

How did American Woman win the right to vote?

A. The Struggle for Suffrage – A Chronology

1848 The first women's rights convention in the United States is held in Seneca Falls, New York.

1866 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony form the American Equal Rights Association, an organization for white and black women and men dedicated to the goal of universal suffrage.

1870 The Fifteenth Amendment enfranchises black men.

1872 Susan B. Anthony is arrested and brought to trial in Rochester, New York, for attempting to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election. Sojourner Truth appears at a polling booth in Grand Rapids, Michigan, demanding a ballot; she is turned away.

1878 A Woman Suffrage Amendment is introduced in the United States Congress. The wording is unchanged in 1919, when the amendment finally passes both houses.

1890 Wyoming admitted to the Union with its suffrage provision intact.

1893 Colorado becomes the first state to adopt a state amendment enfranchising women.

1912 Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive (Bull Moose/Republican) Party becomes the first national political party to adopt a woman suffrage plank.

1913 Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organize the Congressional Union, later known as the National Women's Party (1916). Members of the Woman's Party participate in hunger strikes, picket the White House, and engage in other forms of civil disobedience to publicize the suffrage cause.

1916 Jeannette Rankin of Montana becomes the first American woman elected to represent her state in the U.S. House of Representatives.

1920 The Nineteenth Amendment is ratified.

B. Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Seneca Falls Convention, 1848

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

C. Frederick Douglass, *The North Star*, 28 July 1848, Rochester, NY

All political rights which it is expedient for man to exercise, it is equally for woman. All that distinguishes man as an intelligent and accountable being, is equally true of woman, and if that government only is just which governs by the free consent of the governed, there can be no reason in the world for denying to woman the exercise of the elective franchise, or a hand in making and administering the laws of the land. Our doctrine is that “right is of no sex.”

D. Carrie Chapman Catt Describes the Campaign for Suffrage

"To get the word male in effect out of the constitution cost the women of the country 52 years of pauseless campaign...; 56 campaigns of referenda to male voters; 480 campaigns to urge Legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters; ...30 campaigns to urge presidential party conventions to adopt women suffrage planks in party platforms; and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses...."

E. “Suffragists' Machine Perfected in All States Under Mrs. Catt's Rule,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1917, p 8.

“New York City, with its many political problems and peculiarities, was the first city in which the suffragists organized along political lines. Its woman suffrage organization is the finest and most complete in the country. The beginning of the organization of the suffragists along the lines of political parties was in 1909. It was the idea of Mrs. Catt, who is recognized as a woman of great breadth of vision and of exceptional executive ability. She felt that, if politicians and voters were to be influenced, they must be addressed by women of their respective districts.”

F. Alice H. Wadsworth to Hon. Chas. E. Fuller, M.C., December 11, 1917.

Dear Sir:

Your attention is invited to the following facts:

1. The proposed Federal suffrage amendment positively destroys the right of the people to vote on the question of woman suffrage, as provided for in their State Constitutions, and allows woman suffrage to be forced on unwilling States by the Legislatures of other States.
2. This proposal is a violation of the present Constitution of the United States, which provides that "The powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."
3. The people, through their State Constitutions, ratified by popular vote, have reserved the right to adopt or withhold woman suffrage by popular vote.
4. This proposal asks you to rob the people of this right; to repudiate your party platform which recognizes the right of each State to settle this question for itself by popular vote.

Every principle of patriotism, every ideal of self-government, and your oath to defend the Constitution, urges you to vote against the attempt to obtain woman suffrage in spite of the expressed will of the people.

G. Woodrow Wilson Addresses the U.S. Senate

"We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right? This war could not have been fought,...if it had not been for the services of the women...wherever men have worked, and upon the very skirts and edges of battle itself."

H. "Suffrage Wins in Senate; Now Goes to States," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1919.

WASHINGTON, June 4 - After a long and persistent fight advocates of woman suffrage won a victory in the Senate today when that body, by a vote of 56 to 25, adopted the Susan Anthony amendment to the Constitution. The suffrage supporters had two more than the necessary two-thirds vote of Senators present. Had all the Senators known to be in favor of suffrage been present the amendment would have had 66 votes, or two more than a two-thirds vote of the entire Senate. The amendment, having already been passed by the House, where the vote was 304 to 89, now goes to the States for ratification. Leaders of the National Woman's party announced tonight that they would at once embark upon a campaign to obtain ratification of the amendment by the necessary three-fourths of the States so that women might have the vote by the next Presidential election.