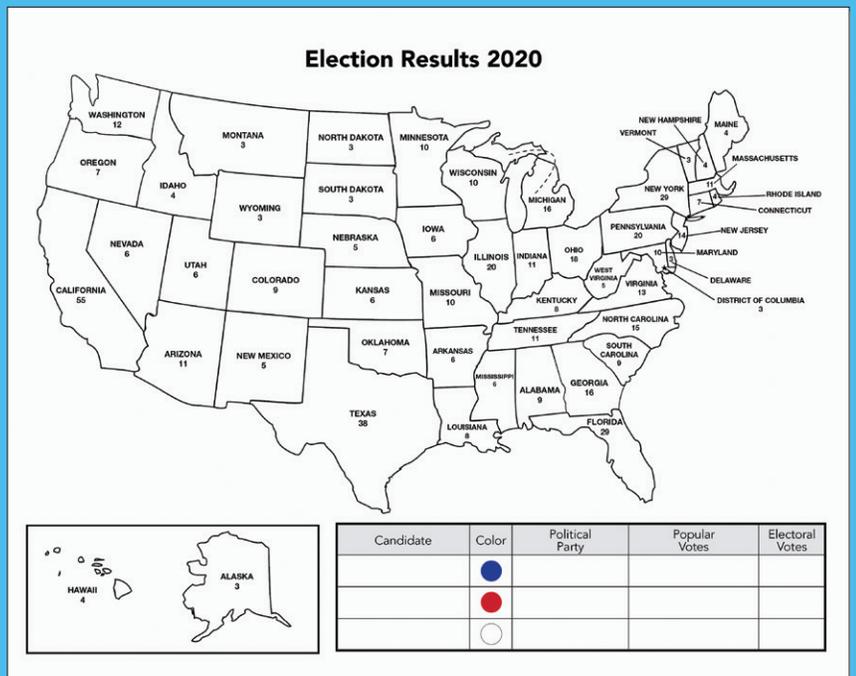
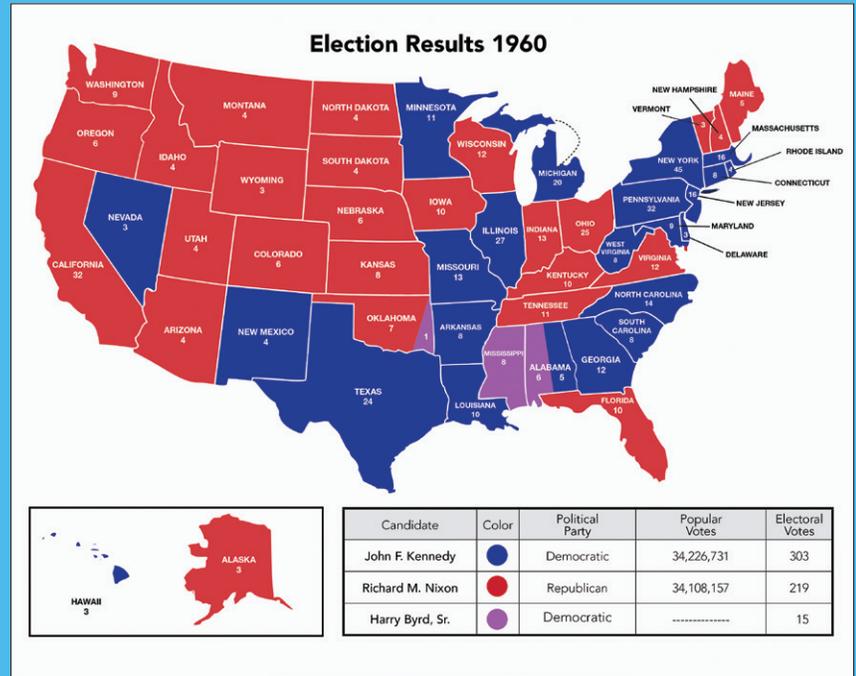
- Additional point for discussion:** Does she use the term “privilege” in the same manner you discussed that word in the icebreaker?
- How much does she say she must pay in order to vote in 1962? (\$2) What does she believe is the reason she is being charged to vote? (*She says she has not found a satisfactory explanation for the poll tax.*)
 - What is her response to needing to pay this tax? (*The ability to vote should not be determined by how much money one has.*) Do you find her arguments persuasive? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - What more information would you like to know about Mrs. Ciaccio, having read her letter? (*Answers might include: Did her husband vote? How much money did her family earn?*) As a class, brainstorm sources students could seek to find some of that information.
 - Why does Ralph Dungan suggest Mrs. Ciaccio discuss with her local officials budgeting information from the state of Texas? (*Poll taxes are a state issue and are used by states to pay for their needs. Local officials might be able to explain to her how those tax dollars are spent.*)

Assessment

Have students research current local, state, and federal laws that might limit voter participation and make an argument either for or against those limitations. For example, students might want to consider Voter ID laws or prohibition of voting for people previously convicted of felonies, including the demand to pay legal fees first. In their arguments, students should consider whether they view voting as a right or a privilege.

Extension

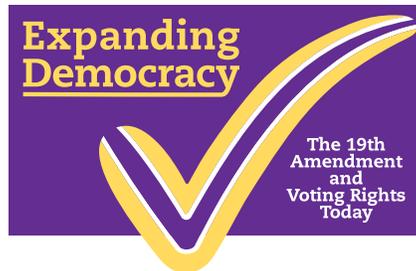
Have older students research why President Kennedy advocated for the “hard way” in abolishing the poll tax through a Constitutional amendment instead of passing legislation to abolish the tax. ★



Expanding Democracy: The 19th Amendment and Voting Rights Today

Tuesday, Oct. 27, and Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2020

In commemoration of the centennial of the 19th Amendment, this special conference will explore the history of the suffrage movement and how efforts to broaden voting rights have evolved over time.



Programming begins on the evening of Tuesday, October 27 with a 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. *Kennedy Library Forum*. **Molly Ball**, national political correspondent for *TIME* and author of the new book *Pelosi*, and **Susan Page**, *USA Today's* Washington bureau chief and author of the forthcoming *Madam Speaker: Nancy Pelosi and the Lessons of Power*, discuss Nancy Pelosi's career and leadership as Speaker of the House of Representatives with **Nancy Cordes**, chief congressional correspondent for CBS News.

On Wednesday, October 28, beginning at 11:00 a.m., programming continues with panel discussions featuring notable national historians, social scientists, and leaders exploring the origins and development of suffrage efforts as well as contemporary voting rights issues. Confirmed speakers include UCLA professor emeritus of history **Ellen DuBois**, Suffolk University professor of government **Rachael Cobb**, Johns Hopkins professor of history **Martha S. Jones**, University of Virginia professor of politics **Jennifer Lawless**, University of Massachusetts Boston professor of political science **Erin O'Brien**, Harvard University professor of government and sociology **Theda Skocpol**, University of Connecticut professor of history **Manisha Sinha**, University of South Carolina professor emerita of history **Marjorie Spruill**, Carnegie Mellon professor of history **Lisa Tetrault**, and author **Brenda Wineapple**.

Join us for this milestone anniversary event! Teachers and students are encouraged to attend. Please visit jfklibrary.org/forums for full information and general registration for this free conference.

This program is funded in part by Mass Humanities, which receives support from the Mass Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Kennedy Library Forums are made possible with generous support from:



Did You Know?

Women voters played an important role in John F. Kennedy's political campaigns. In commemoration of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, featured below are just a few highlights of the many contributions women made to help elect him to office. The women in his own family were some of his strongest surrogates and political advocates, helping to mobilize women voters and recruiting women for key staffing positions. Their high visibility attracted women voters to join in supporting his candidacy.

Pauline "Polly" Fitzgerald, a cousin by marriage of John F. Kennedy, worked on several of his campaigns for office. She was credited with organizing the highly popular women's teas and receptions for Kennedy's 1952 and 1958 senatorial campaigns, and 1960 presidential primary and presidential campaigns.



"Coffee with the Kennedys" call-in program during John F. Kennedy's 1952 Senate Campaign. Seated (left to right): Patricia Kennedy, Rose Kennedy. Standing (left to right): Congressman John F. Kennedy, Jean Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy. October 15, 1952.



John F. Kennedy on crutches speaking at a Kennedy tea in Worcester, MA during his campaign for the US Senate. His sister Eunice Kennedy is seated behind him. May 18, 1952.

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, his mother, often introduced JFK at campaign events. His sisters – Eunice, Jean, and Patricia – often campaigned alongside their brother showing support and actively advocating for his candidacy. The strong visibility of politically involved women continued from that 1952 senatorial race into John F. Kennedy’s 1960 presidential campaign.

John F. Kennedy’s sisters, along with Jacqueline

Kennedy, Ethel Kennedy, and Lady Bird Johnson, traveled to key states to speak at campaign events. Behind the scenes of the 1960 Kennedy campaign, women worked in all aspects of the organization to mobilize support – from stuffing envelopes and overseeing mailings at campaign offices to forming Kennedy Girls clubs throughout the country and coordinating Kennedy promotional attire. ★



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Rose Kennedy shaking hands with a procession of women voters at the New Ocean House Hotel in Swampscott, MA during John F. Kennedy’s campaign for a seat in the US Senate. ca. September 21, 1952.



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Photograph of the 50 Kennedy Girls of Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The photograph accompanies a September 26, 1960 letter sent by J.G. Yankoski and Betty Luongo of the Delaware County Kennedy Girls.



JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM. PHOTO BY FRED A. FORBES.

United States Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin stands with Kennedy Girls at the Los Angeles Airport in California for the Democratic National Convention. 1960.



JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM. PHOTO BY FRED A. FORBES.

Four women stand by John F. Kennedy campaign posters during the Democratic primaries. 1960.



JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM. PHOTO BY FRED A. FORBES.

Group of women pose at table full of letters and envelopes during the Democratic primaries. 1960.



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Ethel Skakel Kennedy, Lady Bird Johnson, and Eunice Kennedy Shriver stand outside an airplane during a 1960 campaign event in Texas. 1960.

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★ A Virtual Visit with the Kennedy Library! ★

On weekdays during the 2020-2021 school year, the Kennedy Library's Department of Education and Public Programs offers a variety of structured programs for elementary, middle, and high school classes in virtual settings for students in grades 3-12.

The programs offered are about 1-hour long and include the following topics.

- John F. Kennedy: Family, Courage, and Service (Grades 3-6)
- Civil Rights, Civic Action (Grades 3-6)
- Presidential Campaigns and Elections (Grades 4-6)
- Leadership for the 60s (Grades 6-8)
- Approaching a DBQ: A Workshop for AP US History Students (Grades 10-12)
- Civil Rights Confrontations: 1960-1963 (Grades 9-12)



- The Cold War Heats Up (Grades 9-12)
- But Where Are the Books? Exploring a Library that is not a Library (Grades 9-12)

Please visit jfklibrary.org/VirtualSchoolPrograms for more information on virtual programs. ★

Additional support for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum's history and civic education programs is provided by Kenneth R. Feinberg & Camille S. Biros, of The Law Offices of Kenneth R. Feinberg, PC and:

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