



My Rights and Liberties:
SS.7.CG.3.6
Voting Rights
READING #2

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.3.6 Benchmark Clarification 2: Students will evaluate the impact these amendments have had on American society.

The impact of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments on society was significant. For example, individual citizens and interest groups sued states because state laws denied them their rights as U.S. citizens. Interest groups also organized marches and participated in **civil disobedience** to protest these state laws. The number of protest activities and lawsuits against states increased greatly in the 1950s.

The impact of the 14th Amendment on society in the U.S. was important. The U.S. Constitution now protected all U.S. citizens (including former slaves) from state laws that **discriminated** against them because of their race. This meant that African-Americans and women could go to court when they believed state laws discriminated against them and violated their rights as U.S. citizens.

The former slave states opposed the **ratification** of the 15th Amendment. They decided to try other ways, especially passing new laws, to keep African-Americans from voting. For example, in Alabama, African-Americans had to take a 68-question “**literacy**” **test** that had to be answered completely and perfectly quickly. If African-Americans taking the test missed even one question, they could not register to vote. In Mississippi, African-Americans were asked questions that had no correct answer, such as “How many seeds are in a watermelon?” Failing to answer such questions correctly meant that these U.S. citizens were not allowed to register to vote.

The ratification of the 19th Amendment gave women power that they had not had before. Beginning in the 1960s, women began forming **interest groups** to ensure they had equal job opportunities and other economic and social opportunities. Women have also taken part in marches and protests for women’s rights. Today, we see the impact of this amendment on society. More women than ever run for, and win, elected offices at all levels of government. Women have also sued in court when federal and state laws discriminate against them because they are women.

Even though the 15th Amendment was supposed to allow all races to vote, some states did everything they could to prevent minorities from voting. Many implemented **poll taxes** that African Americans had to pay before they were allowed to vote. The 24th Amendment abolished those poll taxes. The impact of this amendment is that candidates and elected leaders now pay more attention to the concerns of the poor and minorities because they know that these individuals can vote in elections.

The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years old. One impact of this amendment is that candidates and elected leaders pay more attention to the concerns of young people because they know that these young people can vote in elections.

civil disobedience - the refusal to obey certain laws as a form of political protest

discrimination - treating a person or group unfairly based on their race, religion, gender, disability, or other reasons

interest group - a group of people who are concerned with a particular issue and who try to influence legislators to act in their favor, also known as a special interest group

literacy test - a written test used to decide whether or not someone was eligible to register to vote

poll tax - a fee someone has to pay in order to vote

ratification - the process of formally approving something

unconstitutional - not in agreement with the U.S Constitution