

HISTORY OF VOTING

The Constitution of the United States of America gave her citizens the right to vote. Ratified in 1788, after years of bitter debate by the Founding Fathers, it is an extraordinary product of godly, well-educated minds and stands today as a model of cooperative statesmanship and the art of compromise.



The Founding Fathers pooled their wisdom, personal experience, education, prayers and a wealth of written information to draft the exceptional document we know as our Constitution. They communicated through face-to-face discussions, letters and newspaper articles to forge the document that called for the balance of powers that characterized the first republican democracy of the modern world.

Several Amendments have since increased the number of Americans who hold the right to vote.

•1789 -- *The U.S. Constitution gave:*

- Men with property the right to vote.
 - States the responsibility to determine the qualifications to vote,
 - States the responsibility to appoint Electors to the Electoral College
- **1870** 15th Amendment eliminated racial barriers to voting
 - **1913** 17th Amendment provided for direct popular election of U.S. senators and Electoral College members
 - **1920** 19th Amendment eliminated gender barriers to voting
 - **1964** 24th Amendment eliminated poll taxes
 - **1971** 26th Amendment established the voting age at 18

YOUR RIGHT AND YOUR PRIVILEGE

While more Americans than ever now have the right to vote, the number of Americans who exercise this right continues to dwindle. Among Christians, the numbers are worse -- until the 2004 elections. Election Day 2004 revealed that values and issues are of great significance to Christians, and they put action to their convictions by voting in record numbers. Let's not allow ourselves to enter into complacency or go back to the days when less than one in four Christians voted and a staggering 24 million Christians weren't even registered to vote.

QUOTES FROM GREAT AMERICANS



From the 18th Century

If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted; laws will be made not for the public good so much as for the selfish or local purposes.

--Daniel Webster

When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you for rulers just men who will rule in the fear of God. The preservation of a republican government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty.

--Noah Webster

That government is the strongest of which every man feels himself a part.

--Thomas Jefferson

Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is not making a present or a compliment to please an individual--or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.

-- Samuel Adams

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.

--Thomas Paine

Those people who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants.

--William Penn

From the 19th Century

The ballot is stronger than the bullet.

--Abraham Lincoln

From the 20th Century

If the people fail to vote, a government will be developed which is not their government.... The whole system of American Government rests on the ballot box. Unless citizens perform their duties there, such a system of government is doomed to failure.

--Calvin Coolidge, U.S. President

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.

--Franklin D. Roosevelt

The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower

The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.

--John F. Kennedy

In a world that might say one vote doesn't matter..., it does matter because each person is of infinite worth and value to God... Your vote is a declaration of importance as a person and a citizen.

--Billy Graham

From the 21st Century

We have a duty to our country to participate in the political process. See, if you believe in freedom, you have a duty to exercise your right to vote to begin with. I'm [here] to encourage people to do their duty, to go to the polls. I want all people, no matter what their political party is or whether they even like a political party, to exercise their obligation to vote.

--George W. Bush

Our first civic duty is to vote. If you don't vote, you are abandoning the biblical obligation to be a responsible citizen.

--Chuck Colson

I think it is a disgrace that half the Christians in America aren't even registered to vote, and of those who are, only half go to the polls. . . . When we withhold our influence and participation, we yield by default to those who promote immoral and destructive policies.

--James Dobson

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY?

The entire book of Esther is about a young queen who sought the prayers of a nation to save her people. Because of those prayers, the king lifted the condemnation and “the Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor” (Esther 8:16).

On the Sovereignty of Public Officials

When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan.

--Proverbs 29:2 NKJV

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

--Romans 13:1

On the Responsibility to Vote

Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly.

--Deuteronomy 16:18

On the Power of Prayer for a Nation

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

--II Chronicles 7:14

Pray . . . for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity.

--I Timothy 2:2

DOES ONE VOTE COUNT?

*W*hen asked why they don't vote, many Americans say they wonder if their vote really counts. Consider the following.

- Texas was admitted to the Union in 1845 by one vote.
- Hitler won leadership of the German Nazi Party in 1923 by one vote.
- The US House of Representatives, in 1801, elected Thomas Jefferson as President of the United States by one vote.
- One vote per precinct passed women's suffrage in California in 1911.
- In 1941, the Selective Service Act (the draft) was saved by one vote just weeks before Pearl Harbor was attacked.
- John F. Kennedy won the presidency by less than one vote per precinct nationwide.

Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.

--John Quincy Adams