

Chapter 6: Voters and Voter Behavior

Section 2

Lecture Notes

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

► Objectives

1. Identify the universal qualifications for voting in the United States.
2. Explain the other requirements that States use or have used as voting qualifications.

▶ Key Terms

- **alien:** foreign-born residents who have not become citizens
- **transients:** people who plan to live in a State for only a short time
- **registration:** a method of voter identification intended to prevent fraud
- **purging:** the process of removing the names of voters who are no longer eligible to vote
- **poll books:** the official lists of qualified voters in each precinct
- **literacy:** a person's ability to read and write

- What are the qualifications for voting, and how have they changed over time?
 - The basic requirements for voting are that you must be a U.S. citizen, have established residency in the State where you are casting your vote, and be at least 18 years of age.
 - The minimum voting age and minimum length of residency have both been lowered over time.

► Citizenship

- In most States, foreign-born residents who have not become citizens cannot vote.
 - Citizenship is up to each State to decide.
 - States can also distinguish between native-born and naturalized citizens, requiring that voters become citizens of that State for a minimum period of time before being allowed to vote.

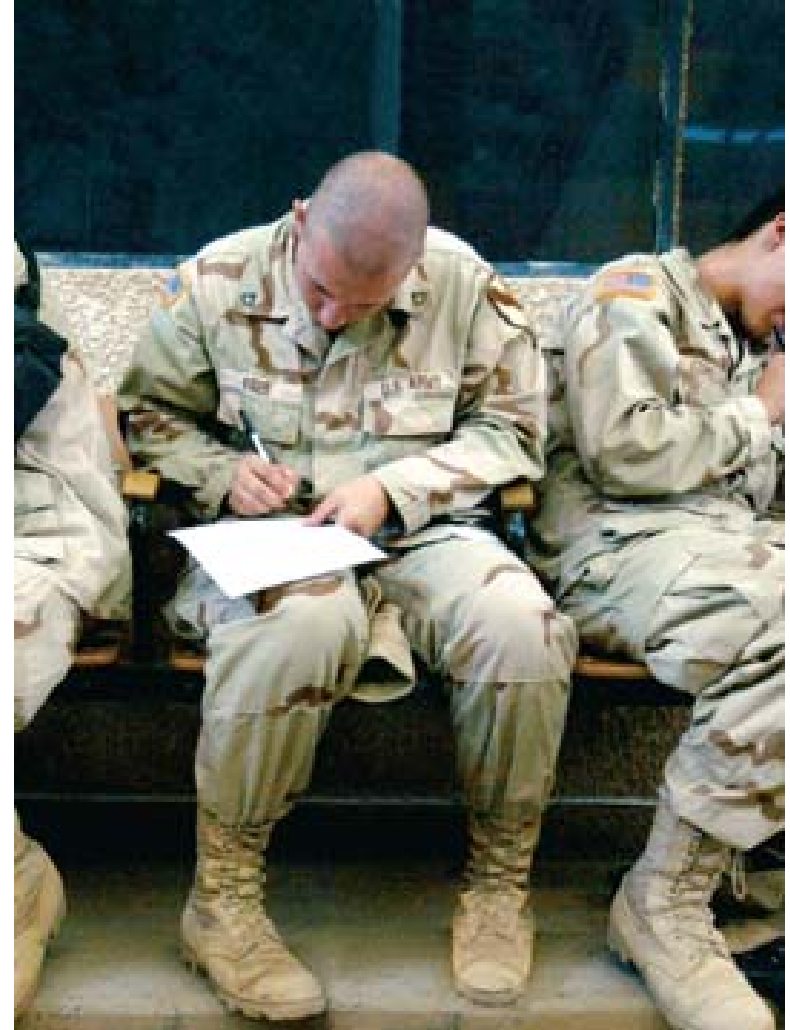
► Residency

- A person must also be a legal resident of the State in which he or she votes.
- In the past, this meant a person had to be a State resident for at least a year to vote in that State.
- Due to federal law and a Supreme Court ruling, most States now set no time requirement for legal residency, or have cut it to 30 days.



► Residency, cont.

- Transients cannot vote in the State where they are living temporarily.
 - Voters living outside their State, such as soldiers, can cast absentee ballots in their *home* State.



► Age

- Under the **26th Amendment**, the minimum voting age cannot be older than 18.
 - Before the passage of this amendment, the minimum age had been 21 in most States.
 - Some States allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections.
- Historically, young voters have been less likely to vote than any other age group of eligible voters.

► Age, cont.

- Checkpoint: What event was significant to lowering the voting age?
 - The service of 18-year-olds in the Vietnam War helped mobilize public opinion to lower the voting age.



▶ Voter Registration

- In almost all States, one must be registered in order to vote.
- A prospective voter typically provides their age, name, place of birth, address, and length of residence to a registrar or county clerk, who keeps a record of all eligible voters.



▶ Voter Registration, cont.

- Voter registration can take place at rallies, fairs, school campuses, and other public places.
- In other democracies, voters must be registered by law. Only in the United States is it voluntary.



▶ Voter Registration, cont.

- The Motor Voter Act requires all States to:
 - Let eligible citizens register when they apply for or renew a driver's license
 - Provide voter registration by mail
 - Make registration forms available at many State offices



▶ Should You Need an ID to Vote?

- In 2005, Indiana passed a law requiring voters to present photo ID to vote.
- In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that the law was constitutional and did not create a barrier to voting.
 - This ruling allowed other states to add stronger ID requirements to election laws.



▶ Tests and Taxes

- Literacy tests for voting were once common, but are no longer used.
 - These tests were often aimed at denying African Americans the vote, with grandfather clauses allowing whites to vote without being tested.
- Some States, particularly in the South, also charged a poll tax to vote.
 - In 1964 the 24th Amendment banned the use of any voting taxes.

▶ Persons Denied the Vote

- Every State denies the vote to some people.
 - Few States allow people found mentally incompetent to vote.
 - Most States disqualify people convicted of serious crimes from voting, although it is often possible for convicted felons to regain their voting rights.
 - Some States also ban those dishonorably discharged from the armed forces from voting.

► Review

- Now that you have learned about the qualifications for voting and how they have changed over time, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
 - Why do voters act as they do?