

Course XII. The History of Elections and Voter Registration II

(1 1/2 days, 9 hours of instruction)

The Modern Era

When did the concept of making lists of potential voters come into existence and why? What laws, rules and court decisions have affected voter registration? Why were they implemented? What has been the impact of each of those on the current form of democracy? How does voter registration in America differ from voter registration in other forms of developed democracies? What has been the evolution of pluralistic democracy? What events caused the development of the kinds of elections we have today. These and other areas may be covered in a course designed to help us better understand the reasons for what we do currently. Understanding the developments of the past which have led to the present can help elections and registration professionals interpret both the intent and the influence of laws and procedures on voter registration and elections administration. It may even help us to predict what future changes can do to the course of democracy.

Elections and voter registration from the 1600s to modern day in America and Europe is the subject matter. We cover why voter registration was implemented and the abuses, court cases, and improvements that evolved as the electoral process grew in the United States. This course will cover the early democracy that was limited mostly to wealthy, white, property owner males and its extension of voting rights to ever increasing groups of citizens throughout our history. We review the reasons behind the changes in laws and the Constitution in assuring rights to citizens. We see the impact on voter registration laws and how they were structured to enhance or limit the growth of democracy. We review how the enfranchisement of more levels of the public has affected democracy and its impact on government.

By understanding the reasons for the decisions which impacted both voter registration and elections administration, we can more clearly understand why we administer the process the way we do in the present. It also provides a better basis for anticipating changes for the future and can help to predict the outcome of changes to the system as they are proposed.