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.

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.

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

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.

Sources:
- http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/37022