

“FIGHTING FOR THE VOTE” FOR EARLIER GRADES

DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES

A version of *Fighting for the Vote* is available for grades 4 through 7. It shares the same interactive design as the high school and college version, but works with a simplified timeline of suffrage milestones. The voter-turnout and how-to-vote modules of the version for older students are gone. In their place, the young students are given a pin-on buttons that read: “I can’t vote, but you can” and they role-play how they will respond to questions from adults about their buttons. The long-range goal is to build a personal commitment to vote when they are eligible. Shorter term, the idea is to develop young ambassadors who will become compelling voting advocates in their families, neighborhoods, and communities.



LOGISTICS

Like the version for older students, the *Fighting for the Vote* session for earlier grades works best in groups of 25 or fewer. On average, it takes about 45 minutes, but can be adapted to fit longer or shorter periods.

The program can be delivered without slides, if a computer and projector are unavailable. Access to a white board and easels is desirable.



American Civil Liberties Union

INTERESTED?

To bring *Fighting for the Vote* to your school, contact the League:

fightingforthevote@gmail.com

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization formed in 1920 as an outgrowth of the women’s suffrage movement. Now open to men and women, the League continues to defend voting rights and works year round to register, inform, and motivate voters to turn out election day. Based on grassroots study and input, the League takes stands on key issues of the day including Voter Suppression, Money in Politics, Fair Redistricting, and much more.



Developed by the League of Women Voters of Southern Monmouth County

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“Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it.”

Susan B. Anthony

Fighting for the Vote

A non-partisan program of the League of Women Voters, offered without charge to schools throughout New Jersey, aimed at developing a generation of informed and committed voters.

WHAT IT IS

Arguably, our schools have no more critical mission than preparing each generation to play an active and informed role in our democracy. Yet our record of voter turnout, especially among the young, is dismal. *Fighting for the Vote* is a single-session, interactive program, delivered in the classroom by skilled League of Women Voters facilitators, designed to help change that record.

Targeted for high school seniors and college students, it brings home the message that voting is a hard-won right. Students problem-solve the challenge of poor voter turnout and they evaluate their own potential as voter-turnout advocates with their peers and within their communities.



1964. Associated Press

HOW IT WORKS

Fighting for the Vote is adaptable to the needs of students and schools. In general, it consists of three modules:

1. Suffrage Role-Play. The core of the program is a role-playing walk through the timeline of suffrage—from the American Revolution through recent changes in New Jersey’s voting laws. Students take on the persona of an avatar. They are given a card describing their avatar, including a picture and a list of attributes that map to voter eligibility through time. As the League facilitator tells the story of each struggle for suffrage, those in the room who can vote at that point in history stand. At each milestone, students see and hear about the struggle and learn the cost people paid for the right to vote. They share with each other why they (that is their avatars) can or cannot vote. They begin developing a personal interest in eligibility and the fight for it.



1917. Library of Congress

2. Voter Turnout Problem-Solving. Students analyze voter turnout statistics—from aggregate, national data to results for their own local demographics. They brainstorm causes of low turnout and propose solutions. They are challenged to examine their own power to effect change and their willingness to do so.

3. Voting Support. The program de-mystifies the actual process of voting—from registration to casting a ballot. The language of elections (*polling place, voting district, primary, general election, etc.*) is explained. When possible, arrangements are made to have a voting machine on site. The idea is to remove those barriers to showing up on election day that we are able to anticipate.

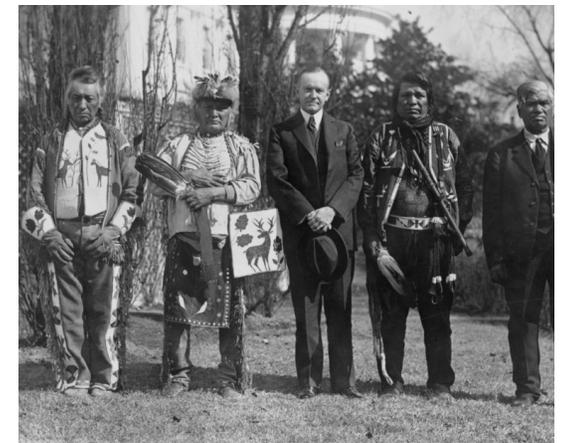
BEFORE AND AFTER

Since passage of automatic voter registration (in effect though Motor Vehicles in New Jersey since late 2018), we anticipate that most eligible students 17 years old and older will be registered. But to ensure they are, the League will work with schools to support voter registration drives on site (ideally, run by students with League support).

After the *Fighting for the Vote* session, the classroom teacher is left with follow-up materials including a message to deliver on election day, reminding eligible students to vote and encouraging all students to urge their peers to the polls. The package includes voting-related wrist bands for students.

LOGISTICS

Fighting for the Vote works best in groups of 25 or fewer. Delivering the full three modules takes at least one full (approximately 50-minute) period, but easily expands if more time is available. The program can be delivered without slides, if a computer and projector are unavailable.



President Calvin Coolidge with Osage Indians after the signing of the 1924 act guaranteeing Native Americans U.S. citizenship

Library of Congress