



50 YEARS LATER

Commemorating
the Voting Rights
Act of 1965

History of the Voting Rights Act

Although the 15th Amendment granted African Americans the right to vote, there were literacy tests, poll taxes and other discriminatory requirements put in place to make it difficult for eligible citizens to register to vote. The Amendment passed in 1870 but it did not fully take effect until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, after which most African Americans living in the South were able to register to vote and participate in the democratic process without facing disenfranchisement.

Voting Rights Act of 1965

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a milestone in national legislation that prohibits discriminatory voting practices from disenfranchising African Americans. The act, which was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, makes it illegal to require eligible voters to pass literacy tests in order to register to vote.

In the same year the act was passed, many key events took place throughout the Civil Rights Movement: Malcolm X was assassinated, the Selma to Montgomery marches occurred, the Watts riots in Los Angeles occurred, and President Johnson issued Executive Order 11246 to enforce Affirmative Action for the first time.

Looking Forward

Since its initial passage, the act has expanded its reach with amendments that assist language minorities in the voting process by providing language-specific election materials to jurisdictions with large numbers of language minorities.



Eighty-ninth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

Began and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the fourth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five

An Act

To enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act shall be known as the "Voting Rights Act of 1965".

Sec. 2. No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.

Sec. 3. (a) Whenever the Attorney General institutes a proceeding under any statute to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court shall authorize the appointment of Federal examiners by the United States Civil Service Commission in accordance with section 6 to serve for such period of time and for such political subdivisions as the court shall determine is appropriate to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment (1) as part of any interlocutory order if the court determines that the appointment of such examiners is necessary to enforce such guarantees or (2) as part of any final judgment if the court finds that violations of the fifteenth amendment justifying equitable relief have occurred in such State or subdivision: Provided, That the court need not authorize the appointment of examiners if any incidents of denial or abridgement of the right to vote on account of race or color (1) have been few in number and have been promptly and effectively corrected by State or local action, (2) the continuing effect of such incidents has been eliminated, and (3) there is no reasonable probability of their recurrence in the future.

(b) If in a proceeding instituted by the Attorney General under any statute to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that a test or device has been used for the purpose or with the effect of denying or abridging the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color, it shall suspend the use of tests and devices in such State or political subdivisions as the court shall determine is appropriate and for such period as it deems necessary.

(c) If in any proceeding instituted by the Attorney General under any statute to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that violations of the fifteenth amendment justifying equitable relief have occurred within the territory of such State or political subdivision, the court, in addition to such relief as it may grant, shall retain jurisdiction for such period as it may deem appropriate and during such period no voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect at the time the proceeding was commenced shall be enforced unless and until the court finds that such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure does not have the purpose and will not have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color: Provided, That such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure may be enforced if the qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure has been submitted by the chief legal officer or other appropriate official of such State or subdivision to the Attorney General and the Attorney General has not interposed an objection within sixty days after such

S. 1564-10

Sec. 17. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to deny, impair, or otherwise adversely affect the right to vote of any person registered to vote under the law of any State or political subdivision.

Sec. 18. There are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 19. If any provision of this Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of the Act and the application of the provision to other persons not similarly situated or to other circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

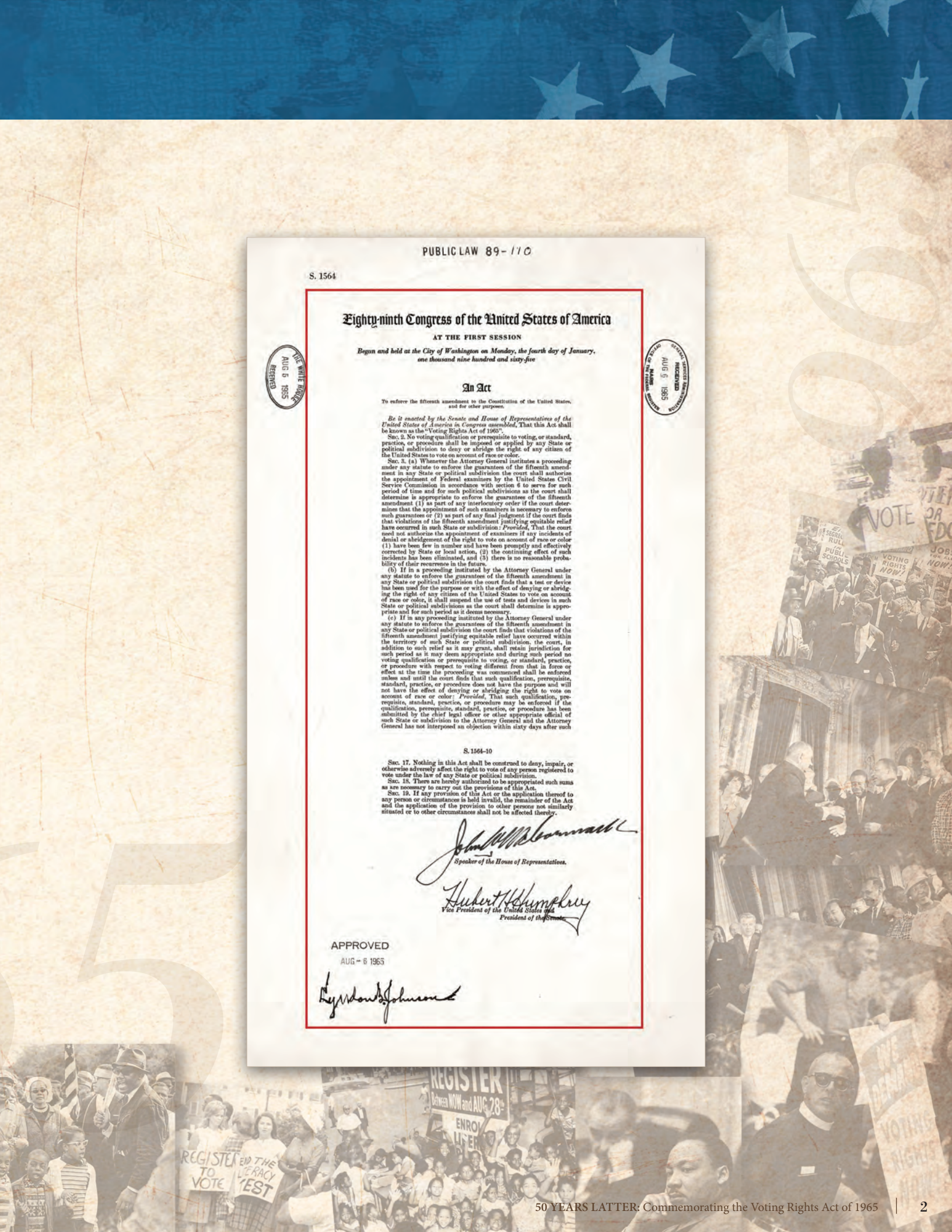
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate

APPROVED

AUG - 6 1965

Signature of Lyndon B. Johnson



Timeline of 1965

February 26, 1869

On this day, the United States Congress passed the 15th Amendment declaring that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

May 31, 1870

To further protect the rights established in the 15th Amendment, President Ulysses S. Grant signed into law The Enforcement Act of 1870 promising federal prosecution of anyone who obstructed citizens in the exercise of those rights.

1890s-1960s

Despite these protections, the Jim Crow laws passed by several southern legislatures effectively suppressed the African American vote.

Poll taxes were established.

Literacy tests were administered.

In 1910 Louisiana, less than 1% of eligible African American voters were registered.

March 7, 1965

Civil rights demonstrators began their first march from Selma to Montgomery, incurring many losses, but giving courage to millions and inspiring real change.

August 6, 1965

President Lyndon Johnson signs into law the Voting Rights Act establishing landmark protective measures to prohibit discriminatory, voter-suppression tactics.

Timeline of 1965

March 24, 1966

In its decision on Harper vs. Virginia Board of Elections, the Supreme Court held that poll taxes were illegal for all elections.

June 22, 1970

President Nixon signs the extension of the Voting Rights Act, proclaiming the provisions of the Act "to be of great importance."

November 7, 1972

Barbara Jordan of Houston and Andrew Young of Atlanta become the first African Americans elected to Congress from the South since the reconstruction era.

August 6, 1975

President Gerald Ford reauthorizes the Voting Rights Act which included new provisions to extend assistance to language minorities.

June 29, 1982

Recognizing its importance, President Ronald Reagan signed a 25-year extension to the Voting Rights Act remarking as he signed "the right to vote is the crown jewel of American liberties and we will not see its luster diminished."

July 27, 2006

George Bush signed the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, And Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act Of 2006 extending protections for another 25 years.

"The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) was designed to restore the birthright of every American - the right to choose our leaders."

Literacy Test

Although the 15th Amendment granted African Americans the right to vote, there were literacy tests, poll taxes and other discriminatory requirements put in place to make it difficult for eligible citizens to register to vote. This is an example of the literacy test given to prospective voters purportedly to test their literacy in order to vote. In practice, these tests were intended to disenfranchise African-Americans and other minorities.

1. Draw a line around the number or letter of this sentence.
2. Draw a line under the last word of this line.
3. Cross out the longest word on this line.
4. Draw a line around the shortest word in this line.
5. Circle the first, first letter of the alphabet in this line.
6. In the space below, draw three circles, one inside (engulfed by) another.

7. Above the letter "X" make a small cross.

8. Draw a line through the letter below that comes earliest in the alphabet.

ZVSDAKMPHBTYC

9. Draw a line through the two letters below that come last in the alphabet.

ZVBDNKIPHSTYC

10. In the first circle below write the last letter of the first word beginning with "L".



11. Cross out the number not necessary when making the number below one million.

10000000000

Literacy Test

12. In the line below, cross out each number that is more than 20 but less than 30.

25 21 16 48 23 53 47 22 37 98 26 20

13. Draw a line from circle 2 to circle 5 that will pass below circle 3 and above circle 4.



14. Draw a line under the first letter after “H” and draw a line through the second letter after “J”.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

15. In the space below write the word “noise” backwards and place a “d” over what would be the second letter should it have been written forward.

16. Draw a triangle with a blackened circle that overlaps its left corner.

17. Look at the line of numbers below and place on the blank line the number that should come next.

2 4 8 16 ___

18. Look at the line of number below and place on the blank the number that should come next.

3 6 9 ___ **15**

19. Draw in the space below a square with a triangle in it and within that same triangle draw a circle with a black dot in it.

20. Spell backwards, forwards.

21. Print the word “vote” upside down but in correct order.

22. Place a cross over the tenth letter in this line, a line under the first space in this sentence, and circle the last the in the second line of this sentence.

Literacy Test



23. Draw a figure that is square in shape. Divide it in half by drawing a straight line from its northeast corner to its southwest corner and then divide it once more by drawing a broken line from the middle of its western side to the middle of its eastern side.

24. Print a word that looks the same whether it is printed forwards or backwards.

25. Write down on the line provided what you read in the triangle.



26. In the third square below write the second letter of the fourth word.

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27. Write right from the left to the right as you see it spelled here.

28. Divide a vertical line in two equal parts by bisecting it with a curved horizontal line that is straight at the point of bisection of the vertical.

29. Write every other word in the first line and print every third word in the same line but capitalize the fifth word that you write.

30. Draw five circles that have one common interlocking part.



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YEARS
LATER

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