Albeit nearly short of 300 years of independence, America has evolved and grown throughout the centuries. In 1776, America gained independence from the British and inherited various behaviors and rules from the Englishmen. Although many may not be seen in this current age and time, we must know what it took for America to come this far as a whole. However, no matter how far we have come or how many issues we have faced, various problems are bound to arise. What have been the problems we have met, and what are the current problems we face? Have the issues we faced mended, or has it grown for the worse?

Starting from the 18th century, America gained its independence in 1776. During this time, America’s voting procedures vastly followed the British – wealthy, white property owners over 21. No rules were created to follow, and each independent state had independent voting regulations. However, all followed the same direction – only the rich and white could vote. This meant women, ethnic-racial minorities, and non-propertied males had no right to vote. Only New Jersey explicitly gave women the right to vote during the late 1700s. Voting during this time was a privilege, not a right. Moving on to 1791, this year was the year in which poll tax was introduced. Poll taxes were introduced in certain states, including New Hampshire, Delaware, Georgia, and North Carolina. People were required to pay to vote; however, this also included people of color. However, this was lifted the next year as free black men lost their voting rights. Later into the century, people also wanted to know how the votes were counted and demanded the congress’s publicization, opening its doors during the 1795s. However, until today, has congress been public about the vote counts?

During the 1800s, more progress as a country could be seen. During the early 19th century, the 15th amendment was passed – free African Americans were granted the right to vote without discrimination. This, however, caused many backlashes as racial discrimination was still normalized within the country. Many did not want to allow ethno-racial people to vote and discriminated against those who went to vote—causing a decrease in voters even though more were allowed to vote. Later into the century, around the 1870s, the amendment was ratified. Poll taxes and literacy tests were introduced to reduce the number of voters.

The 1900s was when significant changes started happening, and we got a glimpse of where we are today. At the start of 1920, women had won the right to vote. Various disagreements had happened between people, and many were against this movement during this time. However, multiple activists bonded together and led the campaign to fight for women’s suffrage. Fast forward to 1960, various barriers appeared in the south as people wanted to reduce the number of voters from immigrants, people of color, and the low income. Literacy tests were implemented, poll taxes returned, and English-language requirements were set to suppress minorities, just like in the 18th century, especially in the southern states. Later in the decade, black activists banded together to protest against these barriers. “In March 1965, activists organized protest marches from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital of Montgomery to spotlight the issue of black voting rights. Police and others brutally attacked the first march on a day that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday” https://www.carnegie.org/our-work/article/voting-rights-timeline/. Despite the constant attacks and imprisonment the people faced, people are still bonded together to fight for their rights. This ultimately led to the voting rights act, which ensures that people will not be suppressed based on race. 1971 was when the age requirement for voting was lowered to 18 years old, and 1975 introduced more language options for non-native speakers. This creates more inclusiveness and shows progress moving forward as a country. In 1982, support for people with disabilities was introduced, which allowed people with disabilities to vote safely.

However, nearing the 2000s, various issues occurred, including faulty equipment and inconsistent rules, causing defective votes or inaccurate results. Some states also changed certain limitations to their liking. Further, into the century, people were bonding together to support voting rights because fraud and illegal voting cases existed. 2018 was the year when they had a new record of voters; however, it took much work to vote during this time. Twenty-three different states created new obstacles to voting. Furthermore, in the most recent 2022 election, there was news of people not being able to get water and queuing for long hours despite the blazing sun.

As we progress more into the future, we expect more equality, freedom, and understanding towards one another. This is not the case. One of the major problems of the voting procedure nowadays is that counting ballots need to be publicized. Back in the late 1700s, people have already been asking for the publicization of counting ballots. However, even though it had been open to the public, no one had seen the act of counting. This could cause various problems. The main problem it creates is the loss of trust of the people. The public might only know the actual process if the process was rigged, having counted the fake ballots or disregarding sure votes in favor of a particular party. “In 2020, election night became “election week” as the counting of absentee ballots across a bevy of close states delayed most networks declaring who won the presidency and certain close House and Senate races,” Hudak, John. “Why We Will not Know Much on Election Night.” Brookings, 8 Nov. 2022, www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2022/11/07/why-we-wont-know-much-on-election-night.Various articles cite complaints about the process taking too long, which stirs up various conspiracy theories, including fake, illegal, and foreign ballots being counted and included.

One of the easiest ways to combat this is to have a live broadcast of the counting of ballots. Each of the states could have its broadcast on different channels to ensure the public’s trust. This way, not only can everyone understand the delays happening during voting, no fraud or rigs can happen under the public eye. This would decrease the possibility of unfair or illegal votes happening during the process.

Albeit it has been a long fight, discrimination still has been and still is a massive issue in this current day and age. Many barriers had been put up to make it harder for people to vote or to make people not vote at all. “Election officials use false claims of rampant voter fraud to justify strict requirements like a photo ID, often aimed at suppressing the votes of people of color and younger voters,” “The English-language requirements of the past may be gone, but voting rights groups regularly receive reports that local jurisdictions are not translating materials or offering language assistance,” “Chicago’s Cook County, which has the largest non-Hispanic black population in the country, election administrators closed or moved 95 polling places,” – “11 Barriers to Voting | Voting.” Carnegie Corporation of New York, www.carnegie.org/our-work/article/11-barriers-voting. These are a few instances of setting up barriers to create a more challenging voting environment, lack of language access, harsh ID requirements, and polling place closures. These restrictions mainly aim at younger voters or ethnic-racial people who reside in America. A few sources also stated that voting hours had been reduced, so the low-income and working-class people had less freedom to vote.

Online voting should be fine with how far our technology has come. We all store our valuable information online, including bank accounts, personal information, and driver’s license. What is stopping us from creating an online voting system? This would help lessen the time it takes for people to vote and allow freedom for working-class people to vote. It would disregard any issues caused by the closure of voting centers or various barriers set up to discourage people from voting. With our current technology, online translation has become widespread and accessible. Implementing an online translation system to help out non-native English speakers would be as easy as one click away. Furthermore, people who face discrimination when voting would not have to deal with it anymore since they could easily do it in their homes.

However, specific problems also arrive if we implement this online voting system. “Online voting is not ready for high-stakes elections” Horizon Magazine, https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/horizon-magazine/online-voting-isnt-ready-high-stakes-elections. Even though our private information, bank details, driver’s license, IDs, are all in the online database, if this gets hacked it would only affect us personally. If an election gets hacked, not only would our vote not get counted, but the entire state’s vote would be disregarded. Furthermore, voting is meant to be done privately, where you have your own space to vote where others cannot see. Even though online voting is done remotely, this does not ensure privacy. Numerous data could be seen online, and who knows if someone is watching you casting your vote online. Even though online voting is not quite ready for this current age and time, perhaps shortly, everyone will be able to privately and securely cast their votes in the comfort of their homes.

In Malaysia, anyone eligible to vote is given a day off to vote; if another country can do this, we could learn from it and employ it ourselves. Aside from having people vote in the comfort of their homes, we could also have public holidays on election days. This would encourage working-class people to cast their votes since there would not be any work burdening them on those days.

Voting is a complicated and vital process to ensure equality and fairness in the country. Furthermore, important decisions must be made to achieve this equality and fairness, and adapting to the new changes is also essential. Different changes must be made as we move toward an even better future. Even though we currently do not have a perfect voting system and the public still doubts, we could hope to change to create an even better future for the next generations by ensuring a truly democratic voting system.