

OUR VOTING RIGHTS WERE WON TOGETHER

How Black, Latino, and Asian American people fought to expand the right to vote – and why that matters for us today.

The right to vote was not always guaranteed

Voting is one important way our communities have power to impact our lives, our neighborhoods, and our communities.

But when our country was founded, only wealthy white men were allowed to vote. Over the course of centuries, women, people of color, and young people came together to win the right to vote. Asian American immigrants were one of the last groups to win the right to vote, which is connected to the ability to be included as a citizen. Until laws were changed in 1952, Asian immigrants had no pathway to citizenship, and therefore no right to vote.



Right to vote ≠ access to the ballot

Black citizens in Southern states were kept from voting through poll taxes, literacy tests, and voter intimidation.

In the 1960s, thousands of Black organizers, many of them students and young people, participated in the Civil Rights movement. They organized protests, marches, and voter registration drives in the face of hostility and violence from Southern states.

They knew that voting was the key to political power.

Organizing changed the law

In 1965, the Civil Rights movement succeeded in passing the Voting Rights Act (VRA). The VRA banned racial discrimination in voting, and has been the most important voting rights protection for decades.

Over a quarter million Black Americans registered to vote that same year. This translated to an increase in Black political representation AND an increase in spending on public infrastructure in Black communities.

The fight expanded to language access

Through 1975, Latino voters in the Southwest faced similar voting barriers. Voters were excluded if they could not speak or read English, and their votes were thrown out when they were unable to follow the instructions on the ballot.

Latino and Black congressional representatives, such as Edward Roybal and Barbara Jordan, joined forces to update the VRA to include protections for language minority voters.

These protections required certain counties to provide translated voting materials.



Victory for one community can strengthen all communities

Language access protections empower all immigrant communities, including Asian Americans. Asian Americans are the most likely group to cite 'difficulty with English' as a reason for not registering to vote.

The history of expanding voting rights shows that when we come together, we can win meaningful changes from the voting booth to the halls of Congress.

And that advancing rights for one community, advances rights for all.



**The next chapter is ours
to write.**

**This election is another opportunity for
our communities to show up and fight for
our political power.**



Join [**citizensinaction.us**](https://citizensinaction.us)

**to learn about how you can get involved to protect your
community's voting rights this November.**