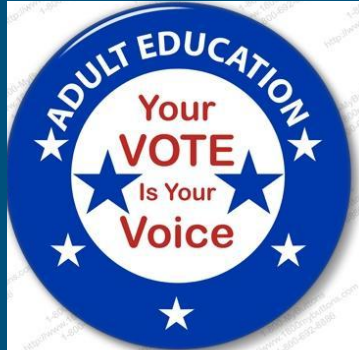
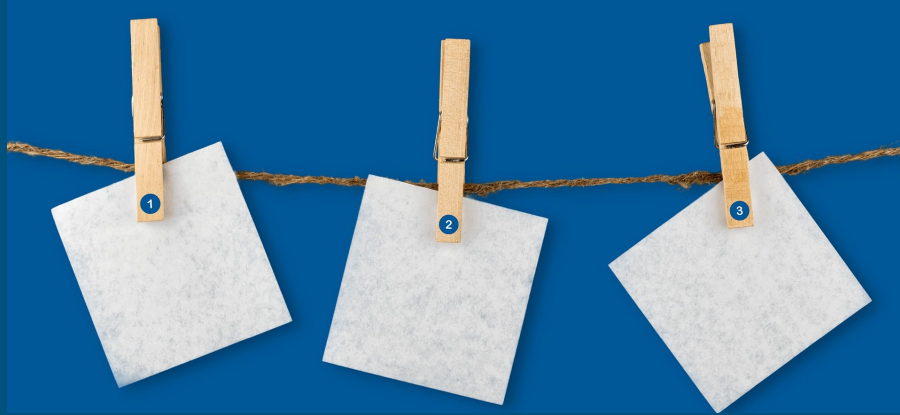


# New England Voter Education, Registration and Action (VERA) Campaign



2024 VERA Orientation  
NELRC/World Education

# Agenda



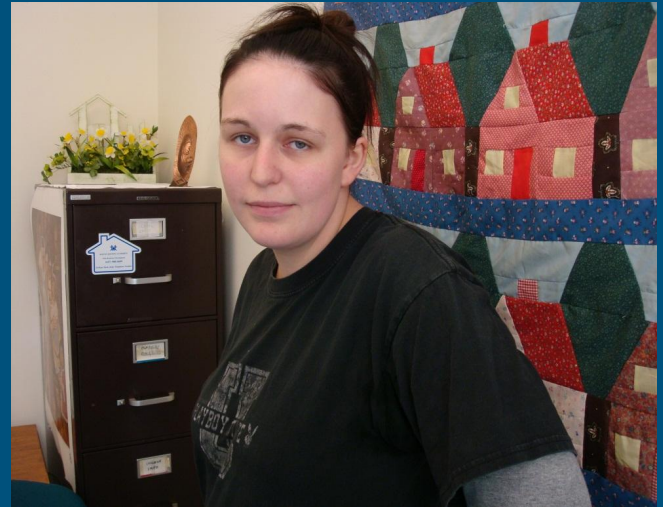
- Introduction to VERA; visit website and report back
- Teach history of voting
- Train Voting Ambassadors

# What is VERA?

- Non-partisan campaign in which all members of the NELRC community participate.
- The goal is to educate adult learners about voting and the topical electoral issues, and mobilize them to vote through classroom and program activities -- *and to do this in a way that teaches basic skills, adds knowledge, and supports digital literacy and leadership.*
- Sponsored by the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) at World Education every four years during presidential elections since 1996.

# What do students have to say?

“I never thought about voting before. I had bigger problems in life, but I look around here and I see so many people having so many problems. In my class, we studied the pros and cons of different issues to help us form our opinions. My top issues are housing and homelessness, and a woman’s right to choose.”



- Karen Lynch, Julie’s  
Family Learning  
Program, Boston, MA



# VERA 2024



VERA State-Specific Voter Information Classroom and Program Resources  
Hold a Mock Election in your Program Organize a Voter Registration Drive

**Voter Education, Registration, and Action (VERA)** is a non-partisan project designed for adult learners and program staff in the New England states. Its goal is to educate adult learners about voting and current election issues, and mobilize them to vote in the 2024 elections. VERA is sponsored by the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) at **World Education**.

 **Timeline**

*Let me show you the website; then you explore*

# *What Got Your Attention?*

- VERA home page -- with timeline
- State-specific information
- Classroom and program resources
- How to hold a mock election
- Ideas for holding a voter registration drive



# Election still a year away. What can you do now?

Teach about the history of voting rights. We have a 9-page packet on this. Will share link later...

Let's dive in by watching this short [video](#).

## History of Voting Rights Ideas and Materials for Teaching

### MATERIALS:

- 1) History of Voting Rights Activity (pp. 2-4).
- 2) History of Voting Rights [video](#).
- 3) Race and Voting Rights by Andy Nash, pp. 5-6.
- 4) More about Race and Voting, pp. 7-8.
- 5) Worksheet, p. 9.

### WARM-UP:

- 1) Do the "History of Voting Rights" activity on pp. 2-4 of this packet and/or watch this "History of Voting" [video](#).
- 2) Discuss what stood out to you about the activity and/or the video.
- 3) Describe what happens to voting rights over time. (Hopefully, students will notice that rights are won and lost, that rights are not always guaranteed, that people have had to fight for voting rights, etc.)
- 4) Pay special attention to the very end of the voting rights narrative, which covers what is happening currently with voting rights. What are students' experiences with voter ID laws? What have they read in the media or from people they know? [Note: the "History of Voting" video does not cover voter ID laws. If you just show that video and do not do the "History of Voting Rights" activity, then you will need to introduce the idea of voter IDs.

### BEFORE YOU READ:

- 1) Before reading, "Race and Voting Rights," look up these vocabulary words: *citizens*, *voter turnout*, *polls*, *disproportionate*, *backlash*, *devising*.
- 2) What is the Constitution?
- 3) What does it mean to say, "People have worked on the state and federal level [of government]."



John Legend is one of the narrators in "History of Voting" [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar7r5aG_BOY): <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar7r5aG\\_BOY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar7r5aG_BOY)>.

(To answer questions #6 and #7, you could look at <[bensguide.gpo.gov](https://www.gpo.gov)>. You can choose between three literacy levels (apprentice, journeyman, or master) to read about how the U.S. government works, including an explanation of the Constitution and federal versus state government.)

- 4) Skim the article. Look at the title, the subheadings, and the images. What do you think this article will be about?

### WHILE YOU READ:

Mark the text. Underline words you don't know or have a question about. Use a question mark in the margin to indicate something you don't understand. Put an exclamation mark or a note if you agree or think the point is particularly important.

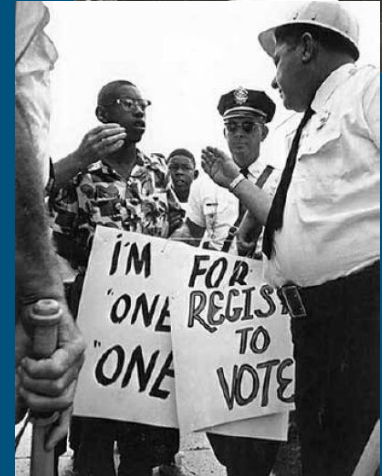
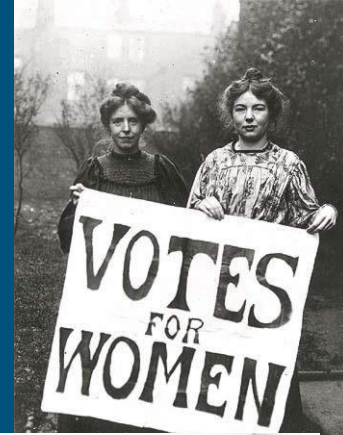
### AFTER YOU READ:

- 1) Do the worksheet at the end of this packet.
- 2) Reflect on the history of voting rights. What surprised you about what you learned by doing these activities and readings?



# The History of Voting Rights Activity

- Gets everybody up and out of their chairs.
- Invites everyone's knowledge as well as teaches history.
- Gives people an immediate feeling of inclusion and exclusion – which is interesting to reflect on later.
- Communicates the fluid nature of institutions and that they are shaped by our actions and by social movements.
- Is memorable in a way that a lecture is not!





**Can't  
Vote**

Put a “Can't  
Vote” sign on one  
side of the  
room...

# How Does it Work?

**Can  
Vote**

...and a “Can Vote”  
sign on the other  
side of the room.

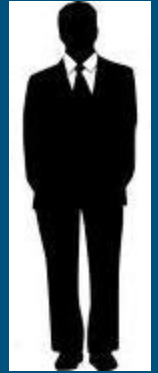


Assign “identities” to people in the class – e.g., “Wealthy White Male,” “African American Female,” “Immigrant,” etc.

**Can't  
Vote**

At the beginning of U.S. history,  
who could vote?

**Can  
Vote**



Read the script out loud. The script narrates the history of voting rights in the United States. Pause as new developments occur in history which affect people's voting rights. Ask people to move to the "Can" or "Can't Vote" side of the room depending on what their identity is.

**Can't  
Vote**

People win voting rights  
over time...

**Can  
Vote**

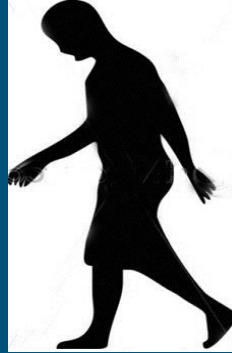


People often get very enthusiastic when their demographic wins the right to vote. You can see a perkiness to their step when they cross over to the “Can Vote” side of the room.

**Can't  
Vote**

And they lose voting rights  
as well...

**Can  
Vote**



The story of voting rights in America turns out to be very fluid – with the right being won and lost – often several times over throughout the course of history. There are also numerous opportunities for debate among the participants. For example, did the poll tax and literacy tests exclude all African Americans from voting or just some?

# History of Voting Rights: Post-activities:

- How did it feel to not be able to vote? To vote? To lose the right to vote? How does it make you feel about voting in real life?
- How are voting rights in flux in your community today? Note the photos below of current struggles to gain voting rights for immigrants and ex-felons.



# What else is in the packet?

- Article by Andy Nash about Race and Voting Rights.
- Two pages of stories about people who lost voting rights
- A worksheet to assess understanding and take it further

Here's the complete packet.  
Let's go have a look.

## Race and Voting Rights

Andy Nash

**NOTE:** This article was written in 2016 and updated in 2023.

For decades, people have worked on the state and federal level to make it easier for citizens to vote. They have passed laws that make it easier to register to vote, to vote at more convenient times, and to send in their vote by mail. These efforts strengthen our democracy because they allow more voters to participate.

But in 2010, things changed. State lawmakers

across the U.S. began introducing bills to restrict voting. These laws include strict photo ID requirements, restrictions to early and mail-in voting, and limits on same-day registration.

Although each state's laws are different, they all have something in common: they affect communities of color and people living in poverty more than they affect other people. Researchers at UMass and the Brennan Center for Justice studied the problem. They found that if a state had increases in minority and low-income voter turnout in the 2008 election, then the state was more likely to push for laws cutting back on voting rights. Let's examine how.

### Voter ID Laws

Voter identification laws require citizens to present specific forms of ID in order to vote. Nationally, 11% of Americans do not have the current photo IDs required under the stricter laws, including 25% of African Americans, 20% of people 18-29, and 18% of seniors.<sup>1</sup>

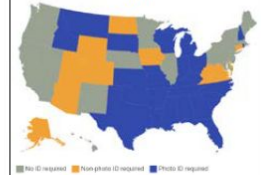
### Dumped from the Voting Rolls after 70 Years of Voting



In 1942, 21-year-old Rosann Eaton took a two-hour mule ride to a courthouse in North Carolina to register to vote. She recited the preamble to the Constitution from memory and passed a literacy test. She was one of the few blacks to be able to vote in the Jim Crow era. But in 2013, after voting for 70 years, she became a casualty of North Carolina's new voter-ID law because the name on her voter-registration card (Rosann Eaton) did not match the name on her driver's license (Ros Johnson Eaton). In early 2015, Eaton tried to match her documents. She made 11 trips to various agencies — the DMV, two Social Security offices, and several banks. "It was really stressful and difficult, [a] headache and expensive," she said.

— Excerpted/adapted from an article by Ari Bernstein in *www.thesation.com*

### Voter Identification Laws by State, 2023



### The Struggle Continues

Despite these efforts, not all Americans have the

## Read Carefully for Understanding Worksheet to Accompany "Race and Voting Rights"

1. According to Andy Nash, what are three ways that voters are being deprived of voting rights?

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2. What evidence does Nash present to argue that restrictions on voting rights have disproportionately affected people of color and poor people?

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3. According to Nash, ordinary people are fighting back against voter restrictions. What are they doing?

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Write about race and voting rights. Use one or both of the following writing prompts:

1. Read "More about Race and Voting" (pp. 7-8) and study the chart and box on Voting Rights (p. 8). Look up arguments in favor of voter restrictions, such as, these restrictions will prevent voter fraud. Make your own evaluation of what is happening to voting rights in the U.S. Write an essay using Nash's article and the additional sources on pp. 7-8, plus your own research.

2. According to the map on p. 6, 34 states have introduced restrictive voting laws. Is your state one of them? If so, what laws have been introduced? Alternatively, are there laws to relax voter restrictions? Find out, and then read further about those laws. What do you think of them? Do you agree or disagree with them? Write a letter to your congressperson to express what you think. [If you cannot find information about the laws in your state, then simply write to your congressperson expressing your opinion in general about voting restrictions.]

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# What skills/knowledge will you be teaching?

[Notes here]

- Critical reading and thinking skills
- academic vocabulary: based on the evidence, according to the author
- vocabulary words
- history of voting rights
- empathy skills: personal stories and participating in the activity
- speaking and listening
- social studies credits
- using CCR standards
-



# Consider the Voting Ambassador Training!

What is it? It is a set of Google slides that includes:

- articles about voting and civic engagement
- practical steps about how to register and vote
- ideas about how to get started supporting others to register, etc. -- and then how to reflect and learn from the experience

## Become a Voting Ambassador 2024



Photo CC BY-SA 2.0, Michael Freshman on Flickr

Voting Ambassadors are people who support others to register to vote, learn about the issues, vote, and/or stay active. They can engage in all of these activities or choose a subset. Training students to become Voting Ambassadors is an authentic, relevant way for them to build leadership, engage in civics, and learn basic skills (including digital literacy).

Google slides are [here](#).

# More Program Strategies

- Mock elections
- Candidates' wall & forum
- Make a student infomercial about voting. Here's a sample: <https://www.aacs15.com/node/692>
- Guest speakers and visits with legislators
- Program-wide election day activities and rides to the polls
- What else?

## Next Steps?

1. Share what you have learned today with colleagues.
2. Have a conversation with colleagues about moving forward with program-wide events (e.g., mock election, voter registration drive, or invite a speaker).
3. Try out these materials in the classroom.
4. Build in capacity for a Voting Ambassador training at your program.

# Thank you!



Mock elections at the International Institute of Boston, 2008