

**CHAPTER 17 SUMMARY CONTINUED**

**EXPANDING VOTING RIGHTS** *(continued)*

The struggle for woman suffrage began in the 1830s, but by 1914 only eleven states had granted women the right to vote. Full woman suffrage was not achieved until 1920 with the ratification of the

Nineteenth Amendment. The Twenty-sixth Amendment, ratified in 1971, lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

**★ INFLUENCES ON VOTERS** ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

<b>FIVE MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCE VOTERS' DECISIONS</b>	
Personal Background	This factor includes upbringing, family, age, occupation, and income level. Education, religion, and racial or ethnic heritage are other background factors that might influence a voter's decision. Many voters, however, are cross-pressured, which means that elements in their backgrounds might have conflicting influences on their final decisions.
Loyalty to a Political Party	Voters with the strongest allegiance to a party often vote a straight-party ticket—they select only candidates from that party. Weak party voters are more likely to switch their votes to the rival party from time to time. The number of independent voters, those who belong to no party, has increased in recent years.
Campaign Issues	Television and higher levels of education help modern voters to be more informed. Issues with the greatest influence include Social Security, health care, taxes, education, affirmative action, abortion, gun rights, and the environment.
The Voter's Image of Candidate	The way voters perceive the issues is just as important as the issues themselves. The image of the candidates in the voters' minds is closely related to public perception of the issues. Most voters want a president who appears to be trustworthy and strong.
Propaganda	Propaganda is information that is used to influence opinion. Propaganda is not necessarily untrue, but it is used to support a predetermined objective. The use of patriotic symbols and celebrity endorsements to sway voter opinions are examples of political propaganda.

People who vote regularly tend to have positive attitudes toward citizenship and government. The more educated people are, the more likely they are to vote. Middle-aged citizens have the highest voter turnout rates. Voter regularity also increases with income level.

Many U.S. citizens do not exercise the right to vote. The percentage of voters has declined since 1960.

Every state but one requires voters to register—officially record their names with local election boards before an election. Voter registration helps prevent election fraud. Once registered, a person remains eligible to vote unless he or she dies, moves, or fails to vote for a certain number of years. Some political experts have recommended a national registration system under which voters would not have to register again when they move.

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