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## CHAPTER ONE VOTING

**Voting: to express the will or a preference in a matter**

**Suffrage: the right to vote**

**Franchise: the Constitutional right to vote**

In the United States, citizens make their will known by voting. This representative democracy, or republic, grants citizens final governmental authority via the key function of the vote. Those who have and use the right to vote choose not only the representatives who make the laws, but many of the officials who enforce the laws.

*To make these choices in knowledge and wisdom is the challenge of representative government.*

Missouri voters also may take a direct part in the law-making process in other ways, such as by means of the initiative petition that can result in a public referendum.

The conduct of elections and the registration of voters are the responsibility of boards of election commissioners in Clay, Jackson, and St. Louis counties, and the cities of Kansas City and St. Louis. These are salaried, bipartisan board members appointed by the governor for four-year terms. In all other counties, the county clerk is a partisan elected official who serves as election authority.

## ***Who May Vote?***

Under Section 2, Article VIII of the Missouri Constitution, the state requirements for voting in Missouri include:

- United States citizenship, including occupants of soldiers' and sailors' homes
- attainment of the age of eighteen by the date of the election
- resident of Missouri and the political subdivision in which he or she wishes to vote
- residence in the state for thirty days preceding the election
- registration in the jurisdiction of his or her residence four weeks prior to the election.

Citizens are excluded from voting for any one of the following reasons:

- if convicted of felony or misdemeanor crime connected with the exercise of the right of suffrage
- if on probation or parole after conviction of a felony (until discharged from such probation or parole)
- if held under guardianship of his or her estate by reason of mental incapacity
- if involuntarily confined in a mental institution

A Missouri statute gives employees the right to three hours absence from work in order to vote, without loss of pay. This holds only if the person is in the service of his or her employer during the hours the polls are open. An employee must make the request for leave before the day of election. This rule does not apply if there are three successive hours while the polls are open in which the voter is not working.