INDIANA UNIVERSITY CENTER ON Representative Government

Janice Burch • Sacred Heart Catholic School • Jeffersonville, IN

BRINGING THE DECLARATION of INDEPENDENCE TO LIFE

Using **Engaging Congress** from the **IU Center on Representative Government**

Purpose: Participants will collaborate to connect founding principles to current curriculum standards and use CORG's Engaging Congress digital tool to design engaging, classroom ready lesson activities.

Lesson Title

The Right to Vote: How Voting Rights Changed Over Time

Target Grade Level 8	**Time of Lesson** 50-55 minutes

Indiana Academic Standards for Target Grade Level

8.C.1

Identify and explain essential ideas of constitutional government, which include limited government, rule of law, due process of law, separated and shared powers, checks and balances, federalism, popular sovereignty, republicanism, representative government. individual rights to life, liberty, and property; and freedom of conscience.

Declaration of Independence Principle

Inalienable Rights: Individuals possess inherent rights-life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness-endowed by a Creator, not granted by government

Engaging Congress Source

Unit: Voting Rights
Primary Source: Voting Rights Act of 1965

Explain Engaging Congress Unit Connection

This video/interactive activity from Engaging Congress will help students understand how voting rights in the United States have expanded over time to include all citizens.

Activity Description

1. Display the quote: "The right to vote is one of the most important rights citizens have in a democracy." Ask students: Why do you think voting is important? Have students discuss in small groups. Reconvene as a class and have groups or partners share. Remind students that voting is not just a right, but a civic duty. Not everyone was allowed to vote when our nation was first formed. Explain that, through the years, voting rights changed to include all citizens.
2. Students will watch the "Engaging Congress: Vote Early, Vote Often" video and then complete the interactive sections on the events that removed barriers and granted voting rights to all citizens, including African Americans, Native Americans, and women. After completion of the Vote Early, Vote Often activity, place students in small groups and distribute copies of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Explain: The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to help ensure that all Americans, especially African Americans in the South, could exercise their right to vote. It banned practices such as literacy tests that had been used to prevent people from voting. Students will view the primary source document and discuss the following questions with their group
1. Why do you think the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was necessary?
2. How did the Act help make voting more fair for citizens?
3. Ask each group to choose one of the questions and share their response with the class.
4. Have students individually complete the Exit Reflection on a sticky note and collect responses as an informal assessment of student understanding. Exit Reflection: "The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was important because _____."

Primary Source Link(s)

https://docsteach.org/document/voting-rights-act-1965/ DocsTeach (National Archives Foundation)

Additional Source(s)

https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/15th-amendment National Archives 15th Amendment 19th below

Expected Learning Outcomes

*By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
*Explain how voting rights in the United States have expanded over time
*Evaluate the significance of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in protecting citizens' right to vote.
*Use information from the Engaging Congress: Vote Early, Vote Often activity and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 primary source to discuss how barriers to voting were removed and how the Act helped create a fairer and more democratic voting process.
* Collaborate in discussions by sharing and responding to peers' ideas in group discussions

Modifications / Differentiation
1. Differentiation Strategy (Target: Grade Level / ELL / IEP)

Provide a simplified version of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, such as this version from Encyclopedia Britannica Kids https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Voting-Rights-Act/632895

2. Differentiation Strategy (Target: Grade Level / ELL / IEP)

Provide a list of the key vocabulary terms: voting, citizen, rights, literacy test, discrimination, democracy, and their definitions

Provide fill-in-the-blank guided notes

Pair with a supportive partner for group discussion and interactive activities

List any required materials and/or attach worksheets / graphic organizer / classroom materials

Devices for students to access the Vote Early, Vote Often video and activities at https://engagingcongress.org/play/index.html

Copies of the primary source Voting Rights Act of 1965 https://docsteach.org/document/voting-rights-act-1965/

Sticky notes for students to complete the Exit Reflection

List all sources / links used (content and instructional)

https://www.engagingcongress.org/play/index.html Engaging Congress
https://docsteach.org/document/voting-rights-act-1965/ Voting Rights Act 1965 Docs Teach National Archives
https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/15th-amendment 15th Amendment National Archives
https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/19th-amendment#page-header 19th Amendment National Archives
https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Voting-Rights-Act/632895 Kid friendly version of Voting Rights Act