



Women's Suffrage General History

The Women's Suffrage Movement was a century-long fight to win the right to vote for women in the United States. The campaign was not easy; along the way, there were many disagreements over the strategy which threatened to debilitate the movement on more than one occasion. The campaign finally came to close on August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, enfranchising all American women and proclaiming for the first time that they, like men, deserve all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

In the 1820s and '30s, the majority of the states had extended the franchise to all white men, no matter their income or ownership overland. This step in the right direction, started the fire in women to begin the campaign for women's right to vote.

Even after starting their campaign for the women's right to vote, women continued their efforts in temperance leagues, religious movements, moral-reform societies, and anti-slavery organizations.

Throughout history, a "true" woman was perceived to be a pious, submissive wife and mother who was concerned exclusively with their home and family.

These efforts created a new way of thinking about what it means to be a true woman and a citizen of the United States.

Seneca Falls

In 1848, one of the first meetings involving the Woman's Suffrage Movement was at Seneca Falls, New York. A group of more than 300 abolitionist activists, comprised of mainly women, but some men, gathered in Seneca Falls to discuss the problem of women's rights. This convention launched the women's rights movement on a national level. The group that met was invited by the reformers Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott.

According to history.com, the convention touched on many points regarding women's rights; afforded better opportunities for education and employment, and "most of the delegates at the Seneca Fall Convention agreed that American women were autonomous individuals who deserved their own political identities."





During the convention, the delegates produced the Declaration of Sentiments. They proclaimed, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men *and* women are created equal, that their creator endows them with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The convention and proclamation of the Declaration of Sentiments meant that they believed women should have the right to vote, among many other things. Following the event, the idea of women have the right to vote was mocked throughout the press, and some delegates withdrew their support for the Declaration Sentiments. Nonetheless, they (Stanton and Mott) persisted.

Civil War and Civil Rights

Due to the Civil War, the women’s rights movement had come to a pause after gaining the momentum they wanted. Once the war ended, the addition of the 14th and 15th Amendments began fueling the suffrage campaign all over again. Those two amendments started raising questions about women’s suffrage and citizenship.

To give some context, the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, extended protection to all citizens. During this ratification, it was made clear that citizen was defined as “male”; the 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, guarantees black men the right to vote.

Women suffrage advocates such as Stanton and Susan B. Anthony believed that due to these ratifications, they finally had their chance to push lawmakers for universal suffrage. In hopes of pushing for women’s right to vote, the campaign refused to support the 15th Amendment and even joined forces with racist Southerners who argued that white women’s votes could be used to neutralize those cast by African-Americans.

In 1869, the group of women who were allies with racist Southerners formed a group called the National Woman Suffrage Association. The group began their fight for a universal suffrage amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Since the National Woman Suffrage Association was created based on racism, “others argued that it was unfair to endanger black enfranchisement by tying it to the markedly less popular campaign for female suffrage,” history.com stated. Those who argued with the National Woman Suffrage Association created a group that was pro-15th-Amendment, calling





themselves the American Woman Suffrage Association and fought for the franchise on a state-by-state basis.

The Progressive Campaign for Suffrage

From the beginning of the two groups, there was intense hatred, which eventually faded, and in 1890 the two groups merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The organizations' first president was Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

The original approach suffragists had was to argue that women deserved the same rights and responsibilities as men because women and men were "created equal." The new generation of activists decided they will say that women deserve the same rights and responsibilities as men because they were *different* from men.

The reasoning behind this strategy was because it served many political agendas: Temperance advocates, for instance, wanted women to have the right to vote because they thought it would mobilize an enormous voting bloc on behalf of their cause. Many middle-class white people were swayed once again by the argument that the enfranchisement of white women would "ensure immediate and durable white supremacy."

Winning the Vote at Last

In the year 1910, some of the Western states began to extend the vote to women for the first time in almost 20 years. Two of the first states to give women the right were Idaho and Utah; they had made this change at the end of the 19th century. Southern and Eastern states resisted.

The NAWSA president, Carrie Chapman Catt, unveiled in 1916, what she called a "Winning Plan" to get the vote at last. She created a blitz campaign that mobilized state and local suffrage organizations all over the country, with particular focus on those reluctant regions.

A separate group called the National Women's Party took on a more radical, militant tactics that were aimed at winning dramatic publicity for their case. The organization staged many demonstrations such as hunger strikes and regularly picketed the White House, among other tactics. Some of these tactics ended in arrests, and several served jail time.





In 1918, President Wilson switched his stance on women's voting rights from disapproval to support through the influence of Carrie Chapman Catt. Once the Amendment came up for a vote, Wilson addressed the Senate in favor of suffrage. *The New York Times* reported that on October 1, 1918, Wilson said, "I regard the extension of suffrage to women as vitally essential to the successful prosecution of the great war of humanity in which we are engaged." Wilsons believed the proposed suffrage amendment is tied to America's involvement in World War I and how women played a significant role in the war efforts.

Even though Wilson voiced his newfound support, the Senate failed to pass the Amendment by two votes. Congress did not bring the case back to the floor until another year had passed.

According to an article on history.com, on May 21, 1919, U.S. Representative James R. Mann, a Republican from Illinois and chairman of the Suffrage Committee, proposed the House resolution to approve the Susan Anthony Amendment granting women the right to vote. The measure passed the House 304 to 89—a full 42 votes above the required two-thirds majority.

Two weeks after the resolution was approved in the House, it was sent to the U.S. Senate. On June 4, 1919, the U.S. Senate passed the 19th Amendment by two votes over its two-thirds required majority, 56-25. The Amendment was then sent to the states for ratification.

The states began ratifying one by one; within six days, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin ratified the Amendment. Within the following week, on June 16, 1919, Kansas, New York, and Ohio approved the Amendment. By March 1920, there was a total of 35 states that had passed the Amendment, all they needed was one state to ratify, and they would reach the required two-thirds required for ratification.

Many of the Southern states continued to reject the Amendment, but Tennessee was the state that the country was hoping would pass the Amendment giving the two-third votes the country needed. The outcome was very uncertain, based on the other Southern states votes and the position that Tennessee legislators are in, they were sitting on a 48-48 tie. The ultimate decision came down to 23-year-old Representative Harry T. Burn, a Republican who was opposed to the Amendment. Although Burn opposed the Amendment, his mother had convinced him to vote yes, and become the 36th state to ratify. Mrs. Burns wrote to her son, "Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the 'rat' in ratification."





Finally, on August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified. Congress finally received the 36th yes they needed to ratify, Tennessee was the last state to say yes. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was certified by U.S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, and women finally achieved the long-sought right to vote throughout the United States. On November 2 of that same year, more than 8 million women across the U.S. voted in elections for the first time.

It took over 60 years for the remaining 12 states to ratify the 19th Amendment. Mississippi was the last to do so, on March 22, 1984.





PHOTOS



Women's Suffrage Ribbon – Credit to library of Congress





Annie Arniel being arrested for picketing in front of the White House
– Credit to Widener Law



**WOMEN'S
VOTE**
DELAWARE CENTENNIAL
1920-2020



College Day in the Picket Line – Credit to Library of Congress



**WOMEN'S
VOTE**
DELAWARE CENTENNIAL
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Picketing Republican Convention in Chicago in June 1920 – Credit to Library of Congress





Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton – Credit to Library of Congress





Hardware Hats for Suffragists – Credit to Delaware Public Archives





Parade in Boston Massachusetts – Credit to Women Suffrage MA



**WOMEN'S
VOTE**
DELAWARE CENTENNIAL
1920-2020



NYC March – Credit to Berkshire Edge –



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DELAWARE CENTENNIAL
1920-2020



Vote for Women – Credit to ACLU Maine





Women's Suffrage NYC March 5th Avenue – Credit Manhattan Women's Club

Citations

- <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/the-fight-for-womens-suffrage>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/19th-amendment-1>
- <https://www.womenshistory.org/resources/general/woman-suffrage-movement>





FACTS

Did you know?



In 1923, the National Women's Party proposed an amendment to the Constitution that prohibited all discrimination on the basis of sex. The so-called Equal Rights Amendment has never been ratified.

Did you know?



Wyoming, the first state to grant voting rights to women, was also the first state to elect a female governor. Nellie Tayloe Ross (1876-1977) was elected governor of the Equality State—Wyoming's official nickname—in 1924. And from 1933 to 1953, she served as the first woman director of the U.S. Mint.

