

## "VOTING TODAY"

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## BLACKS FINALLY GOT THE RIGHT TO VOTE – NOT SO LONG AGO

In 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act. Millions of African Americans began voting as a result. This Act is generally considered the end of the Jim Crow Era.

Today, most of these ways to stop people from voting are illegal. The US Supreme Court said that states could not use the Grandfather Clause and could not have all-White primary elections. The US Constitution was amended in 1964 to make poll taxes illegal. Literacy and property tests are not used today. While violence is seldom used, voter intimidation does still occur.

**However, there are still vestiges – laws and customs – that make it difficult or impossible for many Black citizens and other minorities to vote.**

- Former felons are not allowed to vote in most states. (Different states have different laws.)
- Purges of the voter rolls are still used to get rid of African American and Latino voters.
- Government-issued IDs, like driver's licenses or special photo IDs, are now required in some states. This is similar to a poll tax. **Here is why:**
  - To get this ID, people have to travel to special offices that are often far away from where they live. Many Black, Brown, and elderly people do not own cars.
  - They must present birth certificates. Getting a copy of your birth certificate costs, time, and money (from \$10-\$45). More Black and Brown people than Whites lack birth certificates, for a variety of reasons, such as being born at home.
  - The housing foreclosure crisis has left many people homeless or with temporary addresses. You need a permanent address to get a voter ID. More African American, Latino, and poor White families have been affected by foreclosures than White middle-class families.

In these ways, many African American, Latino, elderly, and poor White citizens are now forced to pay for their right to vote, as Blacks were during Jim Crow.

## VOTING RIGHTS ACT (1965)

This act was signed into law on August 6, 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson. It outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War, including literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting.