

SHOULD IT BE EASIER TO VOTE IN THE UNITED STATES?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

HOW RESTRICTIVE VOTING REQUIREMENTS TARGET MINORITIES

PBS NewsHour | October 16, 2018 | Video | [Transcript](#)
6:20 minutes

PBS Newshour speaks with Emory University professor and author of *One Person, No Vote*, Carol Anderson weeks before the 2018 midterm elections to discuss how voter roll purges, voter ID requirements and poll shutdowns disproportionately affect minority communities.

- Strict voter requirements, such as those found in the federal Help America Vote act, are said to be implemented in order to combat “voter fraud,” which is a myth that has been repeatedly debunked.
- Justin Levitt, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, California, counted the roughly 1 billion votes cast between the years 2000 and 2014 and found only 31 cases of voter fraud.
- Practices such as voter ID laws have been proven to disproportionately affect marginalized populations. For example, in Wisconsin, voter ID requirements prevented 8% of white voters from voting compared to 27% of Black voters during the 2016 presidential election.

WHY DOESN'T EVERYONE HAVE A VOTER ID?

FRONTLINE | November 4, 2014 | Video
1:53 minutes

This brief video lists all of the valid forms of identification that can be used to vote. It also outlines what the challenges are for individuals to obtain these specific types of identification in order to answer the question: “Why doesn’t everyone have a voter ID?”

- Passports work as photo identification, but they are expensive and less than half of Americans have these.
- Driver’s licenses are a more commonly used form of identification, but if you don’t drive or own a car, you won’t have a driver’s license.
- Non-Driver’s IDs require a birth certificate to apply, and many people do not have a copy of this document and it can be difficult and costly to obtain another copy.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS COMPLICATED VOTING ACCESS FOR MILLIONS OF NATIVE AMERICANS

PBS NewsHour | Oct 6, 2020 | Article

1620 words

This article looks at how having “non-traditional addresses” on reservations, the use of P.O. boxes, a lack of accessibility to polling places, strict voter ID requirements, and other issues made it even more difficult for Native Americans to vote in the 2020 election amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Many Native Americans living on tribal reservations use a set of directions as their address, as opposed to a number and street name, which means many of them use a P.O. box to get their mail.
- Post offices are often very far (one per 707 square miles on Navajo Nation’s reservation in Arizona), and there is little access to vehicles or public transportation to allow people to get their mail.
- Frequently, several native families share a single P.O. Box. Additionally, many have P.O. boxes located in a different state because of how state lines cut through tribal lands.
- Because of these, voting by mail during the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely difficult for Native Americans who were also disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Identification
- Voter purging
- Suppression
- Voting Rights Act

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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