

## VOTING THEORY

A number of theories that attempt to explain why people vote like they do.

- Rational choice theory:
  - All persons have their own interests that compel them to act in certain ways.
  - These interests may be derived from their own desires or a desire on the behalf of others.
  - Persons will vote in a way that fulfills their interests the most (i.e. a person who barely has health insurance would probably support M4A).
- Retrospective voting:
  - All persons will look back in time, either at an incumbent's or at the prospective public official's accomplishments and failures.
  - If a prior pos. experience was taken, the incumbent / that prospective official will receive the vote.
  - If a prior neg. experience was taken, the incumbent / prospective official will not receive the vote in favor of someone else.
- Prospective voting:
  - Persons will analyze a prospective official's beliefs and their supposed agenda and vote based on whether or not they believe that the candidate can (A) do the things they state on the agenda and (B) achieve a vision of the future that the individual wants.
- Party-line voting:
  - Persons who affiliate strongly with one party are both the most likely to vote and are very likely to vote for their party.
  - *A person's party affiliation is one of the most important determinants of how a person votes or if they vote, although it is not foolproof.*

## OBSTACLES TO VOTING

An **electorate** is the group of the population that will vote, and a **franchise** is the right to vote. Franchise has been expanded over time from men over 18 who owned land to all citizens over 18.

Several means of keeping various demographics out of the polls have been implemented, such as:

- Violence. An example of this is white KKK members threatening African-American voters with violence.
- Poll taxes: A fee that a prospective voter must pay to enter the poll.
- Literacy tests: A test that proves your literacy and thus competency in participating in society.
- White primaries: Changing the rules of a primary to allow only white people to partake in them, limiting the influence of racial minorities in the electoral process.

## RECTIFICATION

- AM15: Voting discrimination based on race.
- AM17: Makes Senators subject to elections and thus more likely to listen to constituents
- AM19: Voting discrimination based on sex.
- AM23: Extends franchise to the District of Columbia.
- AM24: Bans poll taxes as a voting restriction
- AM26: Extends suffrage to all over 18, whereas it used to be 21.
- Supreme Court ruling *Guinn v. US*:
  - Ruled that other voting restrictions combined with the grandfather clause (which stated “if you were able to vote without a literacy test after the Civil War but before the enactment of AM15, you can vote without a literacy test now”, which effectively exempted almost all white people from the test and was thus a violation of AM15 in effect.
- *Smith v. Allwright*
  - In TX, there was a law that stated that parties could determine their own rules for primaries, which resulted in the TX Democrats to create a law that required all primary voters to be white. And even though the state delegated and did not enact discriminatory practices directly, it was still ruled that the state allowed it to happen and thus it was a violation of the Reconstruction AMs.
- 1957 Civil Rights Act: established the US Office of Civil Rights which carried out enforcement and reported to the DOJ (eventually becoming the Civil Rights Division of the DOJ). Their function is to enforce and execute any law regarding discrimination.
- 1964 Civil Rights Act: bars discrimination based on race, sex, gender, etc. in all spheres, and prohibits *unequal application of voting restrictions*.
- 1965 Voting Rights Act: bars other voting restrictions such as literacy tests and began monitoring states for low voter turnout amongst racial minorities. Also established the preclearance provision, which states that changes to the election process must be examined first by the federal government.