

THE 19TH AMENDMENT

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This year, on August 18, 2020, the United States celebrated the centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment, which granted women the right to vote. Before its ratification, women in 18 states, mostly in the west, had full suffrage, 22 states had partial suffrage—meaning women could vote in some elections—and eight states had no female suffrage.

For decades, women in many states, mostly in the southeast, had been kept out of the polling stations. Anti-suffragists opposed suffrage for various reasons. Many argued that women didn't want the vote and should be kept out of politics, but one opinion in the early 20th century was that women would vote like their husbands and therefore make their vote pointless.

However, history has proven the anti-suffragists wrong, as the female vote has become very important. According to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, in every major ethnic category, more women have voted than men in every presidential election since 1964. In the 2016 election alone, 73.7 million women voted, while only 63.8 million men did. Therefore, it is impossible to say that women only vote like their

male partners, considering there are millions more of them voting. So what have they done with this political power?

Since the passage of the 19th amendment and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, more women have been elected to Congress, which has subsequently created more legislation aiming to improve the lives of women. Equal access to credit, equal pay and fair health guidelines are just a few of the initiatives that women have pushed for in the last 100 years.

"All different kinds of women from women in China to black women, Native women—everybody had their hat in the game on what they needed to be able to get access to, and the one way that people can make change is through policy," social studies teacher Tatiana McKinney said. "Being able to vote, it really opens the door for you to be able to say I want this candidate because they're going to support women."

For example, according to the lifestyle magazine *Woman's Day*, before the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, single women could be denied credit cards, and married women needed the approval of their husbands for credit. According to *The Atlantic*, initially the

Equal Credit Opportunity Act did not include sex or marital status in its nondiscrimination policy, so Congresswoman Lindy Boggs amended the act to include those guidelines. Senior Molly Halladay-Glynn attributes this to the idea that women are better advocates for their own needs than men are for women's needs because of their personal experiences.

"Even though men totally should still care about women's rights, I feel like women understand more and therefore will fight harder for those types of ideas, and it's just really important to have a woman to represent us and to fight harder for those issues," Halladay-Glynn said.

Furthermore, 15 female representatives created the Women's Caucus to focus on women's issues, such as in 1990, when they took on the National Institutes of Health for not using female test subjects. They wouldn't even conduct research on female rats. Because of the caucus, later in 1993, the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993 went into effect and stated that "(A) women are included as subjects in each project of such research; and (B) members of minority groups are included as subjects in such research."

HOW THE FEMALE VOTE HAS CHANGED AMERICAN POLITICS

In addition to legislation in Congress, the Supreme Court has been an integral part of furthering women's rights. In *Reed v. Reed*, the court ruled that women could not be paid less than men for the same job, upholding the precedent set by the Equal Pay Act.

The female vote has also played a role in the judiciary system. According to the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, in the 1992 presidential election, 45% of female voters voted for Bill Clinton, however just 38% voted for George H.W. Bush Sr. One year later, Clinton appointed Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the Supreme Court of the United States, making her the second woman in US history to be on the Supreme Court.

As a justice, Ginsburg voted in favor of women's rights in cases like *Young v. United Parcel Service, Inc., [UPS]* which, as the American Civil Liberties Union states, resulted in requiring "employers to provide pregnant employees with the same on-the-job accommodations...as they do to other nonpregnant employees who are similar in their ability or inability to work."

Finally, it's important to note that the 19th amendment in practice only allowed white

women to vote. Native Americans couldn't vote until much later, with Utah as the last state to allow them to vote in 1962. In addition, black women were subjected to poll taxes and intentionally unreasonable literacy tests until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Even today, voter suppression still exists for many minorities and felons.

Still, the election polls and the issues and people on the ballot look very different today than they did just 100 years ago. In 2020 alone, the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University states 584 women filed to run for Congress, and 261 will be on the ballot this November, up from 234 in 2018. Although there is still much to be done to achieve equality, great progress has been made by fearless leaders, especially by the leaders of the women's rights movement.

"I am very very proud of our country and the progress that we made," social studies teacher Robin Grenz said. "So we have women in politics. We have women in powerful positions. We have women doctors and lawyers and justices, and I think that we should be proud of that progress."

This article is dedicated to the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died on September 18, 2020 at the age of 87. A pioneer for women's rights, she fought to end sex-based discrimination and dedicated her life to creating the change she wanted to see in the world. Ginsburg has inspired the next generation to challenge the status quo and to never give up on their dreams, no matter what obstacles stand in their way.



Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells founded the Alpha Suffrage Club that taught Chicago women about the importance of voting. She also helped Illinois women gain partial voting rights in 1913 and marched with the Illinois delegation at a NAWSA suffrage parade in Washington D.C., despite being told to march in the back behind the white women.



Mabel Ping-Hua Lee

Chinese-American immigrant Mabel Ping-Hua Lee fought for women's suffrage starting in her teenage years. She organized a suffrage parade in New York City in 1912 and fought for the voting rights of Chinese women, who were excluded from the 19th amendment due to the Chinese Exclusion Act.



Susan B. Anthony

Susan B. Anthony was an abolitionist and was friends with fellow suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The two gave speeches around the U.S. about suffrage and founded the American Equal Rights Association. Later they started the National Woman Suffrage Association to focus on passing a constitutional amendment for women's suffrage.



Sojourner Truth

Born a slave in 1797, Sojourner Truth gained freedom in 1827; she was a prominent abolitionist and women's rights champion. Truth delivered speeches about slavery and women's rights. Her most famous one, "Ain't I a Woman?", which she shared at a women's rights convention in 1851, outlined her experiences with gender and racial inequality.



Alice Paul

Alice Paul dedicated her life to advancing the political status of women, specifically through the 19th amendment and the Equal Rights Amendment, which was never passed. Paul created the National Women's Party as well as organized marches and pickets outside of the White House to pressure President Wilson into supporting the 19th amendment.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an abolitionist and pioneer of the women's suffrage movement. Stanton helped produce the Seneca Falls Convention, the original women's rights convention, and wrote "The Declaration of Sentiments," which modeled the Declaration of Independence and listed the grievances women had suffered from men.