
“Your Right to Vote” Exhibit on the 26th Amendment at the IUB Scholars’ Commons

SARA STEFANI
Modern Political Papers Archivist
Indiana University Bloomington



*Image advertising the “Your Right to Vote” exhibit at the IUB Scholars’ Commons.
Designed by part-time student employee Melanie Roberts.*

The exhibit [“Your Right to Vote: The 26th Amendment and the 18-Year-Old Vote”](#) was installed in the Wells Library Scholars’ Commons exhibition space on November 21, 2023, and is due to remain up until April 2024. I put this exhibit together using materials from the [26th Amendment Collection](#), which is part of the IU Libraries’ Modern Political Papers Collection. The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed Congress and was ratified by the required number of state legislatures in 1971. It lowered the voting age for all federal, state, and local elections from 21 to 18 years of age.

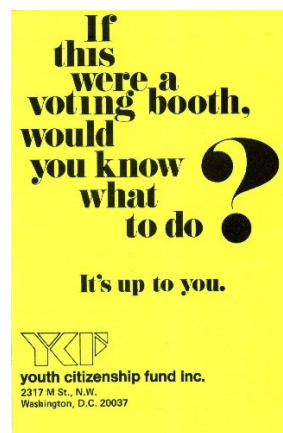
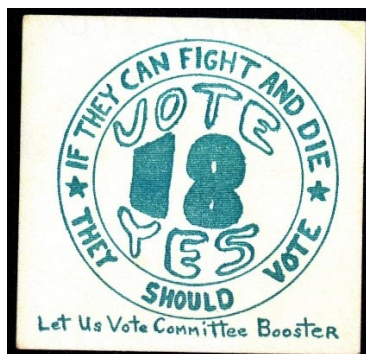
The amendment was passed by Congress, was ratified by the states, and was codified into law in under four months – a record period of time, faster than any other amendment to the Constitution. Its quick passage was assisted by members of Congress such as Indiana Senator Birch Bayh and Senator Jennings Randolph (D-WV), but it also happened due to more than two years of hard work, planning, and lobbying by different grassroots organizations, labor organizations, civil rights groups, and youth activists. The contributions of these grassroots groups have often been overlooked or downplayed in

traditional narratives about the 26th Amendment, and this exhibit aims to provide a more balanced picture of the historical record.

The 26th Amendment Collection was donated by two of the leaders of the popular movement to get the voting age lowered. It contains not only documents, photographs, and ephemera, but a rich collection of [oral history interviews](#) that are publicly available in [Media Collections Online](#). The subject of the exhibit seems particularly relevant and timely right now, as one presidential candidate has stated that, if elected, he wants to [raise the voting age from 21 to 25, except under certain circumstances](#).

I put together the exhibit with the help of Alyssa Denneler, Melanie Roberts, Natalie Guingrich, Elise Calvi, and Matt Nix. Come visit the exhibit and view the oral history interviews online! If you have students or know of departments that would be interested, tell them about it too!

Some items in the exhibit:



Some of the oral history interviewees:



Ian McGowan NEA Interview



Carolyn Coleman Interview, Part 1



Patricia Keefer NEA Interview