

Let Us Vote! Youth Voting Rights and the 26th Amendment

Jennifer Frost

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In 1971, the ratification of the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. Jennifer Frost's thorough, valuable *Let Us Vote!* celebrates the amendment's semicentennial by chronicling the long struggle to pass it—alongside considerations of the role of the youth vote in contemporary politics.

While a congressman first proposed such an amendment during World War II, on the grounds that men were sent to a war by a government in which they didn't have a say, it took decades to become a movement. As *Let Us Vote!* makes clear, the movement for youth rights not only involved a combination of grassroots activism and leadership from key officials, but needed the civil rights movement of the 1960s to lay the groundwork for its success. Indeed, many of the organizations fighting to guarantee the vote for Black Americans took up the cause of youth voting, too.

As the cause gained momentum, the amendment gained bipartisan support. Young voters mirrored the partisan makeup of the country overall at the time. Frost reveals that only in the twenty-first century have Republican-led attacks on voting rights targeted young voters, and that a partisan divide has developed in the youth vote itself.

Let Us Vote! tracks all of these developments, showing how the once unlikely expansion of the franchise became an underrated success story that made the United States more representative of its people.

JEFF FLEISCHER (January / February 2022)

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