

APIA

(ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN)

VOTING RIGHTS TIMELINE

Understanding how Asian Pacific Islander Americans (APIAs) emerge as politicians begins with the history of APIA voting rights and citizenship. In the United States, voting rights are tied to citizenship status. Without citizenship, it is almost impossible to vote and become a politician.



1700s

Voting rights are limited to white property owners.

1866

The **14th Amendment** is passed, which outlines the rights and protections applied to citizens of the United States, the three key points being the granting of equal protection, birthright citizenship, and due process. In 1868, the **14th Amendment** is ratified, second of the three Reconstruction Amendments.

1882

The **Chinese Exclusion Act** bans Chinese laborers from entering the United States for 10 years, which is then renewed every 10 years until made indefinite in 1904. Following this Act, other Asian groups are also prevented from coming to America.

1790

The **Naturalization Act of 1790** limits naturalization to immigrants who are free white persons of good stature, thus excluding APIs from citizenship and voting.

1869

The **15th Amendment** is passed, preventing the federal government and each state from denying a citizen's right to vote "on account of race, color, or previous conditions of servitude."

1898

In *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the Supreme Court rules that any person born in the United States is a citizen by birth (birthright citizenship). This case reaffirms that the **14th Amendment** applies to all.

1920

The **19th Amendment** is passed, giving women the right to vote. However, this does not include APIs and women of color.

1923

In ***United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind***, the Supreme Court rules that people of Indian descent cannot become naturalized citizens, therefore, they cannot vote.

1925

Congress prevents Filipinos from becoming US citizens unless they have served three years in the US Navy during World War I.

1946

The Philippines becomes an independent nation, thereby allowing Filipinos living in the United States the right to naturalize and vote.

The **Rescission Act of 1946** denies Filipino soldiers and sailors who fought with US forces against Japan the benefits of citizenship, which was promised during World War II.

1959

Hawai'i becomes the 50th state of the United States, thus allowing its citizens the right to vote.

1922

In ***Takao Ozawa v. United States***, the Supreme Court rules that people of Japanese descent cannot become naturalized citizens, therefore, they cannot vote.

1924

The **Immigration Act of 1924** enacts a national origin quota system that further restricts immigration from Asia to the United States. The few who are able to immigrate cannot become naturalized citizens and therefore cannot vote.

1943

Federal policies barring immigrants of Asian descent from naturalization begin to lift, making them eligible to become citizens. This includes the **Chinese Exclusion Act** which ends in 1943 with the **Magnuson Act**.

1952

The **McCarran-Walter Act of 1952** grants people of Asian descent the right to become naturalized citizens and, therefore, the right to vote.

1964

The **24th Amendment** bans poll taxes to be required for voting in a federal election.

1965

The **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965** removes the national origin quota system from the **Immigration Act of 1924**, enabling many APIs to immigrate.

The **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** is passed by Congress, which prohibits racial discrimination in voting.

1975

The **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** adds accommodations for voters with limited English skills (Section 203). This is further expanded in 1992.

2000

A federal court rules that residents of US territories, like American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico, cannot vote in federal elections.

2013

In ***Shelby County v. Holder***, the Supreme Court strikes down a key provision of **VRA**, Section 4(b). This section requires state and local governments to review voting law changes to prevent discriminatory voting practices.

2021

In ***Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee***, the Supreme Court rules voting restrictions that disproportionately affect racial minority groups do not violate Section 2 of the **Voting Rights Act (VRA)**.

1971

The **26th Amendment** passes to reduce the voting age from 21 years and older to 18 years and older.

1982

The **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** is extended with new voting protections for people with disabilities.

2004

The **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** is renewed.

2015

In the wake of the ***Shelby County v. Holder*** decision, rallies and organizational efforts step up to protect voter rights. One rally takes place in Roanoke, Virginia to demand that Congress restore the voting rights stripped by the Supreme Court in 2013.

