



Article II. Right of Suffrage

Excerpted from the Constitution of the State of South Carolina, ratified in convention, December 4, 1895.

“Section 3. Every male citizen of this State and of the United States twenty-one years of age and upwards, not laboring under the disabilities named in this Constitution and possessing the qualifications required by it, shall be an elector.

Section 4. The qualifications for suffrage shall be as follows:

(a) Residence in the State for two years, in the County one year, in the polling precinct in which the elector offers to vote four months, and the payment six months before any election of any poll tax then due and payable: Provided, that ministers in charge of an organized church and teachers of public schools shall be entitled to vote after six months' residence in the State, otherwise qualified.

(b) Registration, which shall provide for the enrollment of every elector once in ten years, and also an enrollment during each and every year of every elector not previously registered under the provisions of this Article.

(c) Up to January 1st, 1898, all male persons of voting age applying for registration who can read any Section in this Constitution submitted to them by the registration officer, or understand and explain it when read to them by the registration officer, shall be entitled to register and become electors. A separate record of all persons registered before January 1st, 1898, sworn to by the registration officer, shall be filed, one copy with the Clerk of Court and one in the office of the Secretary of State, on or before February 1st, 1898, and such persons shall remain during life qualified electors unless disqualified by the other provisions of this Article. The certificate of the Clerk of Court or Secretary of State shall be sufficient evidence to establish the right of said citizens to any subsequent registration and the franchise under the limitations herein imposed.

(d) Any person who shall apply for registration after January 1st, 1898, if otherwise qualified, shall be registered: Provided, that he can both read and write any Section of this Constitution submitted to him by the registration officer or can show that he owns, and has paid all taxes collectible during the previous year on property in this State assessed at three hundred dollars (\$300) or more.

(e) Managers of election shall require of every elector offering to vote at any election, before allowing him to vote, proof of the payment of all taxes, including poll tax, assessed against him and collectible during the previous year. The production of a certificate or the receipt of the officer authorized to collect such taxes shall be conclusive proof of the payment thereof.”

- How does this passage of the South Carolina State Constitution, sometimes called the state’s “Jim Crow Constitution,” disenfranchise Black voters? Which passages would be used for that purpose?
- Other sections of this Constitution mention race explicitly – for instance, measures outlawing interracial marriage. If this Article is intended to deny Black South Carolinians the vote, why does it not also mention race directly?
- Research South Carolina’s “Eight Box Law.” When was it passed, and what did it require of voters? What was its intended purpose, and in what circumstances was it actually enforced?