

The twenty-sixth amendment essay sample

War



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The Twenty-sixth Amendment was proposed March 23, 1971, to lower the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. It was decisively authorized on July 1, 1971. The official amendment is, “ Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age. Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation” (Boyer).

The Twenty-sixth amendment was passed quickly to prevent potential problems in the 1972 elections. The urge for lowering the voting age began with the young people who had been drawn into the political world by the Vietnam War. The Congress and the state officials felt escalating pressure to pass the Constitutional amendment because of the war, in which many young men who were unable to vote were enlisted to fight in the war. Supporters argued that if eighteen-year-olds were old enough to be drafted into military service and sent into combat, they were also old enough to vote. The idea was that they should have a say in the selection of the civilian government that determines when and how the military force is used.

“ Old enough to fight, old enough to vote,” was a common slogan used by advocates for lowering the voting age that traced its roots back to World War II, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt dropped the military draft age to eighteen. The one flaw in the argument was that women were not drafted and were not allowed to serve in combat units if they enlisted in the army. Nonetheless, the momentum of the determination for lowering the voting age increased. In 1970, Congress passed the proposal that lowered the

voting age from twenty-one to eighteen in both federal and state elections (“Askville”).

In his 1954 State of the Union Address, President Dwight D. Eisenhower became the first President to openly state his disagreement of age-based rejection of voting for those eighteen and older. About sixteen years later, on June 22, 1970, President Nixon signed a law that required the voting age to be eighteen in all federal, state and local elections. In his statement about signing the expansion of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Nixon stated, “Despite my misgivings about the constitutionality of this one provision, I have signed the bill. I have directed the Attorney General to cooperate fully in expediting a swift court test of the constitutionality of the eighteen-year-old provision”. Afterwards, Oregon and Texas challenged it in court (“Free Dictionary”).

Oregon v. Mitchell, 400 U. S. 112 (1970), was the case in which the Supreme Court of the United States proclaimed that the parts of the law which required states to register eighteen-year-olds for elections to be unconstitutional. In Oregon v. Mitchell, Justice Hugo Black declared, “I would hold that Congress has exceeded its powers in attempting to lower the voting age in state and local elections”.

On March 10, 1971, the Senate voted 94-0 in favor of proposing a Constitutional amendment to ensure that the voting age could not be older than eighteen. Then, on March 23, 1971, the House of Representatives voted 401-19 in favor of the proposed amendment. Within months, the Twenty-

sixth Amendment was ratified by 75 percent of the state legislatures, faster than any other amendment (“ Free Dictionary”).

After President Richard Nixon signed the much-wanted amendment, he talked about how he believed in the young people of that generation. He said, “ The reason I believe that your generation, the 11 million new voters, will do so much for America at home is that you will infuse into this nation some idealism, some courage, some stamina, some high moral purpose, that this country always needs” (Karl).

To this day, there are still people going off to war at the age of eighteen. There are also many eighteen-year-olds who have their own families, which comes with the responsibilities of paying taxes, rent, groceries and much more. If they contribute to their communities so much on their own, it is only right that they be allowed to vote as well. President Nixon ratified the Twenty-sixth constitution because he believed in the young people of that generation; today, the amendment still stands because the children of every generation are the future of The United States of America.

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