What is Law Day?
In 1961, Congress passed a joint resolution designating May 1 as the national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. Law Day underscores how law and the legal process contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share.

What is the 2014 theme?
“American Democracy and the Rule of Law: Why Every Vote Matters.” This theme calls on every American to reflect on the importance of a citizen’s right to vote and the challenges we still face in ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to participate in our democracy. For more information on the theme, see www.LawDay.org

Why is the theme important?
The right to vote is the very foundation of government by the people. For this reason, striving to establish and protect every citizen’s right to vote has been a central theme of American legal and civic history. Much of the struggle for voting rights began decades ago, but the work is far from complete, and a citizen’s right to cast a ballot remains at risk today.

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See www.MOED.uscourts.gov or www.JudicialLearningCenter.org for a PDF version of this packet
Activity for MIDDLE SCHOOL students
Grade Level: 6-8
Suggested Time: 40-55 minutes

A. Theme: American Democracy and the Rule of Law: Why Every Vote Matters

B. Main Points:
   • Voting is a fair way to make decisions.
   • America uses elections so that citizens can give their input and have their voices heard.
   • Voting is one of our most cherished rights, and is critical to the functioning of our government.
   • At the start of our country, only wealthy male landowners could vote. Constitutional Amendments and other laws have extended and protected voting rights.
   • Throughout U.S. history, people have taken a stand for voting rights. Often, because of their actions, new laws and new protections were enacted.

C. Focus Questions:
   • What is voting and how does it work?
   • Why is the right to vote so important?
   • How has the right to vote been expanded and protected by the law?
   • How have individuals people participated in this process?
   • What would this country be like if all citizens did not have the right to vote?

D. Activity Summary: This activity will introduce basic ideas about the right to vote throughout U.S. history. The presenter will engage the group in a brief introductory discussion, lead a short timeline activity, and read aloud from an interview with a participant in the 1964 Freedom Summer.

E. Supply List:
   • Copies of student worksheet – “The Right to Vote”
   • Copies of images from 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, at least 2 copies each of 4 photos
   • Teacher fact sheets on “Barriers to Voting,” and “Freedom Summer 1964”
   • Book – “Freedom’s Children”
   • Guide sheet for selected readings

F. Step-by-Step Procedure:

INTRO – 5 MINUTES

a. Ask – If you had to choose, do you prefer burger & fries or pizza?
b. Ask – Raise your hand if you prefer burger & fries. Count the hands.
c. Raise your hand if you prefer pizza. Count the hands and declare a winner.
d. Say - That was simple democratic vote. If we went with that vote, this class would have ___ for lunch.
e. Direct students to imagine that the school is having a celebration, and is asking for one representative from each class at this time of day (4th period, 7th period, etc). The representatives from each class will get together and decide the menu for the celebration. You will be asked as a class to elect a student to represent you at the planning meeting.
f. Point out one person who liked burger & fries and one person who liked pizza. Tell the class that in this situation, two or more candidates might run for the office. The winner of the election will represent the entire class at the planning meeting.
g. Ask – Who would you vote for?
   i. Say – This is a more accurate description of how most decisions get made in our country. We are not truly a “democracy” but rather a “representative democracy.” (this is a very quick demo to make a point, no need to hold an actual election)

h. Ask - What types of things do we vote for in the United States? Or, more specifically, whom do we elect to represent us?
   i. Ask – What happens if you don’t vote? (your opinion isn’t included)
   ii. Ask – Why, then, is the right to vote important? (so that your opinion matters, so that the system is fair and representative of all)

ACTIVITY – VOTING RIGHTS – 15 MINUTES

i. Say – You probably already know that the right to vote hasn’t always been extended to everyone. Throughout U.S. History, people have taken a stand for voting rights. Often, because of their actions, new laws and new protections were enacted.

j. This activity will show how the right to vote has expanded since 1787. Distribute the worksheet and instruct students to use the numbers #1-10 to put the events in order. The first and last have been done for them.

k. Allow 4-5 minutes. After 5 minutes, invite students to work with someone sitting near them for 2-3 minutes to check their work and fill in any missing blanks.

l. Call attention and go over the answers, asking the students to correct any they have incorrect.

m. Also tell the date, amendment #, etc. for each if you’d like and if you have time.

n. Point out how the law has worked over the years to protect the rights of citizens. Often people think of the law as restricting rights or taking rights away, but our system of law is also here to protect your rights.

ACTIVITY – FREEDOM SUMMER – 15 MINUTES

o. Now point out the several events from the happened during the Civil Rights Movement, when people in our country took a stand to end discrimination in many areas, including voting rights. Remind students that activists followed the philosophy of non-violence.

p. Say – Many things were happening during the Civil Rights Movement. For today, we will focus just on the work to eliminate barriers to voting, especially in the Southern United States.

q. Point out event #7 (the second one down from the top on the student worksheet) FREEDOM SUMMER, 1964. This year marks the 50th anniversary.

r. Ask – Can someone raise their hand and tell what they know about Freedom Summer? Take one or two volunteers and clarify their answers as necessary.

s. Lead a brief discussion summarizing the main points of the Mississippi Freedom Summer Movement. Freedom Summer talking points (additional fact sheets are attached for use as you prepare)
   i. Mississippi had the lowest percentage of African American registered voters, a complex literacy test, a poll tax, and a history of violence and voter intimidation.
   ii. Groups of local activists were making little progress in increasing the number of registered voters, so they designed the Freedom Summer Project.
   iii. The project brought volunteers from colleges and universities in northern states, to come to Mississippi and work alongside the local volunteers.
   iv. 2 main goals of the project:
      1. Voter Registration – to register as many African American Mississippians as possible. (HOLD UP AND PASS AROUND THE 2 IMAGES)
      2. Freedom Schools – voluntary summer schools, to educate African-American children on topics that weren’t taught in school such as African American
dangerous. Just as the volunteers were arriving to begin the campaign, three turned up missing and were eventually found murdered. Many other acts of violence took place.

i. Ask – What do you think after looking at the photos? Think about these questions. You don’t have to answer out loud.
   i. If you lived in Mississippi in 1964, would you register to vote?
   ii. Would you go door to door talking to people about voting?
   iii. Would you go to extra school in the summer to learn more about your heritage and your rights?

ii. Hold up the book “Freedom’s Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories.” Say that Chapter 6 contains stories from individuals who were children in Mississippi during this time period.
   i. Read select passages. (see guide sheet)

CONCLUSION – 10 MINUTES

i. Make summary points – Voting is a very important part of living in America. We have the right to vote, so that our voice will be heard. We also have the responsibility to vote, so that our government can continue to work. The law has worked to protect the right to vote in the past, and will continue to do so in the future as new challenges occur.

EXTENSION IDEAS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS:

See the pages at the following link for a complete lesson plan using the book “Freedom’s Children.”

http://database.civics.unc.edu/lesson/?s=freedom+children

Schedule time for your students to read a story about elections, such as “If I Ran for President,” to younger students.

Assign research reports on famous people who played a part in the struggle for voting rights. Examples include: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Representative John Lewis, etc.

Assign research reports about the events surrounding the voting rights Amendments (15th, 19th, 23rd, 24th, and 26th)

Assign an art project with theme of voting or elections.

Ask students to interview an adult about voting and their recollections of the time period that included Freedom Summer 1964. Optionally, they could document the interview and report back to the class. Your class could produce a book of interviews for sharing.

For more activities, see the Law Day packet for high school teachers. It includes sample literacy tests from before the Voting Rights Act was passed, as well as an overview of Voting Rights Today.
A. **RESOURCES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS:**

Law Day 2014  
[www.lawday.org](http://www.lawday.org)

The U.S. Courts Law Day page  
[www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-inspired/annual-observances/law-day.aspx](http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-inspired/annual-observances/law-day.aspx)

The Judicial Learning Center in St. Louis  

The Wisconsin Historical Society Freedom Summer Archives  
[http://preview.wisconsinhistory.org](http://preview.wisconsinhistory.org)  
[www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)

The Wisconsin Historical Society Freedom Summer Exhibit – Risking Everything  

PBS American Experience Freedom Summer Documentary, coming JUNE 2014  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomsummer](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomsummer)

PBS American Experience Eyes on the Prize Documentary, Freedom Summer Segment  

The Newseum’s Collection of Historic Photos from Freedom Summer  
[www.newseum.org/mississippi](http://www.newseum.org/mississippi)

Kids Voting Missouri  
[www.kidsvotingmissouri.org](http://www.kidsvotingmissouri.org)

Project Vote Smart  
[votesmart.org/education/classroom#U0RKtlea9PM](http://votesmart.org/education/classroom#U0RKtlea9PM)

iCivics (“Cast Your Vote” game, plus many resources for teachers)  
[www.icivics.org](http://www.icivics.org)


B. **Attachments**

- Book guide sheet
- STUDENT WORKSHEET and answer sheet “The Right to Vote”
- Four images from Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964 from the Wisconsin Historical Society
- TEACHER FACT SHEET A – “Barriers To Voting”
- TEACHER FACT SHEET B – “Freedom Summer 1964”
BOOK GUIDE SHEET

*Freedom’s Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*
By Ellen Levine

10 minutes

Introduction – The author of this book traveled to the Southern United States and spent countless hours interviewing individuals who had participated, as young people, in the Civil Rights Movement. There are chapters on the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Sit-ins. Chapter 6 is about Freedom Summer, which we’ve been discussing. There are short bios of each person at the back of the book.

Chapter 6 – The Closed Society: Mississippi and Freedom Summer  
p. 92

Ben Chaney (brother of James Chaney who was murdered, FYI)  
p.101-102  
*Begin at “Mickey and Rita Schwerner....” (Mickey Schwerner was also murdered with James)*  
*End at “You never got bored.”*

About Freedom Center (School/Community Center setting)  
Would you do this? Go to “extra” school?

Euvester Simpson (1963 seems early, she was part of initial local movement prior to the Freedom Summer)  
p.108-109  
*Begin at “When I was born...”*  
*End at “...$9.64 a week.”*

About Voter Registration  
SNCC = Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (snick)  
Can you sense her passion? Why was she so passionate?

Roy DeBerry (also 1963)  
p. 112  
*Begin at “I think I understood...”*  
*And end at “....local people doing for themselves.”*

About Voter Registration  
Can you imagine going door to door like this? Would you ask someone to register to vote even though it could get them fired from their job?
STUDENT WORKSHEET – The Right to Vote

Voting rights have expanded in this country since the Constitution was written in 1787. Try to put the following in order. The first and last events have been numbered for you.

______ An amendment to the constitution was added, forbidding the charging of a poll tax at federal elections.

______ MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER. Civil rights activists to register people to vote and educate children in Mississippi. Paved the way for the Voting Rights Act.**

__10__26th Amendment DATE 1971
An Amendment to the Constitution was added, saying the right to vote shall not be denied to anyone 18 years or older (formerly 21 years or older)

______ An Amendment to the Constitution was added, saying the right to vote shall not be denied based on gender

______ A law was passed granting citizenship, and the right to vote, to all Native Americans.

__1__U.S. Constitution DATE 1787
Article I, Section. 4. The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing (sic) Senators.

______ An Amendment to the Constitution was added, allowing residents of Washington D.C. (not really a state) to vote in presidential elections.

______ Selma to Montgomery Marches in Alabama. Marchers protesting being denied the right to vote were met with violence as they marched to the state capital. Paved the way for the Voting Rights Act.

______ An Amendment to the Constitution was added, saying the right to vote shall not be denied to any citizen based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude

______ The Voting Rights Act was passed. Landmark federal legislation prohibiting discrimination in voting; considered to be the most effective piece of civil rights legislation in the U.S.
ANSWERS
6, 7, 10, 3, 4, 1, 5, 8, 2, 9

- Go over the answers, asking the students to correct any they have incorrect.
- Also tell the date, amendment #, etc. for each if you’d like and if you have time.
- Point out how the law has worked over the years to protect the rights of citizens. Often people think of the law as restricting rights or taking rights away, but our system of law is also here to protect your rights.
- Point out the events in the 1960s and mention the importance of the Civil Rights Movement
- Point out the Mississippi Freedom Summer for the next activity

ANSWERS (re-typed in the correct order)
1. U.S. Constitution DATE 1787
   Article I, Section. 4. The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing (sic) Senators.

2. 15th Amendment DATE 1870
   An Amendment to the Constitution was added, saying the right to vote shall not be denied to any citizen based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

3. 19th Amendment DATE 1920
   An Amendment to the Constitution was added, saying the right to vote shall not be denied based on gender.

4. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924
   A law was passed granting citizenship, and the right to vote, to all Native Americans.

5. 23rd Amendment DATE 1961
   An Amendment to the Constitution was added, allowing residents of Washington D.C. (not really a state) to vote in presidential elections.

6. 24th Amendment DATE 1964
   An amendment to the constitution was added, forbidding the charging of a poll tax at federal elections.

7. Mississippi Freedom Summer DATE 1964
   ACTIVITY BY CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS TO REGISTER PEOPLE TO VOTE AND EDUCATE CHILDREN. PAVED THE WAY FOR THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT. **50th Anniversary**

8. Alabama, Selma to Montgomery Marches DATE 1965
   Marchers protesting being denied the right to vote were met with violence as they marched to the state capital. Pave the way for the voting rights act.

   Landmark federal legislation prohibiting discrimination in voting; considered to be the most effective piece of civil rights legislation in the U.S.

10. 26th Amendment DATE 1971
    An Amendment to the Constitution was added, saying the right to vote shall not be denied to anyone 18 years or older (formerly 21 years or older)
PHOTO 3 FREEDOM SCHOOL

Source - Wisconsin Historical Society
Staughton and Alice Lynd papers, 1938-2008
PHOTO 4 FREEDOM SCHOOL

Source - Wisconsin Historical Society, Staughton and Alice Lynd papers, 1938-2008
Race and Voting in the Segregated South

After returning home from World War II, veteran Medgar Evers decided to vote in a Mississippi election. But when he and some other black ex-servicemen attempted to vote, a white mob stopped them. "All we wanted to be was ordinary citizens," Evers later related. "We fought during the war for America, Mississippi included. Now, after the Germans and Japanese hadn't killed us, it looked as though the white Mississippians would..." The most basic right of a citizen in a democracy is the right to vote. Without this right, people can be easily ignored and even abused by their government. This, in fact, is what happened to African American citizens living in the South following Civil War Reconstruction. Despite the 14th and 15th amendments guaranteeing the civil rights of black Americans, their right to vote was systematically taken away by white supremacist state governments.

Voting During Reconstruction

After the Civil War, Congress acted to prevent Southerners from re-establishing white supremacy. In 1867, the Radical Republicans in Congress imposed federal military rule over most of the South. Under U.S. Army occupation, the former Confederate states wrote new constitutions and were readmitted to the Union, but only after ratifying the 14th Amendment. This Reconstruction amendment prohibited states from denying "the equal protection of the laws" to U.S. citizens, which included the former slaves.

In 1870, the 15th Amendment was ratified. It stated that, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." More than a half-million black men became voters in the South during the 1870s (women did not secure the right to vote in the United States until 1920). For the most part, these new black voters cast their ballots solidly for the Republican Party, the party of the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln. When Mississippi rejoined the Union in 1870, former slaves made up more than half of that state's population. During the next decade, Mississippi sent two black U.S. senators to Washington and elected a number of black state officials, including a lieutenant governor. But even though the new black citizens voted freely and in large numbers, whites were still elected to a large majority of state and local offices. This was the pattern in most of the Southern states during Reconstruction.

The Republican-controlled state governments in the South were hardly perfect. Many citizens complained about over-taxation and outright corruption. But these governments brought about significant improvements in the lives of the former slaves. For the first time, black men and women enjoyed freedom of speech and movement, the right of a fair trial, education for their children, and all the other privileges and protections of American citizenship. But all this changed when Reconstruction ended in 1877 and federal troops withdrew from the old Confederacy.

Voting in Mississippi

With federal troops no longer present to protect the rights of black citizens, white supremacy quickly returned to the old Confederate states. Black voting fell off sharply in most areas because of threats by white employers and violence from the Ku Klux Klan, a ruthless secret organization bent on preserving white supremacy at all costs. White majorities began to vote out the Republicans and replace them with Democratic governors, legislators, and local officials. Laws were soon passed banning interracial marriages and racially segregating railroad cars along with the public schools.

Laws and practices were also put in place to make sure blacks would never again freely participate in elections. But one problem stood in the way of denying African Americans the right to vote: the 15th Amendment, which guaranteed them this right. To a great extent, Mississippi led the way in overcoming the barrier presented by the 15th Amendment. Over
In 1890, Mississippi held a convention to write a new state constitution to replace the one in force since Reconstruction. The white leaders of the convention were clear about their intentions. "We came here to exclude the Negro," declared the convention president. Because of the 15th Amendment, they could not ban blacks from voting. Instead, they wrote into the state constitution a number of voter restrictions making it difficult for most blacks to register to vote.

First, the new constitution required an annual poll tax, which voters had to pay for two years before the election. This was a difficult economic burden to place on black Mississippians, who made up the poorest part of the state's population. Many simply couldn't pay it. But the most formidable voting barrier put into the state constitution was the literacy test. It required a person seeking to register to vote to read a section of the state constitution and explain it to the county clerk who processed voter registrations. This clerk, who was always white, decided whether a citizen was literate or not. The literacy test did not just exclude the 60 percent of voting-age black men (most of them ex-slaves) who could not read. It excluded almost all black men, because the clerk would select complicated technical passages for them to interpret. By contrast, the clerk would pass whites by picking simple sentences in the state constitution for them to explain.

Mississippi also enacted a "grandfather clause" that permitted registering anyone whose grandfather was qualified to vote before the Civil War. Obviously, this benefited only white citizens. The "grandfather clause" as well as the other legal barriers to black voter registration worked. Mississippi cut the percentage of black voting-age men registered to vote from over 90 percent during Reconstruction to less than 6 percent in 1892. These measures were copied by most of the other states in the South.

**Other Forms of Voter Discrimination**

By the turn of the century, the white Southern Democratic Party held nearly all elected offices in the former Confederate states. The Southern Republican Party, mostly made up of blacks, barely existed and rarely even ran candidates against the Democrats. As a result, the real political contests took place within the Democratic Party primary elections. Whoever won the Democratic primary was just about guaranteed victory in the general election.

In 1902, Mississippi passed a law that declared political parties to be private organizations outside the authority of the 15th Amendment. This permitted the Mississippi Democratic Party to exclude black citizens from membership and participation in its primaries. The "white primary," which was soon imitated in most other Southern states, effectively prevented the small number of blacks registered to vote from having any say in who got elected to partisan offices--from the local sheriff to the governor and members of Congress.

When poll taxes, literacy tests, "grandfather clauses," and "white primaries" did not stop blacks from registering and voting, intimidation often did the job. An African-American citizen attempting to exercise his right to vote would often be threatened with losing his job. Denial of credit, threats of eviction, and verbal abuse by white voting clerks also prevented black Southerners from voting. When all else failed, mob violence and even lynching kept black people away from the ballot box. As a result of intimidation, violence, and racial discrimination in state voting laws, a mere 3 percent of voting-age black men and women in the South were registered to vote in 1940. In Mississippi, under 1 percent were registered. Most blacks who did vote lived in the larger cities of the South.

By not having the power of the ballot, African Americans in the South had little influence in their communities. They did not hold elected offices. They had no say in how much their taxes would be or what laws would be passed. They had little, if any, control over local police, courts, or public schools. They, in effect, were denied their rights as citizens.

Attempts to change this situation were met with animosity and outright violence. But in the 1950s, the civil rights movement developed. Facing enormous hostility, black people in the South organized to demand their rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. They launched voter registration drives in many Southern communities.

**Adapted from the Constitutional Rights Foundation: [www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org)**
I: Background to Freedom Summer
The Mississippi Freedom Summer project was an effort by nonviolent civil rights activists to integrate Mississippi’s segregated political system during 1964. Planning began in the fall of 1963. Volunteers were recruited in the spring of 1964, they trained at Oxford, Ohio, June 15-28, and worked throughout the state from June 29-August 22 when the project officially ended. However, work began in the summer continued for the next several months as activists challenged the legitimacy of the all-white delegation to the Democratic National Convention in August. And because most African-Americans in Mississippi were not permitted to vote in the fall election, activists held an alternative election that proved black Mississippians would vote in numbers sufficient to bring about significant political change.

II: Planning and Recruiting, Spring 1964
The Freedom Summer Project’s overarching goal was to empower black Mississippi residents to participate in local, state, and national politics. Its other main goal was to focus the nation's attention on conditions in the South so the federal government would be forced to pass laws guaranteeing all U.S. citizens equal treatment under the law. To reach these goals, more than 1,500 volunteers were brought to the state (mostly northern white college students). Programs were created to register black voters, educate residents in newly-formed Freedom Schools, open community centers, create a new political party, and challenge the legitimacy of the white supremacist Mississippi Democratic Party.

III: Training Volunteers, June 15-29, 1964
Northern volunteers received training at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, in two groups. The first was trained June 15-22 and the second June 23-29. They spent all day in workshops devoted to conditions in Mississippi, techniques of nonviolent resistance, methods of community organizing, legal and security issues, African-American history, and related topics. Some tension existed between the project staff, who were mainly black, Southern and veterans of racist violence, and the seemingly naïve and idealistic middle-class, white college students.

IV: Murders of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman
These three civil rights workers were kidnapped and murdered on June 21, 1964, just as the Freedom Summer Project got underway. Mickey Schwerner was a CORE staff member from New York who, with his wife Rita, had opened a community center in Mississippi in January. James Chaney was a local black activist who had recently begun working with CORE. Andrew Goodman was a new volunteer from New York on his first visit to Mississippi. Although previous lynchings of local black activists had usually gone unreported, their disappearance at the very start of Freedom Summer was widely covered in the national media. President Lyndon Johnson ordered the U.S. Navy and the FBI to lead the search for their killers and the case focused media attention on Mississippi until their bodies were found on August 4. The three were generally portrayed in the press as martyrs, especially Goodman and Schwerner, who were white northerners.

V: Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
Because Mississippi officials prevented most African-Americans from participating in the regular Democratic Party activities, organizers created a separate organization that would be open to all. They viewed this not only as a challenge to mainstream politics but also as an excellent way to equip local black residents with leadership and organizing skills. The MFDP chose its platform and candidates democratically and offered candidates loyal to the principles of the national Democratic Party. It sent a delegation to the Democratic National Convention held in Atlantic City in August 1964, in hopes of being recognized as the legitimate voice of Democrats in Mississippi. They also held an unofficial freedom vote parallel to the regular November election. When the white-supremacist winners of the mainstream election tried to take their seats in Washington in January 1965, the MFDP legally challenged its right to represent Mississippi.
VI: Freedom Schools
During the summer, more than 40 Freedom Schools opened in 20 communities across Mississippi. More than 2,000 children and adults enrolled in classes led by 175 teachers.

VII: Voter Registration
Organizers wanted as many black Mississippians as possible to try to join the voter rolls. When black residents tried to register, they faced intimidation and harassment. For example, their names were printed in the local newspaper for two weeks to facilitate reprisals by their employers, landlords, police, and the Ku Klux Klan. Freedom Summer leaders hoped that by revealing the contradiction between American ideals of democracy and the actual reality in the South, the federal government would be prompted to act. Public outrage helped swell support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited arbitrary voting restrictions and empowered the federal government to intervene at the local level.

VIII: Opposition and Violence
Mississippi public officials at all levels denounced the Freedom Summer Project and supported white supremacy and segregation. Business leaders joined together to fire black activists, foreclose their mortgages, evict renters, and cut off welfare. Local police trailed workers’ cars and arrested activists on imaginary charges. Police often had close personal ties to vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan who perpetrated violence on black residents and civil rights workers. Between June 16 and September 30, 1964, there were at least 6 murders, 29 shootings, 50 bombings, and more than 60 beatings. Freedom Summer volunteers were taught to meet this assault with non-violent resistance.

IX: Democratic National Convention Challenge, August 1964
The MFDP sent 68 delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City and challenged the right of the segregationist delegation to represent the state. Their testimony before the Credentials Committee on August 22 was aired live on national television. President Lyndon Johnson feared that if the MFDP delegates were seated, he would lose the entire South in the November election. Minnesota Sen. Hubert Humphrey offered a compromise, which neither the MFDP nor the segregationists could accept. Ultimately, national Democratic Party officials refused to allow the MFDP to participate in the convention and the challenge was defeated. Many people viewed this as a betrayal by the Democratic Party of both the Civil Rights movement and its own traditional values.

X: Freedom Election, October 29-November 3, 1964
Since most black residents couldn't vote in the 1964 regular election, organizers conducted a parallel Freedom Election between October 31 and November 2. Despite shootings, beatings, intimidation, and arrests, more than 62,000 people cast ballots, disapproving the segregationists’ claim that black Mississippians did not want to vote. In most counties, Freedom Voters actually outnumbered regular Democratic Party voters, showing that African-Americans would be a powerful voting bloc in the South.

XI: Mississippi Congressional Challenge, January 1965
After the all-white winners of the November regular election were sent to Washington, D.C, the MFDP challenged their right to take seats in Congress. They argued that, because black residents had been systematically excluded from the electoral process, the five white men did not legitimately represent the state. The U.S. House of Representatives debated the question for months. In September 1965 it denied the MFDP challenge and let the segregationists occupy the Mississippi seats.

XII: After Freedom Summer
The Freedom Summer Project failed to reach its most visible goals. Few new voters registered, the Democratic National Convention rejected the MDFP, and white-supremacists took seats in the 1965 U.S. Congress. Some leaders concluded that nonviolence and traditional politics would never bring justice, and helped launch the Black Power Movement. However, in the following months it became obvious that Freedom Summer had achieved its broad goals. Tens of thousands of black residents had created a new political party, learned leadership skills and organizing techniques, and attended Freedom Schools. People around the nation, shocked by the violence on their televisions, spurred elected officials to write new laws. Mainstream politicians realized that African-Americans were a powerful voting bloc. In 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which outlawed discriminatory voting practices and authorized the federal government to intervene. By the end of 1966, most African-Americans in the South who were eligible to vote had registered.