

# Suffrage Vocabulary

**Abolish:** To put an end to.

**Adoption:** (1a) To accept: adopt a suggestion. (1b) To approve officially: In 1920, the government adopted the 19th Amendment

**Amendment:** A legal change or addition to a law or body of laws.

**Ballot:** The piece of paper used to vote.

**Citizen:** A person who is loyal to a given country and has the protection of that country.

**Citizenship:** Having the duties, rights, and privileges of being a citizen of a country

**Enfranchise:** To give the rights of citizenship to a person or group of people, especially to give that group the right to vote.

**Militant:** Aggressive or combative.

**Petition:** (1) An appeal, especially to a person or group in authority. (2) A written document formally requesting a right or benefit from an authority or government.

**Picket:** A person or group of people standing outside a building to protest.

**Ratification:** To approve and make valid

**Suffrage:** (1) The right to vote. (2) The act of voting

**14<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Rights of Citizens (1868). The clauses of this amendment were intended to punish southern states that didn't allow African-Americans the right to vote, prevent former Confederate leaders from serving in government, forbid payment of the Confederacy's debts by the federal government, and insure payments of war debts owed by the federal government

**15<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Suffrage for African-Americans (1870). This amendment replaced section 2 of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment in guaranteeing blacks the right to vote, and also granted Congress the power to enforce this amendment.

**19<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Woman's Suffrage (1920). This amendment extended the right to vote to all qualified women in federal and state election

## Women's Suffrage

*the right of women to vote in political elections*

Individual women demanded **suffrage** (*the right to vote*) for themselves as early as the 1600s. An organized movement on behalf of woman suffrage, led by women but open to men, first emerged in the United States in 1848. Woman suffragists often met hostility and sometimes violence. Women's organizations in many countries made the fight for suffrage their most fundamental demand because they saw it as the defining feature of full citizenship. Woman suffrage claimed for women the right to govern themselves and choose their own representatives. It asserted that women should enjoy individual rights of self-government, rather than relying on indirect civic participation as the mothers, sisters, or daughters of male voters.



Women's **enfranchisement** took many decades to achieve because women had to persuade a male electorate (*body of qualified voters*) to grant them the vote. Many men — and some women — believed that women were not suited by circumstance or temperament for the vote. Women by nature were believed to be dependent on men and subordinate to them. Many thought women could not be trusted to exercise the independence of thought necessary for choosing political leaders responsibly. It was also believed that women's place was in the home, caring for husband and children. Entry of women into political life, it was feared, challenged the assignment of women to the home and might lead to disruption of the family.

In addition, opposition to women's suffrage took varied shapes. Politicians feared that **enfranchised** women might vote them out of office. Priests and ministers held that women should confine their influence to home and children. Socialist and labor parties feared that women might vote for conservative candidates. Specific interests, such as textile companies and the liquor, brewing, and mining industries, did not want to enfranchise women, since women might vote for legislation damaging to their businesses.



American women were the first in the world to voice organized demands for the vote. Abolitionist activists Lucretia Mott and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**, along with several other women friends, convened a meeting in Stanton's hometown of Seneca Falls, N.Y., "to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women." At the **Seneca Falls Convention**, held on July 19–20, 1848, Stanton read her "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," and the convention debated and approved a series of resolutions designed to win equality for women. The most controversial resolution, included at Stanton's insistence, stated that "it is the duty of the women in this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the franchise."



During the Civil War, suffragists shelved their cause temporarily, hoping that at war's end, women as well as **emancipated** slaves would be enfranchised. After the war Republican Party politicians believed enfranchisement of the ex-slaves would be defeated if harnessed to the even more unpopular cause of woman's suffrage. They succeeded in passing the **14th** and **15th Amendments** to the U.S. Constitution, which gave the vote to black men but not to women.

In the wake of the passage of these amendments, suffragists split into two rival factions. Stanton and **Susan B. Anthony**, her longtime colleague, refused to support the 15th Amendment because it did not enfranchise women, favoring passage of another constitutional amendment to do so. They formed the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869. Conservative feminists, led by Lucy Stone; her husband, Henry Blackwell; and **Julia Ward Howe**, supported the 15th Amendment and campaigned for the passage of state laws to enfranchise women. They established the American Woman's Suffrage Association (AWSA) in 1869. But the Supreme Court dashed any hope that the courts might enfranchise women without legislative or constitutional changes. In *Minor v. Happersett* (1875) the Court ruled that citizenship did not in itself confer suffrage rights.



The AWSA and NWSA eventually reconciled and in 1890 merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Anthony retired from the presidency of NAWSA in 1900. **Carrie Chapman Catt**, the astute political campaigner who succeeded her, organized both a well-coordinated state-by-state and a national effort. By 1910 women had the right to vote in Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Colorado, and Washington.

The suffrage movement reawakened in the early 20th century. Educated middle-class women questioned the reasons for denying them the right to vote when immigrant men, many of whom were illiterate or poorly educated, could help choose the nation's leaders. Social reformers hoped that a woman's bloc vote might achieve causes they favored, such as laws protecting the health and safety of employed women and the abolition of child labor. Still, the suffrage movement faced considerable opposition.



**Alice Paul** brought the attention-getting tactics of British suffragists to U.S. shores. In 1916 Paul and other **militant** activists, inspired by the British woman's movement, left the NAWSA to form the National Woman's Party. To bring pressure on Pres. Woodrow Wilson to back congressional passage of a constitutional amendment, they

**picketed** the White House and chained themselves to the White House fence. Grateful to American women for their active participation during World War I (1917–1918), Congress passed a woman suffrage constitutional amendment by a narrow margin in 1919. It was **ratified** by the states in August 1920.

