

The Text of the Original “Grandfather Clause,” State of Louisiana, 1898

[Article 197] Sec. 3. He [the elector] shall be able to read and write, and shall demonstrate his ability to do so when he applies for registration, by making, under oath administered by the registration officer or his deputy, written application therefor, in the English language, or his mother tongue, which application shall contain the essential facts necessary to show that he is entitled to register and vote, and shall be entirely written, dated and signed by him, in the presence of the registration officer or his deputy, without assistance or suggestion from any person or any memorandum whatever, except the form of application. . . .

Sec. 4. If he be not able to read and write, as provided by Section three . . . then he shall be entitled to register and vote if he shall, at the time he offers to register, be the bona fide owner of property assessed to him in this State at a valuation of not less than three hundred dollars . . . and on which, if such property be personal only, all taxes due shall have been paid. . . .

Sec. 5. No male person who was on January 1st, 1867, or at any date prior thereto, entitled to vote under the Constitution or statutes of any State of the United States, wherein he then resided, and no son or grandson of any such person not less than twenty-one years of age at the date of the adoption of this Constitution, and no male person of foreign birth, who was naturalized prior to the first day of January, 1898, shall be denied the right to register and vote in this State by reason of his failure to possess the educational or property qualifications prescribed by this Constitution; provided, he shall have resided in this State for five years next preceding the date at which he shall apply for registration, and shall have registered in accordance with the terms of this article prior to September 1, 1898, and no person shall be entitled to register under this section after said date. . . .

A separate registration of voters applying under this section, shall be made by the registration officer of every parish. . . .

The registration of voters under this section [5] shall close on the 31st day of August, 1898, and immediately thereafter the registration Officer of every parish shall make a sworn copy, in duplicate, of the list of persons registered under this section, showing in detail whether the applicant registered as a voter of 1867, or prior thereto, or as the son of such voter, or as the grandson of such voter, and deposit one of said duplicates in the Office of the Secretary of State . . . and the other of said duplicates shall be by him filed in the office of the Clerk of the District Court of the parish. . . .

All persons whose names appear on said registration lists shall be admitted to register for all elections in this State without possessing the educational or property qualification prescribed by this Constitution, unless otherwise disqualified, and all persons who do not by personal application claim exemption from the provisions of sections 3 and 4 of this article before September 1st, 1898, shall be forever denied the right to do so. . . .

Source: "Constitution of the State of Louisiana, Adopted May 12, 1898," in Walter L. Fleming, ed., *Documentary History of Reconstruction*, Vol. 2 (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 451–453.