



The Glade Community Historical Society, Inc.

including Garfield & Pine Log, Arkansas, a 501 (c)(3) Charity

www.gladehistorynwa.org

2024 Newsletter # 4

Meeting October 20 at 2 p.m. at Garfield City Hall, Speaker: Scott Davis Videos and refreshments!

Music: November 3 and December 1 at Coal Gap School at 2 pm.

VOTE

The work of the society is to preserve the history of Garfield, Pine Log, and Glade by researching and gathering stories, documents & artifacts to connect with the community.

Because this is the year of a national election, GCHS has focused on the importance of voting. We are fortunate to live in a country where we can vote. According to the *World Population Review*, there were 52 nations with a dictator or authoritarian regime ruling their country in 2020. Three in Latin America and South America, 27 in Asia and the Middle East, and 22 in Africa. In those countries, voting is irrelevant.

Voting is a privilege and a duty of citizenship. The United States, was established by Constitution in 1789. At that time, slaves and women were not including in the voting process. Almost one hundred years later, in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment granted voting rights to all races, colors and former slaves, but voting opposition continued almost one hundred years, and females in the United States couldn't vote until 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed that right.

Thanks to Representative John Lewis and other activists' efforts, Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act (VRA) in 1965 to address entrenched racial discrimination in voting and to prohibit it. Section 2 of the original VRA empowers voters to bring legal challenges against election rules that discriminate against voters based on their race or the color of their skin. Section 5 of the VRA was designed to block anti- voter laws before they go into effect. Together they tackle racial discrimination in voting from both ends.

The Supreme Court drastically weakened VRA's protection. They gutted Section 4 (b) of Section 5 in 2013 in *Shelby County v. Holder* and ended the preclearance requirement of the VRA of 1965 because it was over

40 years old. Their opinion was controversial, and Representative John Lewis said, "the purpose of the act is to stop discriminatory practices from becoming law" before his death, July 17, 2020.

Despite the Supreme Court's ruling on June 8, 2023, in *Allen v Mulligan* that ruled for Black voters and struck down Alabama's 2021 congressional map for violating the VRA of 1965 and diluting Black political power, the ruling required Alabama to redraw its congressional map. Still, the current Supreme Court has weakened voting rights several times.

Voters in almost half the country will face new voting restrictions in the upcoming general election, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. The 1965 Voting Rights Act sought to establish a nationwide system to ensure that every voter is truly able to make their voice heard. In Maine and Vermont all prisoners can vote. 70% of all incarcerated U.S. adult cannot read at a fourth-grade level, and some choose not to vote even if they can.

Let's look at the 2020 election. Turnout was the highest in three decades. Over 60% of eligible Americans voted. Vote-by-mail and early voting more than doubled as states adopted new policies during the COVID-19 epidemic. Voter turnout in the south was lowest, and Arkansas ranked last in the U.S. for voter turnout and registration, according to the Census Bureau. Lack of interest was the reason given by those who didn't vote.

U.S. voter turnout is still behind many other countries despite its recent rise. Uruguay, Peru, Indonesia, and Argentina have highly developed economies and solid democratic traditions and a presidential system. They enforce laws making voting compulsory, according to the Pew Research Center.

Here's how some countries increased voting. Australia is a relatively prosperous independent country. Historically, part of the British Empire and now a member of the Commonwealth, Australia has a federal form of government, with a national government for the Commonwealth, and each state has a constitution, and a high voter turnout since 1924 when they implemented compulsory voting. More than 90 % of voters appear in voting booths. At each election more than 89 % of voters participated in the elections.

Their election day is on Saturday. This time allows for higher turnout. On week days people are working or tired or have chores or childcare. On Saturday, the majority of people are free to be able to vote. Election day in Australia is a day for celebration instead of a task people don't like. Polling booths host fundraising and sell snacks and offer inclusive social events around elections.

Voting booths are accessible. They can go to any polling location in the state or territory that they reside in. If they are in a different territory or country during voting time, they can visit an interstate/overseas voting center or submit a postal vote. Telephone voting is an option for person with low vision. Australia has mobile polling teams that visit remote areas and residential care facilities for vulnerable individuals to vote. Australia allows people to vote early if one day is not enough. In Australia, voter fraud was found to be fairly low because of the methods behind the scenes to reduce voter fraud. Intensive review process occurs on the back end.

Glade Community Historical Society Board members: Judi Walter, Ruth Billingsley, Dorothy Williams, Gary Blackburn and Patricia Heck Membership dues: \$20 (4 meetings a year; 4 newsletters, plus extra email stories. The board meets the second Friday of each month at 10 am and visitors are welcome. Send dues to: Ruth Billingsley, 97 W Champion Blvd, Rogers, AR 72758 or pay online @ gladehistorynwa.org.