LESSON 5: **What Does It Mean to Vote?**

**Location:** US **Time Period:** 1789-Present **Grades:** 8-12

**Essential Question:** How has the right to vote evolved over the course of the nation’s history?

**Objectives:**

Students will consider the process and implications of casting a vote.

Students will learn when and how different groups in America got the vote.

Students will explore obstacles that existed despite the promises of voting.

Students will understand property qualifications as a criterion for voting.

**Curriculum Standards:**

COMMON CORE

English and Language Arts, Grades 11 and 12, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RI.11-12.8. Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses)

RI.11-12.9. Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

English/Language Arts; History/Social Studies, Grades 9-12

Key Ideas and Details

RH.9-10-11-12.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RH.9-12.7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

US History 1: The Revolution through Reconstruction, 1763-1877

The Formation and Framework of American Democracy

Political Democratization, 1800-1860

Civil War and Reconstruction

US History 2: Reconstruction to the Present, 1877-Present

The Age of Reform, 1900-1940

American Government Elective

LESSON 5 TEACHER SHEET, P. 1

**Lesson Overview**

Voting is both a right and a privilege in the United States. The Constitution offers little guidance regarding the logistics and specifics of HOW we are supposed to exercise this important opportunity. Who gets to vote has been one of the most developments of our nation’s story. Originally, only white men who owned property were allowed to vote. The struggle to include everyone else has reflected the best and worst of our history.

**Procedure:**

1. Ask students what it means to vote. Prompt responses that include making choices, expressing an opinion. Have them consider the implications of voting, both as it affects them and those around them. Complete Part I of the Student Sheet to help facilitate this conversation. Extend the discussion to voting for a president and encourage them to see how voting is a way to influence their society. Tell the class that even though Americans have been voting since 1789, not every one got to vote. Ask them what might have prevented some people from voting.
2. Give class Voting Amendment Sheet and the Voting Rights Cartoon. Then have students complete Part II of the Student Sheet independently or in small groups. Discuss their results.
3. Explain what property is. When the Constitution was first written, only people with property were allowed to vote. Ask the students why that might have been the case. Look for answers that focus on being able to trust who was voting, being afraid of how some people might vote. Show the students the following 4 maps:

Property Qualifications for Suffrage, 1800

Property Qualifications for Suffrage, 1830

Property Qualifications for Suffrage, 1920

Presidential Elections Results, 1828

Explain that Suffrage means voting. Have them complete Part III of the Student Sheet independently or in small groups. Discuss their results.

**Time Allocation:**

20-40 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

[Property Qualifications for Suffrage, 1800](http://maps.bpl.org/details_12426/?maid=523)

[Property Qualifications for Suffrage, 1830](http://maps.bpl.org/details_12427/?dl_pp=1&maid=523)

[Property Qualifications for Suffrage, 1920](http://maps.bpl.org/details_12430/?dl_pp=3&maid=523)

[Presidential Elections Results, 1828](http://maps.bpl.org/details_12395/?maid=523)

Voting Amendment Sheet

Voting Access Cartoon

**LESSON 5 TEACHER SHEET, P. 2**

**Assessment Criteria:**

Did the students consider the process and implications of casting a vote?

Did the students learn when different groups in America got the vote?

Did the students learn which Amendments gave different groups the right to vote?

Did the students explore obstacles that existed despite the rules?

Did the students understand property qualifications as a criterion for voting?

**Enrichment Activities:**

1. States determine voter eligibility. Have the students see what the requirements are in their state to vote. Voter eligibility is usually under the state Secretary of State. This information is on the state’s website. You may also find the information here:

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/14/politics/how-to-register-to-vote-in-every-us-state-and-territory/index.html>

1. Compare changes in voter eligibility with general political trends. Eras to consider: The Age of Jackson

Civil War and Reconstruction

The Jim Crow South

The Progressive Era

The 1960s: Civil Rights, Women’s Rights, and Vietnam

Our Current Era of Citizens United

1. All four Amendments which affected voting rights contain two parts. The first part states that the right to vote cannot be prevented based on age, race, gender or ability to pay a poll tax. The second part allows Congress to pass legislation to enforce this article with appropriate legislation. Select one of the amendments and see what legislation if any was passed to enforce the article. Why was it necessary?

4. There has been a great deal of concern over access to voting in our time. Have students explore the current issues around Fraud, Voter ID laws, and efforts to limit access to voting.

LESSON 5 STUDENT SHEET, P. 1

Voting is about making choices. Americans have been voting in presidential elections since 1789. But everyone has not always been allowed to vote. The United States Constitution contains few specifics about How we are to exercise this right and responsibility so essential to our form of government.

**Part I: What Is Voting?**

***WHAT IS IT?***

1. When do you get to make choices in your life?
2. How is making a choice when you are part of a group different from choices you make as an individual? How are they the same?
3. Think about choices you make when you are part of a group. Is it always best for everyone to have an equal say? When might it best for just one person to make a choice for a group? When is it important to have everyone involved in the decision?
4. How does casting a vote for the President like other choices you make? How is it different?

***AND ONCE THE VOTE IS CAST???***

A group has held a vote. For which of the following, must you go along with the group’s decision?

1. Three friends decide to order a pizza. Two want sausage. Does the third who ‘voted’ for mushrooms

* Have to eat the pizza?
* Have to pay for the pizza?

Would your answer change if you learned that the third person doesn’t eat meat because she doesn’t like it? How about if her religion forbade her from eating pork?

2. Your town has a school tax increase of 3%. Do you have to pay the School Tax if

You don’t have children who attend the town’s schools?

Your children attend a private school?

3. There are two states next to one another, State A and State B. State A has voted in very strong regulations about air, water, and land pollution. All factories in the state have to follow the laws which include, for many, expensive repairs to their factories. State B prefers to have no regulations other than what the Federal government mandates and many factory owners know it will cost them less money to pay the federal fines than update their factories.

You live in State A, on the border of State B. High levels of lead are found in the soil in your town. Is there anything you can do?

You are a factory owner in State A, on the border of State B. Would you update your factory?

4. The US Congress declares war on Mexico and reinstates the draft.

Do I have to pay taxes for a war I don’t believe in?

Do I have to fight in a war I don’t believe in?

5. The State Board of Health mandates that all children receive a vaccine against disease X. Proof of vaccination is required for school attendance. Do I have to get my child vaccinated?

LESSON 5 STUDENT SHEET, P. 2

**Part II: Voting in America**

In 1789, the Constitution became the rule book for America. Changes to the Constitution are made by Amendments. Read the Voting Amendment Sheet and answer the following questions

1. Which four groups needed specific Amendments to help them get the vote?
2. The language in all four Amendments says that you can’t stop someone from voting because of their race, gender, age or ability to pay a tax. Might there be some other way to stop someone from voting even with these new rules in place?
3. All four Amendments have a second part. What do they say? Why you think Congress is mentioned in all four?
4. Why is the right to vote placed in the Constitution? Why wasn’t it enough just for Congress to pass a law?
5. Look at the Voting Rights Cartoon. What does the White person have to do to vote? What obstacles are in the way for the Black man to vote? How does each obstacle work against the promises of the 15th Amendment?

LESSON 5 STUDENT SHEET, P. 3

**Part III**

Look at the three property qualification maps and election map that your teacher gives you and answer the following questions:

1. What do the yellow states represent? The blue states? The green states?
2. A ‘T’ on a state means that there is an alternative (or different) way to vote, even if you do not own property. Will that allow ***more*** people to vote? Will it allow ***all*** people to vote?
3. There was a big change between 1800 and 1830. What was this change? How do the election results of 1828 reflect that change?
4. Look at the 1920 Property Qualification map. What do all of the Southern states have in common? What historic change might that reflect?
5. Do the voting rules seem fair to you? Why or why not?

**Voting Amendment Sheet**

**Amendment 15 Ratified February 3, 1870.**

1. 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.
2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

**Amendment 19 Ratified August 18, 1920.**

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 sex.

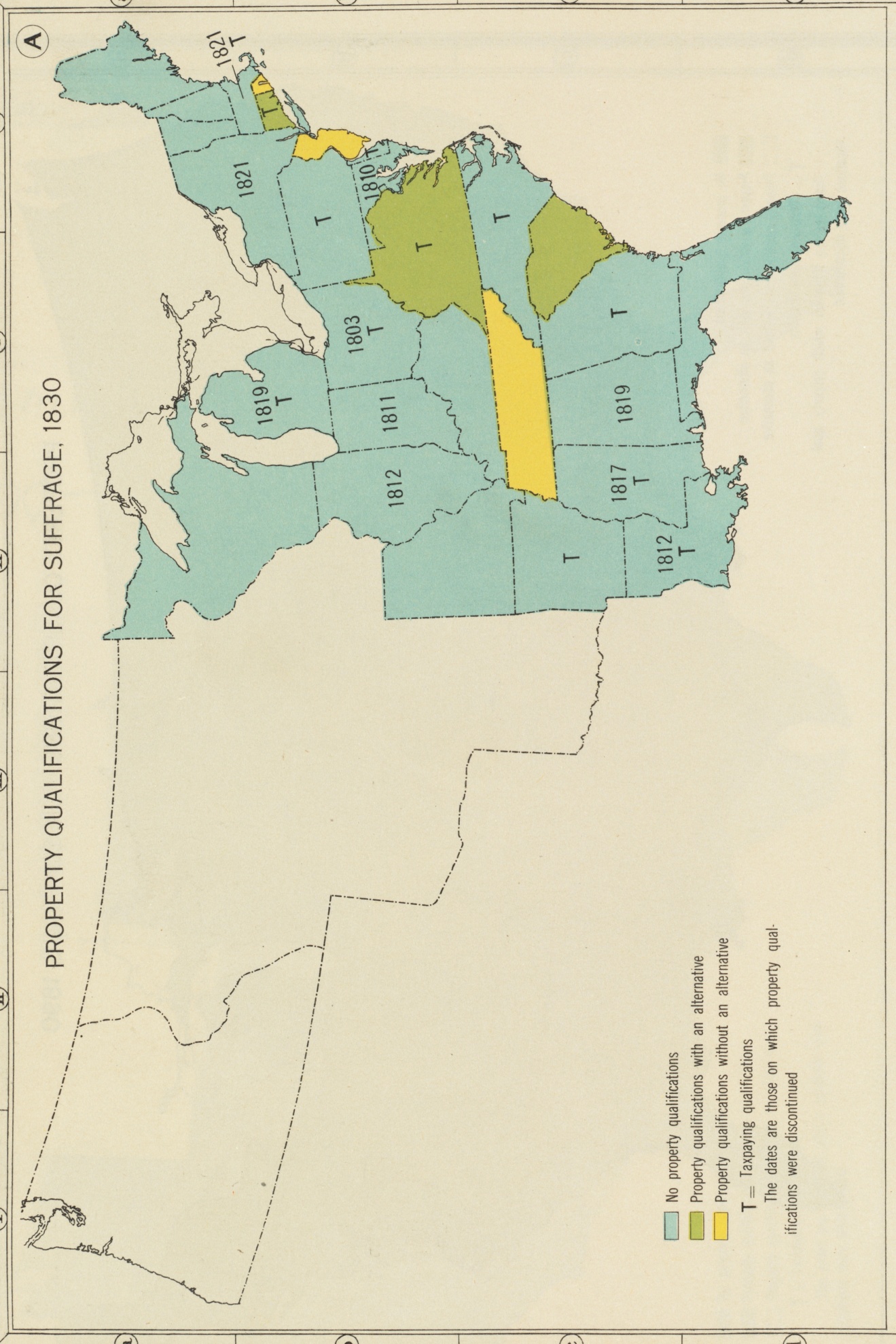
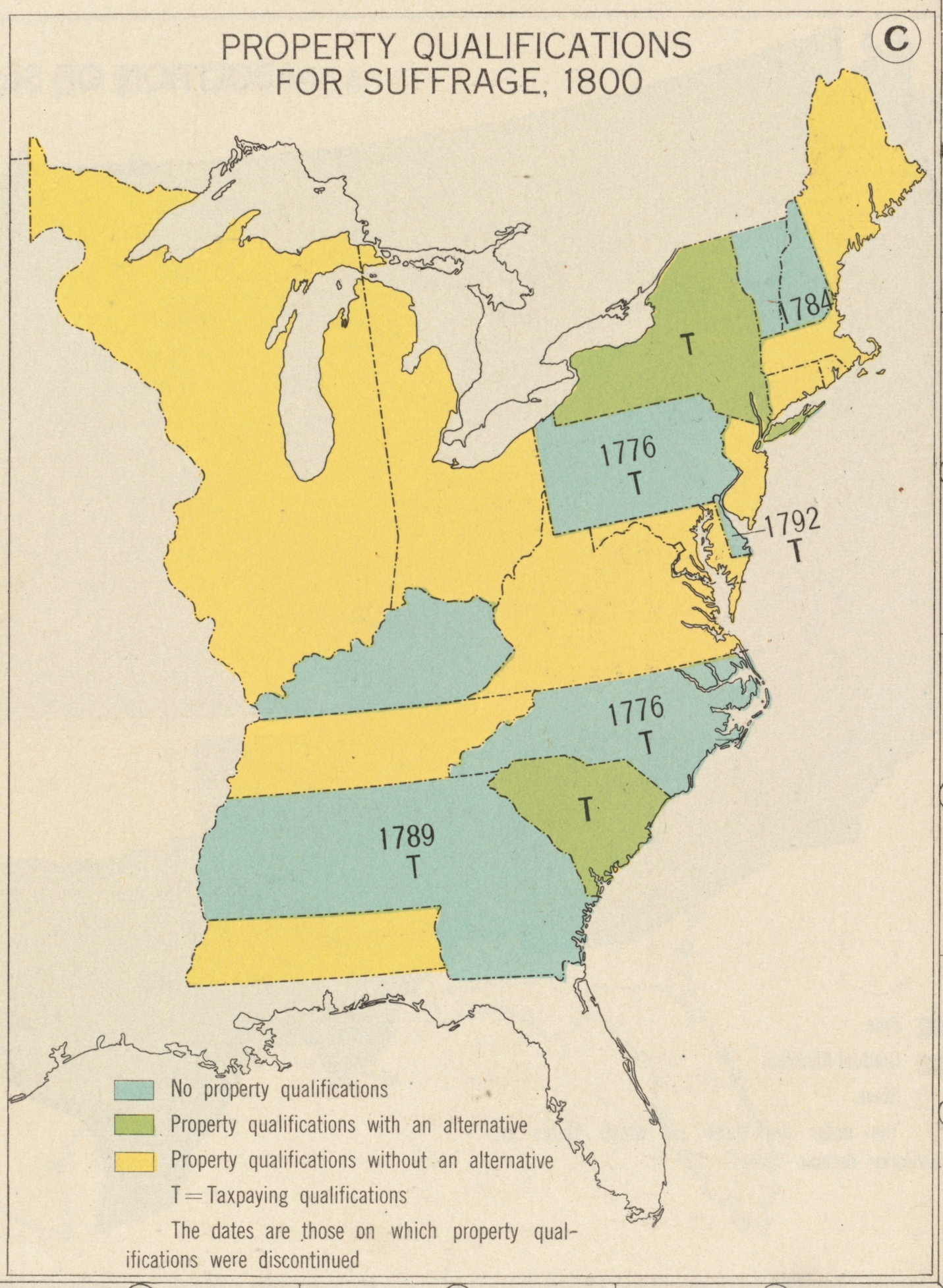
Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

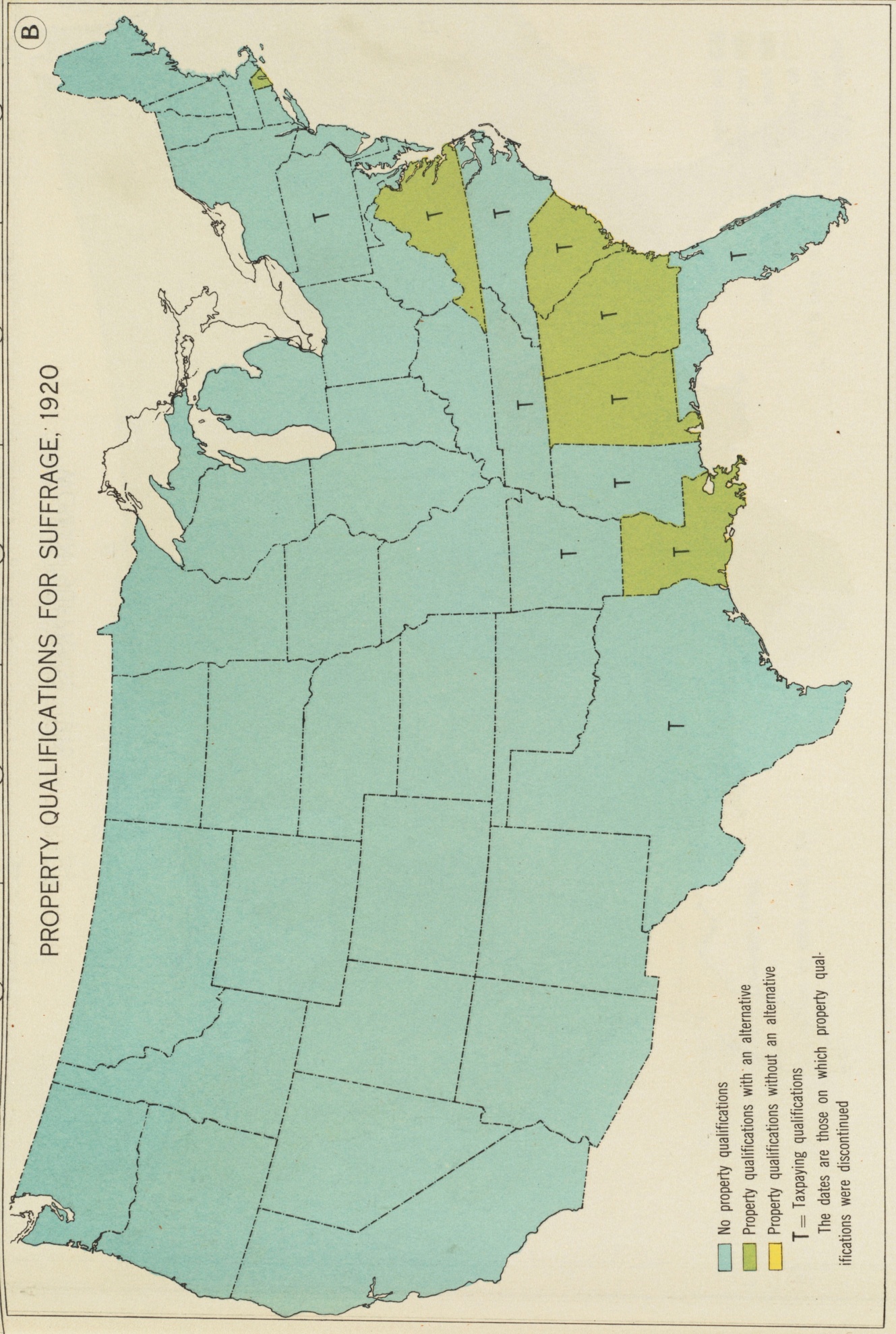
**Amendment 24 Ratified January 23, 1964.**

1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.
2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

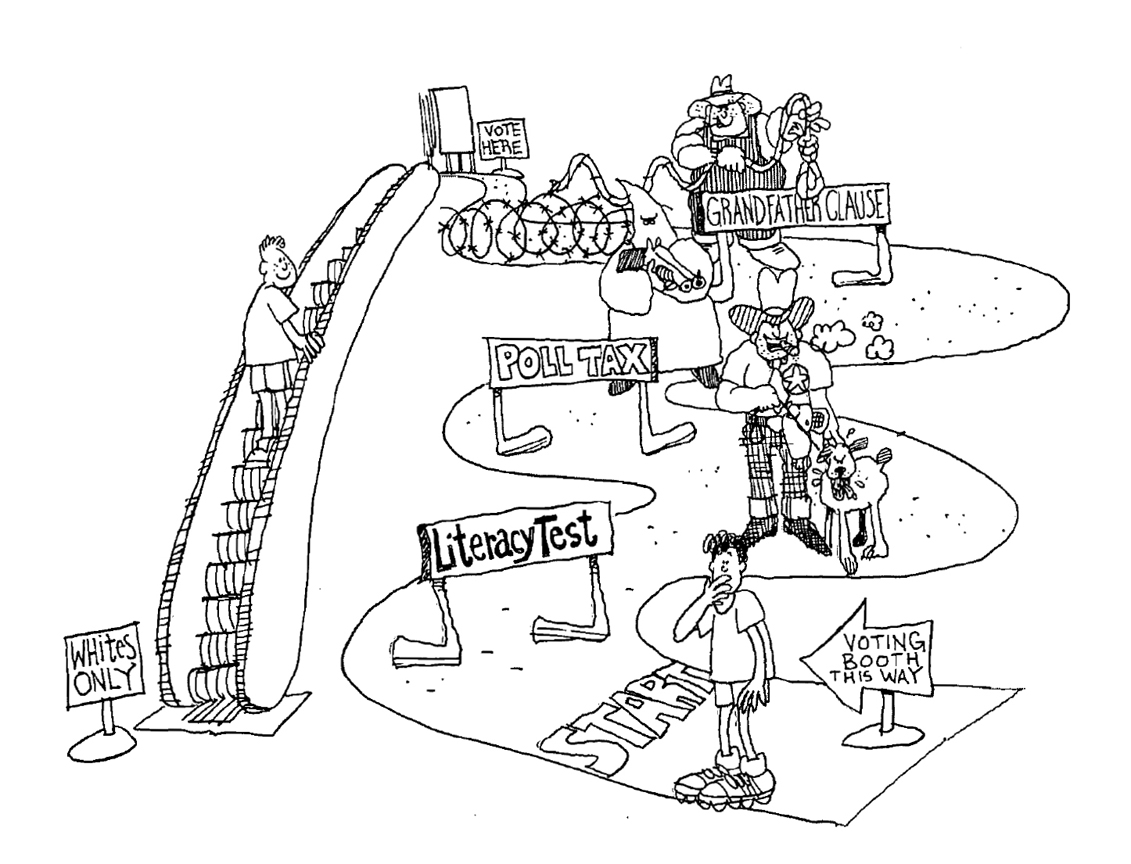
**Amendment 26 Ratified July 1, 1971.**

1. The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.
2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



**Voting Access Cartoon**

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