



Constitution Day and a Reflection on Voting Rights

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Constitution Day allows for Americans to reflect on the passage of the Constitution and how it affects our lives today. When the framers signed the document that would become America's second Constitution, they had several intentions including writing a Constitution that would last the test of time, discussing important issues about what the role of national government was along with the role of states and the people. On Sept. 17, 1787, the signatories of the Constitution finally agreed on what should be included in the final version of the Constitution, which they had been working on since May. However, the final ratified version of the Constitution was not completed until the Federalists were able to convince the Anti-Federalists that the rights of the people and the states would be protected with the passage of the Bill of Rights, or the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution.

In addition to celebrating Constitution Day, this year is also special because it is 50 years since the passage of the 26th Amendment, which gave 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds the right to vote in national, state and local elections. This allows us to reflect on the opportunity that was given to young people to participate in elections and to be a part of the electoral system. Since the original passage of the 26th Amendment there have been many challenges to youth voting and concerns about our democracy when young people do not participate in elections. The concern about our democracy and youth participation was as a result of low turnout by young people in 1996 (32.4% for 18- to 24-year-olds) and 2000 (32.3% for 18- to 24-year-olds).