

The 26th amendment essay



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The 26th amendment helped further balance the difference in equality between 21 and 18 year olds by allowing the latter to vote. The 26th amendment states “ 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. ” 1 A large number of individuals fought for this amendment; the amendment provided for significant popular consent of the American democracy. It was proposed on March 23rd, 1971 and ratified on July 1, 1971.

The ratification period was the shortest in all of U. S. history: 107 days. The idea was first born during the Vietnam war, when young soldiers became interested in the political area. However, when Richard Nixon passed the Voting Rights Act, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional. Congress decided to propose the 26th amendment, which was quickly ratified in order to avoid problems in the 1972 election. “ Historically, 21 was the age of majority, the age of official adulthood, the age of voting.”

An argument used to back this proposal was the saying, “ Old enough to fight, old enough to vote. ” 3 A significant chunk of the U. S. population thought that if 18 year old adults were old enough to join military in combat, they should be allowed to vote. “ It was not fair, people said, for young men who were giving their lives for the country not be able to vote for the leaders of that country. ” Basically, if 18 year old boys were old enough to fight for their country, they would enough to make choices in the country’s future.

In addition, more than fifty thousand people died trying to prevent communism from North Vietnam—the Vietnam War. There was an uproar,

albeit small, in reaction to the lowering of minimum age of drafting from 19 to 18. Since there was so much opposition, President Richard Nixon decided to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. Although there was also an uproar to that, the 26th amendment still contributed to the legitimacy of the government by providing for the increased popular consent of younger adults.

The 26th amendment which was proposed on March 23rd, 1971 and ratified on July 1st, 1971, helped provide for the popular consent by changing the minimum voting age from 21 years of age to 18 years of age. More people wanted the minimum voting age to be lowered to 18, especially soldiers and friends and family of the soldiers in the Vietnam war. The popular consent thought that if 18 year olds were the minimum to be drafted into military combat, they should be able to vote.

In addition, although the amendment went through a short but complex process in order to provide for the majority. Some people say that there's a contradiction in the 26th amendment: it implies discrimination against minors under 18 years of age, but prohibits adults 18 years of age and older from discriminating against minors. Although this contradiction is present in the amendment, the amendment is still very important—it creates more balance and equality between military age draft and voting age. But more importantly, this amendment helps reinforce the American identity—freedom.