Fifteenth Amendment

Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees that an American citizen shall not be discriminated against in exercising the right to vote. It states that the federal and state governments cannot bar a citizen from voting because the person had been a slave or because of race.

Amendment 15 was ratified on Feb. 3, 1870. Seven Southern states tried to bypass it by adding *grandfather clauses* to their constitutions. One such clause gave the right to vote to people who could vote on Jan. 1, 1867, and to their family descendants. In 1915 and 1939, the Supreme Court of the United States declared grandfather clauses unconstitutional. See Voting.

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