

THE ROAD TO FEMALE SUFFRAGE

1776: **Abigail Adams** writes to her husband John, who is at work on the Declaration of Independence at the Continental Congress, asking that he and the other men "remember the ladies." John responds, "As to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh."

1833: **Oberlin College** becomes the first coeducational college in the United States.

1836: **Sarah Grimke** begins her speaking career as an abolitionist and a women's rights advocate. She is eventually silenced by male abolitionists who consider her public speaking a liability.

1837: **Mary Lyon** founds **Mount Holyoke College** in Massachusetts, eventually the first four-year college in the United States exclusively for women. **Vassar** follows in 1861, then **Wellesley** and **Smith** Colleges in 1875.

1848: Marked as the beginning of the 72-year struggle for female suffrage, the first women's rights convention in the U.S. is held in Seneca Falls, New York. Many participants, both women and men, sign a "**Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions**" outlining the main issues and goals for the emerging women's movement. The resolution specifically calling for female suffrage passes by a narrow margin.

1851: Former slave **Sojourner Truth** delivers her "**Ain't I a Woman?**" speech at the **Akron, Ohio** women's rights convention.

1861 to 1865: The **American Civil War** disrupts suffrage activity as women divert their energies to "war work." The war serves as a "training ground," as women gain important skills they will later use in postbellum organizational activity.

1865 to 1880: **Southern white women** create Confederate memorial societies to help preserve the memory of the war, propelling many of them into the public sphere for the first time. **Newly emancipated Southern black women** form thousands of organizations aimed at "uplifting the race."

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

1868: The **Fourteenth Amendment** is ratified, which extends to all citizens the protections of the Constitution against unjust state laws. This amendment is the first to define "citizens" and "voters" as "male."

1869: The women's rights movement splits into two factions as a result of disagreements over the Fourteenth and soon-to-be-passed Fifteenth Amendments. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony form the more radical **National Woman Suffrage Association** (NWSA), with its goal a federal amendment for female suffrage. **Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell** and **Julia Ward Howe** organize the more conservative **American Woman Suffrage Association** (AWSA). In the same year, the Wyoming territory is organized with a women's suffrage provision. In 1890, Wyoming is admitted to the Union with its suffrage provision intact.

1870: The **Fifteenth Amendment** receives final ratification. By its text, women are not specifically excluded from the vote. Over the next two years, some 150 women will attempt to vote in almost a dozen jurisdictions from Delaware to California, including Sojourner Truth in Battle Creek, Michigan. Even in South Carolina, a few black women, protected by Reconstruction officials, cast ballots.

1872: **Susan B. Anthony** and **14 other women** register and vote in the presidential election in Rochester, New York. Anthony is arrested, tried, found guilty and fined \$100, which she refuses to pay.

1874: The **Woman's Christian Temperance Union**, with **Frances Willard** at its head (1876), becomes an important force in the fight for women's suffrage. (One of the most vehement opponents to women's enfranchisement is the liquor lobby, which fears women might use the franchise to prohibit the sale of liquor.)

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: The NWSA and the AWSA are reunited as the **National American Woman Suffrage Association** (NAWSA) under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. During this same year, **Jane Addams** and **Ellen Gates Starr** found **Hull House**, a settlement house project in Chicago, and within a year, there are more than a hundred settlement houses--largely operated by women--throughout the U.S.

1893: **Hannah Greenbaum Solomon** founds the **National Council of Jewish Women**. In that same year, Colorado becomes the first state to adopt a state amendment enfranchising women.

1895: Utah amends its constitution granting suffrage to women.

1896: **Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Margaret Murray Washington, Fanny Jackson Coppin, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Charlotte Forten Grimke** and former slave **Harriet Tubman** meet in Washington, D.C. to form the **National Association of Colored Women**. In Idaho, a constitutional amendment grants suffrage to women.



1903: **Mary Dreier, Rheta Childe Dorr, Leonora O'Reilly** and others form the **Women's Trade Union League of New York**, an organization of middle- and working-class women dedicated to unionization for working women and to women's suffrage.

1910: Washington State votes for woman suffrage, then California (1911), Michigan, Kansas, Oregon and Arizona (1912).

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

1913: Over **5,000 suffragists** parade in Washington, D.C. and are mobbed by abusive crowds along the way. **Alice Paul** and **Lucy Burns** organize the Congressional Union, later known as the **National Women's Party** (1916), whose members engage in various forms of civil disobedience to publicize the suffrage cause.

1914: The **National Federation of Women's Clubs**--which includes more than two million white women and women of color throughout the United States--formally endorses the suffrage campaign.

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

1917: The **National Women's Party** posts "**Sentinels of Liberty**" at the White House, picketing for women's suffrage. Nearly **500 women** are arrested, 168 are sent to jail. In prison, some stage hunger strikes and are force fed. In response to public outcry, they are eventually released without comment or pardon.

... And ain't I a woman?

Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me. -

And ain't I a woman?

I could work as much and eat as much as a man-- when I could get to it-- and bear the lash as well

and ain't I a woman?

I have born 13 children and seen most all sold into slavery and when I cried out a mother's grief none but Jesus heard me. . . and ain't I a woman...?



Sojourner Truth 1797-1883

The colors used by early suffragists were green, white and violet, standing for "**Give Women the Vote.**"

1919: The U.S. House of Representatives passes the **Woman Suffrage Amendment** 304-89; the Senate passes it with just two votes to spare, 56-25.

August 26, 1920: The **Nineteenth Amendment** is ratified, passing by one state, Tennessee, and in that state, by only one vote. It is quietly signed into law in a ceremony to which the press and suffragists are not invited. Its goal accomplished, NAWSA ceases to exist, but its organization becomes the nucleus of the **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS.**

1920: **Black women** try to register to vote, but in most Southern states, they face property tax requirements, literacy tests and other obstacles. By 1930, black women in the South are effectively disenfranchised and it will be another 35 years--with passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act--before the right of all women to vote is finally implemented.

1923: The **National Women's Party** first proposes the **Equal Rights Amendment** to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender. It has never been ratified.

(Courtesy of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, "One Hundred Years toward Suffrage: An Overview," compiled by E. Susan Barber)



United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division
Feminist Suffrage Parade in New York City, May 6, 1912.

FEMALE ELECTED OFFICIALS

In 2006, the U.S. ranked 66th out of 115 countries surveyed for the political empowerment of women (**Global Gender Gap Report**).

According to the **Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University**, in 2008, there are 87 women (16.3%) in the 110th Congress, 16 (16%) in the Senate and 71 (16.3%) in the House. Three women serve as Delegates to the House from Guam, the Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C.

In 2008, 74 women hold statewide elective executive offices across the country; women hold 23.5% of the 315 available positions. In the same year, 1,746 (23.7%) of the 7,382 state legislators in the United States are women. Women hold 423 (21.5%) of the 1,971 state senate seats and 1,323 (24.5%) of the 5,411 state house seats. Since 1971, the number of women serving in state legislatures has more than quintupled.

According to the **U.S. Conference of Mayors**, as of February 2008, of the 1,193 mayors of U.S. cities with populations over 30,000, 187 (15.7%) are women.

WOMEN OF COLOR IN ELECTIVE OFFICE

Of the 87 women in Congress, 20 (23%) are women of color; in addition, an African-American woman and a Caribbean-American woman serve as Delegates to the House from Washington, DC and the Virgin Islands, respectively.

Of the 74 women serving in statewide elective executive offices, 4 (5.4%) are women of color.

Of the 1,746 women state legislators serving nationwide, 355 (20.3%) are women of color, 96 senators and 259 representatives. Women of color constitute 4.8% of the total 7,382 state legislators.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL FIRSTS

WHO WAS THE FIRST U.S. FEMALE ...

- Candidate for President
- Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Of color and first of Asian-Pacific Islander descent to serve in Congress
- African-American elected to Congress
- Elected to Congress
- U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- Elected to the Senate
- To run on a major party's national ticket, as Democratic vice-presidential candidate
- Of Hispanic descent elected to Congress
- African-American elected to the Senate

Answers to Quiz: **a.** Victoria Woodhull (1872), **b.** Nancy Pelosi (2007), **c.** Patsy Takemoto Mink (1965), **d.** Shirley Chisholm (1968), **e.** Jeannette Rankin (1917, three years before passage of the 19th Amendment), **f.** Sandra Day O'Connor (1981), **g.** Hattie Wyatt Caraway (1932), **h.** Geraldine Ferraro (1984), **i.** Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (1989), **j.** Carol Moseley-Braun (1992)

A HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S VOTE

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Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution

"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 sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

"Every single inch of ground that woman stands upon today has been gained by the hard work of some little handful of women of the past."

Susan B. Anthony

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