

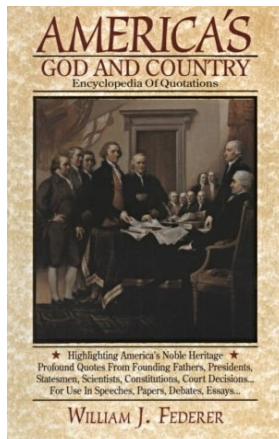
American Minute with Bill Federer Elections, Ballots, and Voting

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The importance of elections was declared by President Calvin Coolidge, April 19, 1926: "The whole system of American Government rests on the ballot box."

First, some background. The most common form of government in world history is kings. Their subjects did not vote.

The first well-recorded instance of millions of people living without a king was Ancient Israel's Republic, circa 1,400 to 1,000 B.C., that initial 400-year period after they left Egypt.

The Bible does not give details, but each tribe and city chose their own elders, as Moses stated:

Exodus 18:21 "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens"; and

Deuteronomy 1:3–13 "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes"; and

Deuteronomy 16:18–19 "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates."

Since the goal was to choose individuals that God wanted, one method of selection was "by lot." Proverbs 16:33 "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."

The Greek word for "lot" is "kleros," from which the words clergy, cleric, and clerk come from.

Levite priests were chosen by lot to minister in the Temple, as Zechariah was, the father of John the Baptist. Acts 1:26 described how the apostles "drew lots" to determine who God wanted to replace Judas."

"Kleros" were pieces of wood used for casting lots. Deciding offices by casting lots is where the word "allotment" comes from, and is the origin of the random selection process used to pick jurors from a jury pool in a trial.

In Ancient Athens, 480-323 B.C., instead of casting lots, each Greek citizen placed a pebble in one of two urns to indicate who was chosen. The Greek word for "pebble" was psēphos - pronounced "say fos" from which comes

the word “vote.” The study of voting is called “psephology.”

Pebbles were replaced with citizens marking a name on small broken pieces of pottery.

Romans used marbles or little clay balls, which voters dropped into boxes. The word for little ball in Italian is “ballota,” in French “ballotte,” from which comes the word “ballot.”

Ancient India, around 920 A.D., used the Kudavolai system, where villagers wrote a candidate’s name on palm leaves which were put inside a mud pot.

In Russia’s Republic of Novgorod, 12th through 15 centuries, citizens gathered in the city square and shouted for their candidate.

The first use of paper ballots in America was in church. The Massachusetts Bay Colony used paper ballots in 1629 to select a pastor for the Salem Church.

Since the goal was God’s will, instead casting lots, church members fasted and prayed, then cast their ballots, thus participating in having God’s will be done through them.

The belief was, that God had preordained someone to be their pastor and church members were simply to recognize the one God had chosen.

Being chosen by God was called being “the elect.” First Peter 1:1-2 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s elect.”

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:12 “As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies”; and Second Timothy 2:10: “I endure all things for the elect’s sakes.”

Mark 13:20 described the last days: “And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.”

The process of putting down the name of God’s “elect” was called an “election.”

Reverend Thomas Hooker, who founded Hartford, Connecticut, stated in a 1638 sermon:

“The privilege of election ... belongs to the people according to the blessed will and law of God.”

President Calvin Coolidge explained how elections came from congregational churches:

"We have the principle of the consent of the governed stated by Reverend Thomas Hooker as early as 1638 ... Reverend John Wise, of Massachusetts ... writing in 1710 ... 'Democracy is Christ's government in church and state.' Here was the doctrine of equality, popular sovereignty ..."

Coolidge continued:

“Placing every man on a plane where he acknowledged no superiors, where no one possessed any right to rule over him, he must inevitably choose his own rulers through a system of self-government ...

In those days such doctrines would scarcely have been permitted to flourish and spread in any other country.”

Coolidge stated April 19, 1926:

"Election day in the olden times was generally considered more or less sacred.”

Coolidge added, November 3, 1924:

“I therefore urge upon all the voters of our country ... that they assemble tomorrow at their respective voting places in the exercise of the high office of American citizenship, that they approach the ballot box in the spirit that they would approach a sacrament, and ... make their choice of public officers solely in the light of their own conscience.

When an election is so held, when a choice is so made, it ... sustains the belief that the voice of the people is the voice of God.”

The U.S. Constitution mentions "ballot" 3 times; "vote," "votes," "voting," and "voted" 16 times; and "elect," "elected," "election," and "electors" 18 times, but nowhere does the Constitution give instructions on how to have an honest election.

Article I, Section 4, Clause 1 leaves elections under the jurisdiction of each state:

“The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof.”

This was an important decentralization feature in the new Republic, as the memory was still fresh of the King’s overbearing centralized government.

States arranged elections where citizens voted for local officials, state-wide officials, Congressmen, and Presidential Electors. Presidential Electors from all the states elected the President.

U.S. Senators were elected by each state’s legislature up until 1913 when the 17th Amendment changed it to a

state-wide popular vote.

Many states simply had voice votes called “viva voce,” similar to a roll call or the “ayes” and “nays” in committee meetings run by Robert’s Rules of Order.

Citizens would gather at the courthouse in a festive, carnival atmosphere. The clerk or judge would have citizens swear on a Bible, then state their name and who they were voting for. Voice voting was used in states like Kentucky as late as 1891.

In other states, individuals scrawled the names of their candidates on pieces of paper and dropped them in a ballot box. Museums have collections of colorfully decorated ballots from the early 1800s.

If a group wanted to create a new political party, all they had to do was write down their views, called a platform, and have candidates run on that platform.

Political parties began to print the names of their candidates on colorful pieces of paper, called “party tickets,” and hand them out, similar to groups today printing voter guides.

Voters proudly displayed these colored “party tickets” in their coat or vest pockets on the way to the polling place to let everyone know how they were going to vote. Then they simply put their “party ticket” into the ballot box.

Newspapers also printed names of candidates, which some simply tore out of the paper and dropped in the ballot box.

In some instances, people would sign their names to their ballots, as there was no motivation yet for a “secret ballot.”

But there was cheating, like the man with a full beard who voted, went home, shaved, and then came back pretending to be someone else to vote again.

During the Civil War, soldiers filled out absentee ballots and handed them to their superior officers who had them delivered to the soldiers' home counties. Immediately there were instances of delays and ballot tampering.

Republican President Abraham Lincoln led the Union in ending slavery, freeing four million slaves. The period after the Civil War was called Reconstruction, where Union troops were left in the Democrat South to protect the freed slaves and guarantee their rights, especially their right to vote. Many blacks were elected, all of whom ran as Republicans.

Democrat-affiliated vigilante groups in the South began intimidating blacks from voting. These groups committed acts of violence and terrorism similar to modern-day riots led by Antifa and BLM groups.

One of the Democrat-affiliated vigilante groups was the Klu Klux Klan, headed up by former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest - the first Grand Wizard of the K.K.K. They attacked blacks, as well as white Northerners who went south to register blacks to vote.

Tuskegee Institute recorded that between 1882-1968, there were at least 4,743 documented lynchings: 3,446 of whom were blacks and 1,297 whites, who were called "extremists" or "radical" Republicans for registering blacks to vote.

Senator Robert Byrd, the longest serving Democrat Senator, was a former Klansman, of whom it was said: "You had to be in the Klan to advance in the Democrat Party."

Republicans in Congress pushed through the 15th Amendment in 1870 prohibiting Southern Democrat states from racially discriminating against blacks in elections.

Republican President Ulysses S. Grant addressed Congress, December 5, 1870:

“I would sum up the policy of the Administration ... securing a pure, untrammelled ballot, where every man entitled to cast a vote may do so, just once at each election, without fear of molestation or proscription on account of his political faith, nativity, or color.”

Due to Democrat voter intimidation, Republicans pushed through the 1871 Klu Klux Klan Act, or Enforcement Act, to guarantee rights for African Americans:

“Be it enacted ... if two or more persons within any State ... by force, intimidation, or threat ... prevent any person from accepting or holding any office or trust or place of confidence under the United States ...

or threat to prevent any citizen of the United States lawfully entitled to vote from giving his support or advocacy in a lawful manner towards or in favor of the election ...

every person so offending shall be deemed guilty of a high crime ...

It - shall be deemed a denial by such State of the equal protection of the laws to which they are entitled under the Constitution of the United States.”

In an interesting present-day twist, several Democrat state office holders are using Civil War era laws in an attempt to get President Trump’s name removed from state ballots, but in doing so, they are violating the 1871

Klu Klux Klan Act.

They are accusing President Trump of participating in an “insurrection” and interfering in an election. Many disagree with this, including U.S. Senator Mike Lee of Utah who shared a post on X, that on January 6 there were “undercover federal agents disguised as MAGA”; and Presidential Candidate Vivek Ramaswamy who called January 6th “an inside job.”

State officials are guilty of what they are accusing Trump of, as their attempts to remove his name is itself interfering in an election, denying citizens the right to vote for the candidate of their choice, which is a violation of the 1871 Klu Klux Klan Act.

Back to the history of ballots.

After the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era ended, there was a push for secret ballots so voters would not be subject to retaliation.

In the 1850’s Australia made an election innovation. Rather than individuals carrying their ballots with them to the polling place, the polling place would have pre-printed ballots with all the candidates’ names on them. The voter just had to mark which name they wanted.

New York Evening Post editor Philip Loring Allen wrote in 1906: “It is the most potent of all sheets of paper: the ballot.”

With various printed ballot styles there was a potential for confusion and fraud, so states passed election laws specifying dimensions of pre-printed ballots, even the thickness of the paper.

By 1888, states, with the cooperation from the major political parties, enacted deadlines and requirements for

getting a candidate's name on the ballot. This made it increasingly more difficult for outside candidates and new political parties.

An innovation in 1884, was the glass ballot jar with a lockable wooden housing. The thought was if people could see inside, it would make it more difficult to add or remove ballots without it being noticed.

Political operatives had tactics. On January 31, 1908, Republican President Theodore Roosevelt decried:

“Corrupt business and corrupt politics act and react with ever increasing debasement, one on the other ... the blackmailing ward boss, the ballot-box stuffer ... the mob leader, the hired bully ... all work at the same web of corruption.”

One infamous ballot-stuffing incident was Lyndon Johnson's 1948 Democrat Senate primary election. Johnson lost, but on election night, in the south Texas town of Alice in Jim Wells County, it was announced they found an uncounted box of ballots in Precinct 13. A week of chaos ensued.

Finally, the newly recounted ballots showed 202 additional voters, some of whom were buried in the local cemetery or absent on election day. These voters supposedly had “lined up” in alphabetical order, signed in the same blue ink, in the same handwriting, and all cast their ballots for LBJ.

To deter ballot-box tampering was new technology. A ballot box would have an internal cylinder “roller” to ensure that once a ballot was dropped in it could not be seen or tampered with, similar to a night deposit drawer at a bank.

Then, another technological innovation. In 1910, Jacob

H. Myers invented an “automatic voting booth,” a complex gear-and-lever voting machine weighing hundreds of pounds with hundreds of levers, having more moving parts than an automobile.

The voter pulled a lever for each candidate or pulled one big lever to vote straight party. When they drew back the curtain to exit the booth, it moved another lever which totaled their votes and reset the machine for the next voter.

Unfortunately, the machines were susceptible to error, as a single damaged tooth on one small gear could cause major miscounts, or they could be rigged with something as small as the tip of a graphite pencil.

In the 1960s optical scan machines were introduced, where a voter filled in little circles on a paper ballot and then fed it into a computer reader, but an insufficiently filled in circle might not be registered.

Then there were rectangular IBM computer punch cards, which gained public trust because it was new technology, but these cards were susceptible to miscounts as tiny pieces of card from the punched holes caused errors, such as “hanging chad.”

In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act, which introduced electronic voting with touch screens. This gained public trust as it was new technology. Unfortunately, software glitches, insecure code, remote access, and hacking vulnerabilities resulted in errors, malfunctions, and a loss of public confidence in voting machine companies.

The largest companies are ES&S - Election Systems and Software, which is owned by the private-equity firm McCarthy Group; and Dominion Voting Systems, which is owned by the private equity firm Staple Street Capital.

The Atlantic Journal-Constitution reported June 3, 2022:

“A U.S. cybersecurity agency reported Friday that voting touchscreens used in Georgia have security vulnerabilities that put them at risk to hacking attacks.”

As a result, there is a movement to return to paper ballots and same day voting, with voters showing ID that they are citizens.

A news report, November 22, 2023, had the headline “Why can Argentina count 25-30 million paper ballots in hours, while blue U.S. swing states take DAYS with machines?”

In closing, we do well to remember President Coolidge’s advice, November 3, 1924:

“... approach the ballot box in the spirit that they would approach a sacrament ... When an election is so held ... it ... sustains the belief that the voice of the people is the voice of God.”

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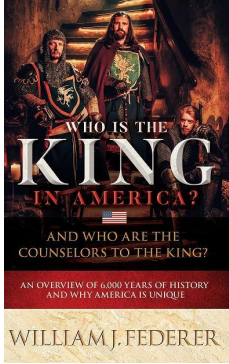
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