



The 19th Amendment

On August 18, 2020, the 19th Amendment will have been the law of the United States for 100 years. The women and men who fought for the passage of this amendment go back to the time of the creation of the nation, including Abigail Adams, who told her husband not to forget the ladies. By 1848, women were calling for equal representation at the Seneca Falls Convention. Many of these women fought for the abolitionist movement, and, with the passage of the civil rights amendments after the Civil War, the suffrage movement took two different approaches.

The split in the suffrage movement was over how to win the vote for women. Some believed a state-by-state approach was best. Western states began passing suffrage provisions, which they were required to remove when they joined the nation. The other group pushed for a national amendment. Peaceful protests brought these groups together.

However, soon division erupted when activist Alice Paul returned to the United States after working with firebrand Emmeline Pankhurst, whose followers were known for slapping police officers, throwing bricks through windows, and setting fires to gain attention. Alice began using aggressive yet legal tactics that and propaganda imagery to gain attention for the cause.

Organized by Paul, the parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. in March of 1913 was a very public sign of women's unity. Each group marched in different colors to show their diversity. When men disrupted the parade, the women wrote to their hometown papers to share stories of their mistreatment, and the message was spread across the nation.

Alice and her supporters picketed the White House and were arrested on trumped up charges. They refused to pay the fines and went to jail. Their penalties were increased, so most spent 60 days in the workhouse.

Public opinion changed when Lucy Burns was chained to the wall in a punishment cell and other women were physically abused. States began passing suffrage bills. Finally, the U.S. Congress passed the bill on June 4, 1919, and it was then sent to the states to ratify. By the spring of 1930, 35 states had approved the amendment.

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