

# The 26th Amendment

Even though the 26th amendment was the fastest constitutional amendment to ever be ratified, the long debate over lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 began in World War II and intensified during the Vietnam War era.



## Draft Age Lowered from 21 to 18

- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt approved an expansion of draft ages, lowering the draft age from 21 to 18.
- Senator Jennings Randolph (D-WV) introduced federal legislation to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. This would be the first of Senator Randolph's 11 attempts to introduce such legislation.

Sept. 1940

## Burke-Wadsworth Act Passed

Also known as the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, this act established the first peacetime military draft in American history.

Nov. 1942

## Georgia Becomes First State to Lower Voting Age

The Georgia State Legislature adopted an amendment to the state constitution lowering the voting age in state and local elections from 21 to 18.

Mar. 1943

## President Nixon Signs the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1970

- President Richard Nixon signed several amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law. One amendment included lowering the voting age to 18 for all Federal, State, and local elections.
- Idaho, Oregon, and Texas argued that this provision was unconstitutional and brought their case to the Supreme Court against the United States and Attorney General John Mitchell.

June 1970



## Oregon v. Mitchell

- Idaho, Oregon, and Texas claimed that States, not Congress, have the authority to establish qualification rules for voters in State and local elections.
- The Supreme Court ruled that the provision setting the minimum voting age for federal elections at 18 was constitutional, but lowering the voting age to 18 for states was not.
- Because the Supreme Court upheld the lowered national voting age in federal elections but not in State elections, States were faced with the "bureaucratic nightmare" of keeping track of who was allowed to vote for President and Vice President but not for State officials who were up for election at the same time.

Dec. 1970

## Congress Adopts Proposed Constitutional Amendment to Lower Voting Age

- Senate votes unanimously (94-0) in favor of constitutional amendment to lower voting age from 21 to 18, two weeks later the House voted 401-19 to approve measure.
- Within hours four state legislatures ratified the amendment

Mar. 1971

## 26th Amendment Ratified by States and Certified by President Nixon

- Ohio becomes the 38th State to ratify the 26th amendment.
- President Nixon certifies the 26th amendment at White House Ceremony, surrounded by approximately 500 prospective 18 year-old voters.

July 1971

