

Topic Introduction: Voting should be mandatory in the United States.

In November of 2020, the United States will be electing our next president.

This week's DebateAble Table topic asks you, your family and friends to think about VOTING.

What does it mean to vote? Do our votes even matter? Should Americans be *required* to vote in elections?

Let's start with the obvious. Unless the laws change, you won't be able to vote for a few years. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't care about voting. And it's never too soon to start learning about it. As one debater said about voting and kids:

"I think it's more important to have 12 year olds voting than 70 year olds because 12 year olds are going to be around a lot longer and will be more affected by their votes than a 70 year old would be."

-Shout Out to Gabriel in Coach Andres' Online DebateAble Club!

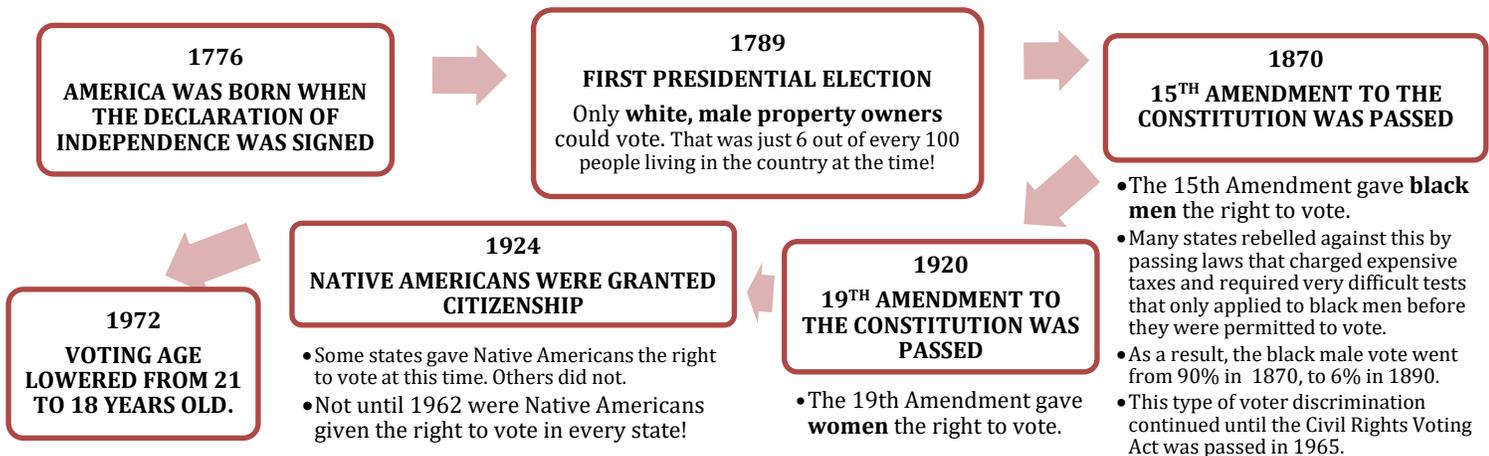
VOCABULARY: What does it mean when something is mandatory? What does it mean to be voluntary? Write your answers below. When you're done, flip your paper upside down to compare them to the definitions in the box.

Voluntary _____

Mandatory _____

Voluntary: Doing something of your own free will, without force. **Mandatory:** Something required of you by rules or laws.

A SHORT HISTORY OF VOTING RIGHTS



VOTING REQUIREMENTS

What are three things required of every person in order to be eligible to vote in the United States?

- *Eligible* means being qualified to do something.

List the requirements you know in this box.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Flip the paper upside down to check your answers.

Must be 18 years old or older.
Must be a citizen of the United States.
Must register with the government (in every state except North Dakota!)

**From the US Constitution, and state and federal laws.*

Here are some other rules you should know about voting in the United States:

- It's always free!
- In most states, you can't vote if you've committed a felony (serious crime). Some states let felons vote again after they get out of prison, or if they meet other requirements.
- Voting is private. This means you don't have to show or tell anyone who you vote for. Ever.
- It's a crime to try to stop anyone from voting.
- Voting is voluntary.

TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE?

STOP! Before you go any further:

- Take a moment to *notice* your opinion about whether voting should be mandatory. Ask someone else THEIR opinion.
- Write both opinions on the back of this paper. Check back after you finish the activity to see if either one changes.

DID YOU KNOW ANY OF THESE VOTING FACTS? If yes, check the box!

- Presidential elections take place every four years. The last election was in _____ (*fill in blank*).
- Midterm elections take place two years after every presidential election.
- In addition to the president, we also elect the people who make our laws and lead us in other ways, like senators, representatives, governors, judges, and more.
- Only around **55% of all eligible voters voted in presidential elections** during the last 50 years.*
- Around **40% of all eligible voters voted in midterm elections** during the last 50 years. *

*fairvote.org "Voter Turnout" (2018)

THE TOP REASONS PEOPLE GIVE FOR NOT VOTING, IN ORDER:

1. "I don't like politics."
2. "Voting has little to do with the way decisions are made."
3. "I don't like any of the candidates."
4. "My one vote isn't going to affect how things turn out."
5. "I don't see a difference between the candidates."
6. "I'm not interested in what's happening in the government."
7. "I'm not informed enough to make a decision"

Pewtrusts.org. "Why Are Millions of Citizens Not Registered to Vote?" (2017)

Circle the reason from the list above that *you* think is the best excuse for not voting.

Why? _____

EVIDENCE

AFFIRMATIVE: VOTING SHOULD BE MANDATORY

Politicians pass laws that make their voters happy and don't care about people who don't vote for them.

New York Times, "Make Voting Mandatory in the US" (Oct 15, 2019)

When Australia made voting mandatory in 1924, they went from a voting rate of less than 60% to over 90%.

New York Times, "To Vote or Not to Vote" (Nov 6, 2011)

Only 2 out of 10 current voters are from low income families.

New York Times, "Make Voting Mandatory in the US" (Oct 15, 2019)

People who choose to vote usually have the most extreme opinions on one side or the other.

fairvote.org "The Pros and Cons of Requiring Citizens to Vote"

NEGATIVE: VOTING SHOULD NOT BE MANDATORY

Groups of voters and non-voters both include about the same number of democrats and republicans anyway.

governing.com "What Would Happen If America Made Voting Mandatory?" (Feb 2016)

People who choose not to vote are less informed about the issues than people who vote.

governing.com "What Would Happen If America Made Voting Mandatory?" (Feb 2016)

Mandatory voting violates freedom of choice for Americans by taking away our option of NOT expressing an opinion.

fairvote.org "The Pros and Cons of Requiring Citizens to Vote"

Mandatory voting violates freedom of religion because some religions are against participating in politics at all.

connectusfund.org "13 Pros and Cons of Compulsory Voting," (July 21, 2018)

COUNTRIES WHERE
VOTING IS
MANDATORY

Argentina
Australia
Belgium
Bolivia
Brazil
Democratic Republic
of the Congo
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
Greece
Honduras
Lebanon
Luxembourg
Mexico
Nauru
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Singapore
Thailand
Uruguay

PBS.org (2014)

DEBATE WORKSHEET

- Read the first two pages of this packet (“Topic Introduction” and “To Vote or Not to Vote”)
- Answer each of the questions below: write out your answers, think about them without writing, or answer out loud.
- Share the questions with someone else and talk about how your answers are the same or different from each other. What can you learn from each other about your unique ideas?

1. Which one of the AFFIRMATIVE pieces of evidence at the bottom of page 2 do you think is the strongest?

Why? _____

Read all of the AFFIRMATIVE evidence out loud to someone else. Ask them which one they think is strongest and why? Compare your answers.

2. Which one of the NEGATIVE pieces of evidence at the bottom of page 2 do you think is the strongest?

Why? _____

Read all of the NEGATIVE evidence out loud to someone else. Ask them which one they think is strongest and why? Compare your answers.

3. If voting was mandatory in the US, should there be consequences for people who do not vote? YES NO

- *Consequence* means a punishment, or another type of response to actions taken.

IF YES, what kind of consequences should there be? List a couple of your ideas below. What would be fair? Be creative

1. _____

2. _____

Flip your paper over to read what consequences other countries use to enforce mandatory voting.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, “Compulsory Voting”

1. Must pay a fine.

2. Can't work for the government.

3. Can't get a passport or driver's license.

4. Must serve time in jail.

5. Can't get a loan from a bank.

6. Kids can't be enrolled in daycare.

IF NO, can you think of any other ways the government could encourage people to vote? _____

4. Look at the Short History of Voting on Page 1 and answer these questions. Let's do some math!

(Hint: Subtract the year of the first presidential election from the year that each group was given the right to vote.)

- How many years after the first presidential election were black men given the right to vote? _____
- How many years after the first presidential election were women given the right to vote? _____
- How many years after the first presidential election did all states give Native Americans the right to vote? _____

Does knowing how many years these groups were not allowed to vote have an effect on your opinion about whether voting should be mandatory? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

5. What are three things you learned about voting from this activity?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____