

Women and Activism— How Far Do We Go?

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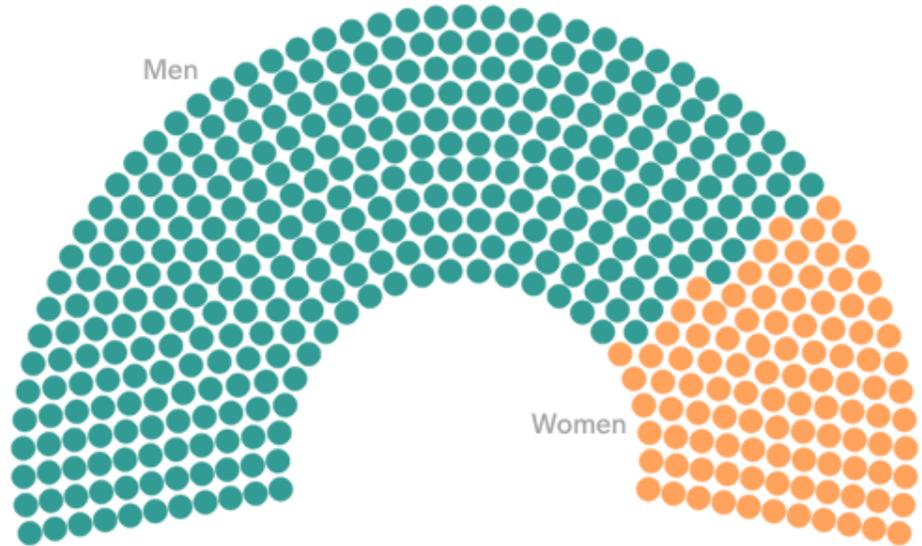
LWVSC, AUGUST 22, 2020

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- Party
- Gender**
- Race
- Age
- LGBTQ

- 115th House
- 116th House**



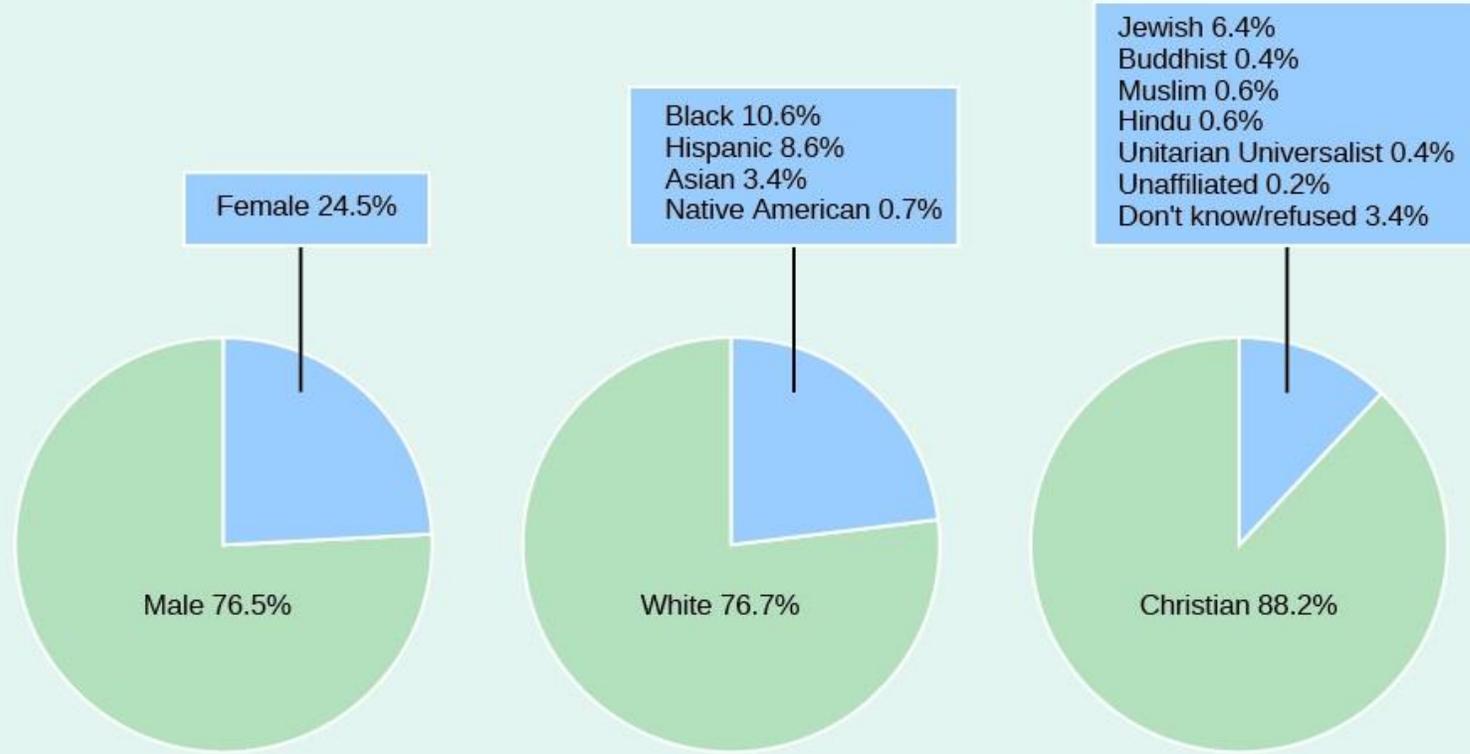
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GENDER	BEFORE ELECTION	AFTER ELECTION	PERCENT CHANGE
● Men	351	332	↓ 5.4%
● Women	84	103	↑ 22.6%

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi



U.S. 116th Congress by Gender, Race, and Religion



Source: Panetta, Grace and Samantha Lee. "This Graphic Shows How Much More Diverse the House of Representatives Is Getting." *Business Insider*. January 5, 2019.

Source: Pew Research Center. "Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of the 116th Congress." January 3, 2019.

Factors in suffrage history

Issues

- Gender
- Race
- Class

Strategies

- Court challenges
- State-by-state legislation
- Constitutional amendment

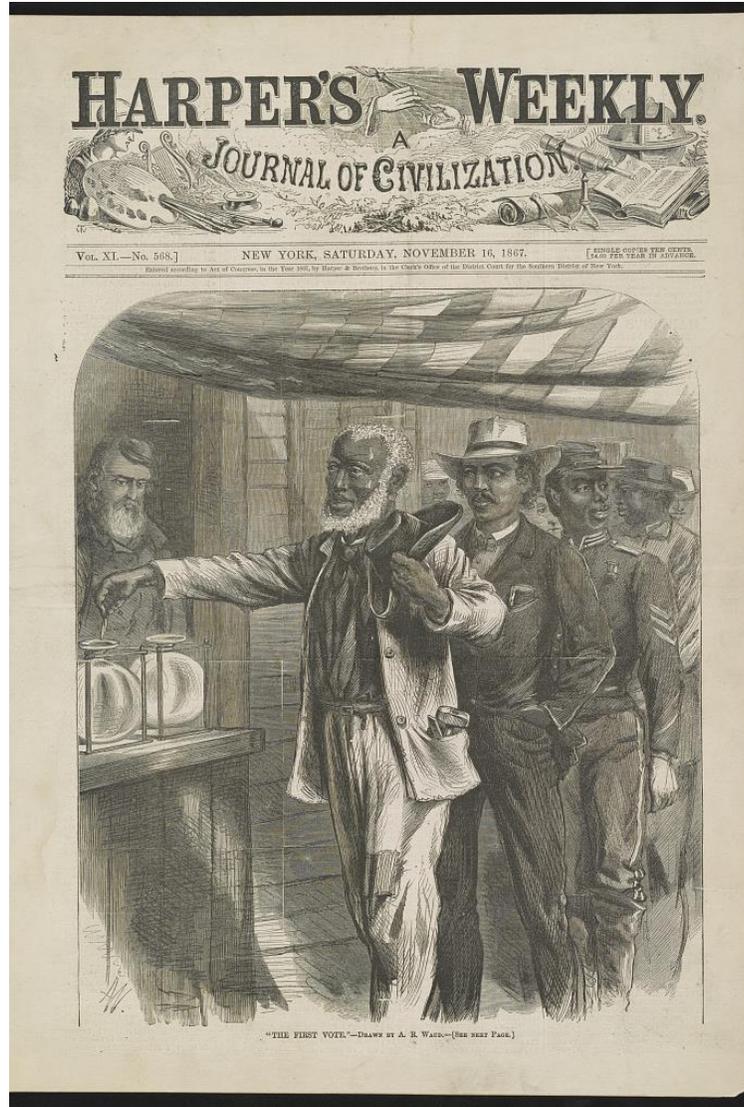
Tactics

- Reasoning
- Lobbying
- Protests

Gender equality argument



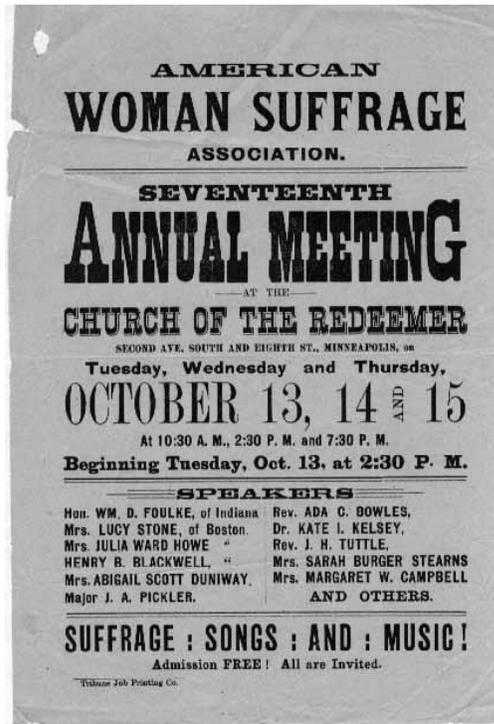
- Women's rights leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony
- Declaration of Sentiments adopted at Seneca Falls, New York (1848)
- "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed with their Creator with certain inalienable rights;"



Fifteenth Amendment (1871) and race

- Granted the vote to Black men
- Many women thought they should have been included
- Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton opposed the Fifteenth Amendment, while other suffragists like Lucy Stone supported it
- Previously, only state laws restricted voting rights to men
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote, “If that word ‘male’ be inserted, it will take us a century at least to get it out.”

Rival suffrage organizations (1869)



- American Woman Suffrage Association
 - A moderate group—*The Woman's Journal*
 - Led by women and men
 - Sought only woman suffrage
 - Attracted female and male support
 - Pursued state-by-state strategy
- National Woman Suffrage Association
 - A radical group—*The Revolution*
 - Led by women
 - Sought rights to suffrage, education, divorce
 - Sought Constitutional amendment
 - First introduced in Congress in 1878, but garnered little support



Court challenges

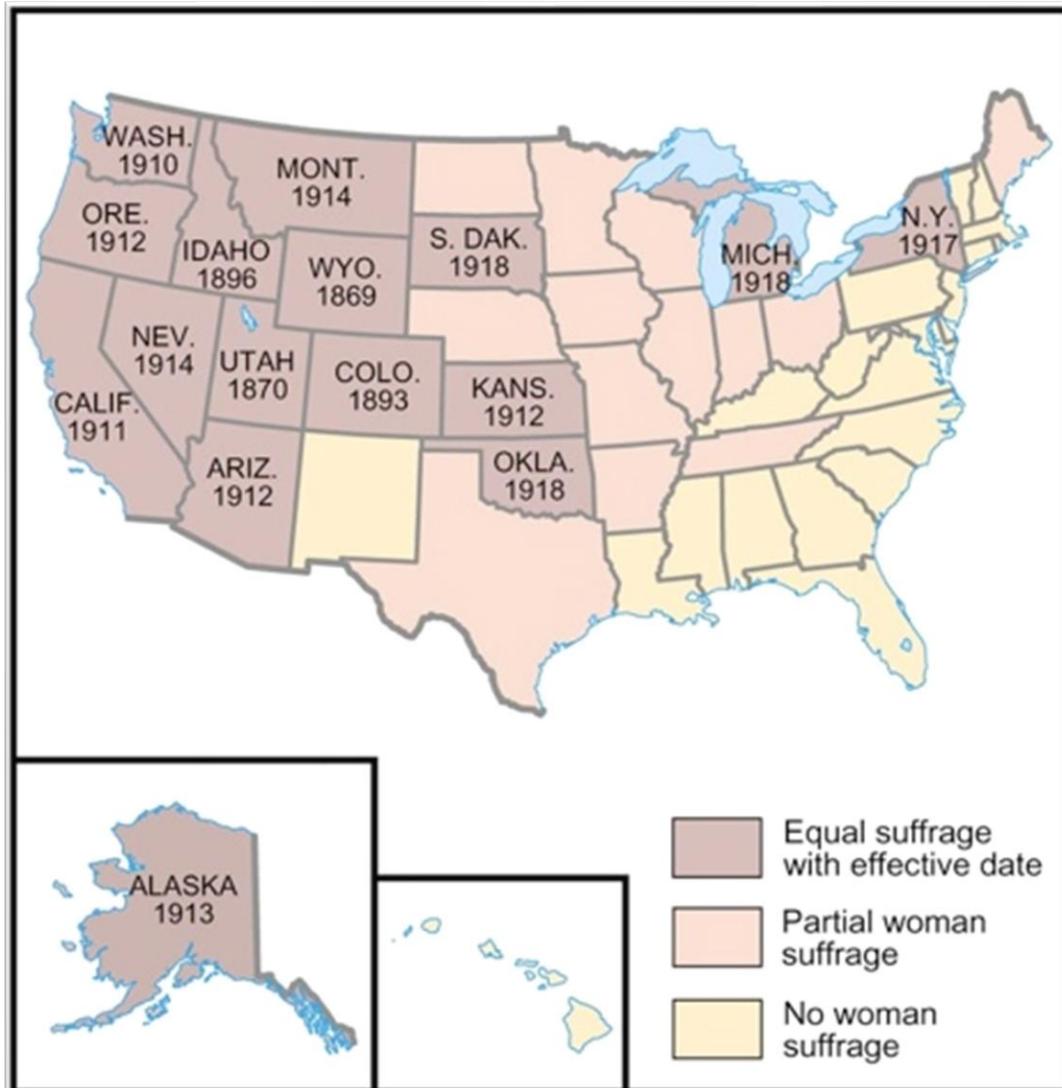
- NWSA challenged the exclusion of women from voting in the 1872 presidential election by trying to register to vote
- Susan B. Anthony registered and voted in New York, and was later arrested, tried, and fined \$100 (which she never paid)
- Virginia Louisa Minor was turned away in Missouri and filed a lawsuit arguing that the 14th Amendment established her citizenship and right to vote
- *Minor v. Happersett* (1875)—Supreme Court held that the U.S. Constitution did not guarantee citizens the right to vote; state laws could prohibit women from voting



State-by-state suffrage

- Abigail Scott traveled to Oregon overland in 1852 at age 17
- Married with six children when husband was seriously injured
- Now Abigail Scott Duniway, she became a writer and publisher to support her family
- Weekly newspaper *The New Northwest* (1871)
- Persuaded men to improve women's economic and political rights in Oregon with laws granting married women property rights, right to operate her own business, right to control her own earnings, right to property if her husband leaves
- Suffrage: Idaho (1896), Washington (1910), Oregon (1912)

NWSA and AWSA merge in 1890



- State-by-state strategy successful in the West
- Organizational support for woman suffrage grew
 - Women's Christian Temperance Union (1874)
 - National Council of Women (1888)
 - American Federation of Labor (1890)
 - Women's Trade Union League of New York (1903)
 - Bull Moose Party (1912) – Theodore Roosevelt
 - National Federation of Women's Clubs (1914)

Expanding female activism

- Women became good at lobbying
- Prohibition (women at left are attending a state suffrage bill hearing in New Jersey)
- Social work and settlement houses
- Birth control
- Good government
- Educational reforms
- Workplace rights
- Anti-lynching campaign





National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (1896)

- Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Frances Ellen Walker Harper among founders
- Motto: Lifting as We Climb
- Literacy tests, poll taxes, grandfather clauses were disenfranchising Black men
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
- Black women were excluded from White suffragist meetings
- Asked to walk in separate Black units in suffrage parades—Wells-Barnett refused
- Walker spoke of Black women's "double burden" of sex and race



Working women for suffrage

- Mary Elizabeth Lease, worked through the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Knights of Labor, and the Populist Party to win women suffrage in Kansas (1912)
- Rose Schneiderman, an immigrant factory worker, union organizer, and strike leader among garment workers, allied with elite New York suffragists who supported working women's labor reforms and woman suffrage





National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (1911)

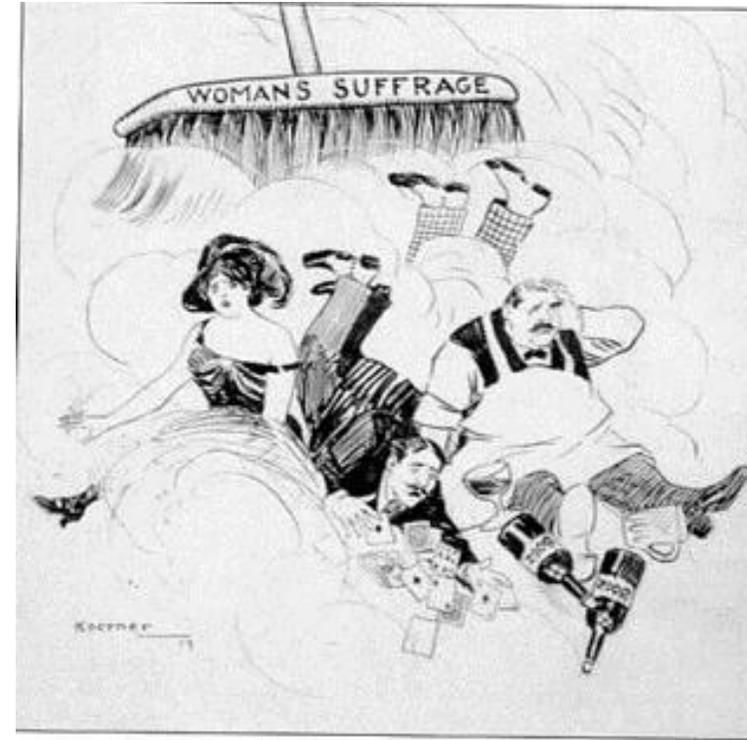
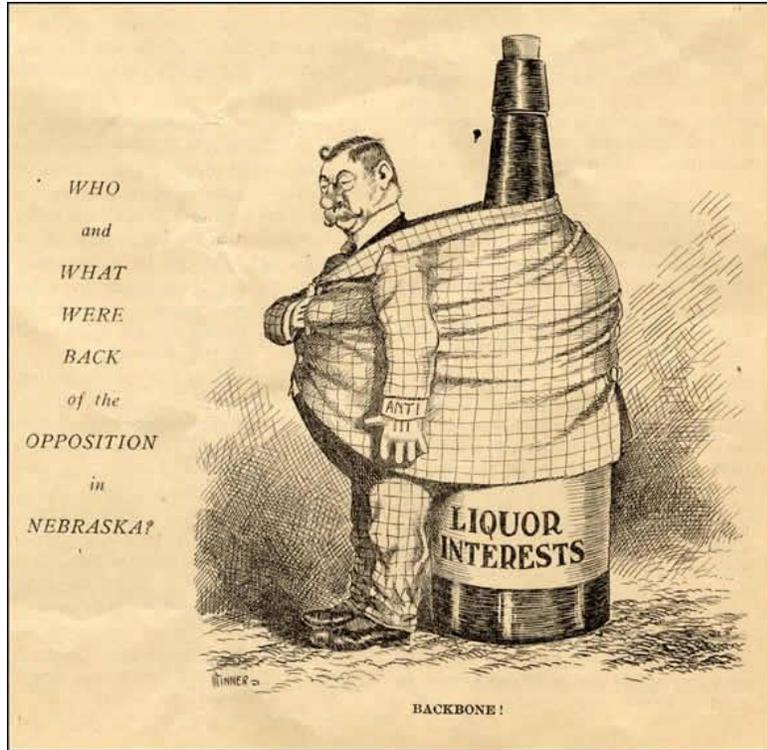


Gender equality backlash

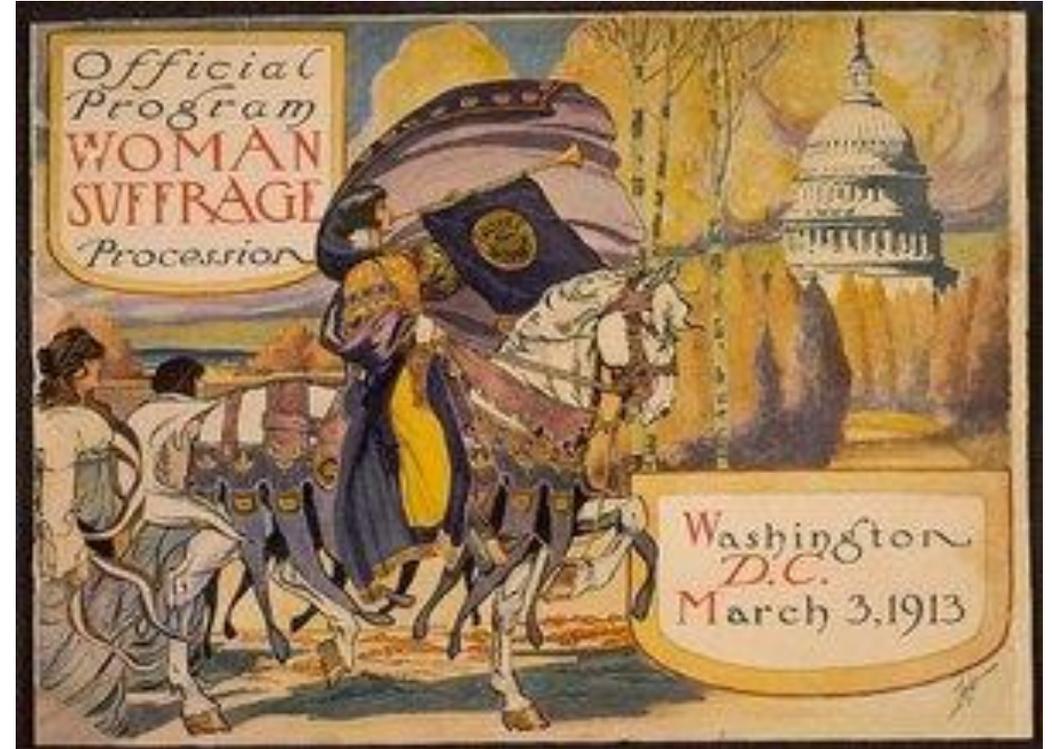
- Women's roles did not include the public sphere
- Men already represented women's political interests
- Women would be coarsened by participation in the public arena
- Men would be emasculated if women gained political power
- Many women shared these concerns



Class and race used in arguments



Liquor lobby opposed suffrage

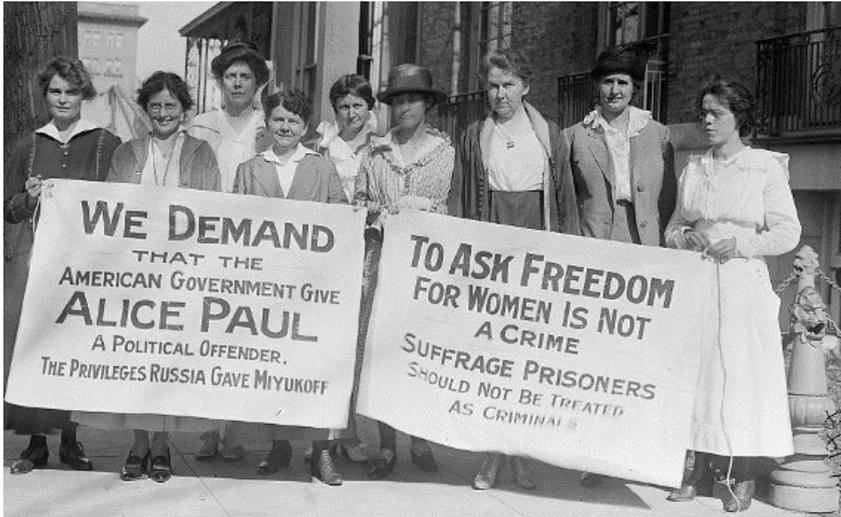


Woman Suffrage Procession (1913)

Militant Methods

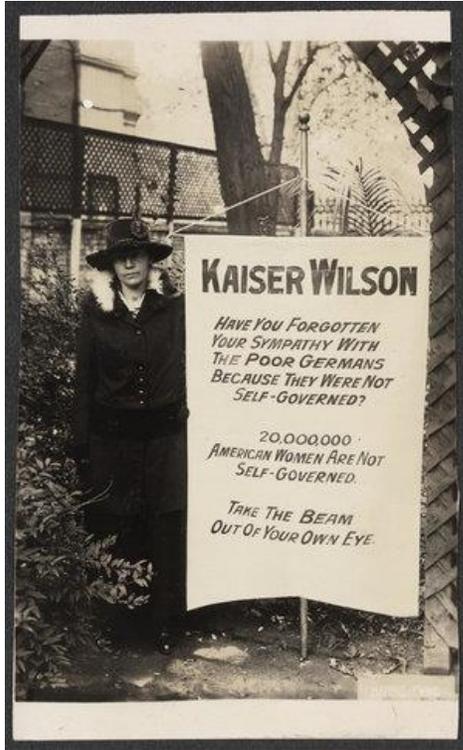


- NAWSA supported traditional tactics of petitioning and lobbying
- After success of 1913 parade, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns wanted more parades and protests
- Broke away from NAWSA in 1913 to form the Congressional Union, renamed the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1917
- 18 months of picketing the White House began in January 1917 to pressure President Woodrow Wilson to support woman suffrage
- U.S. entered the Great War in April 1917; protesters burned copies of Wilson's speeches about democracy in Europe
- Picketers were accused of being unpatriotic, arrested, fined, sent to workhouses, went on hunger strike, force fed
- Newspapers widely reported protests and arrests; public disapproved of harsh tactics used against the women grew



Newspaper reports

- “Alice Paul Happy in Jail Under the Claim of Martyr, She Will Serve at Least Half a Year Unless There Is Un-expected Turn,” *News and Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.), October 24, 1917.
 - “The Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage or its successor, the National Woman’s Party, has been more or less a fake organization ever since it started. . . . Miss Paul and her satellites . . . have become the laughing stock of Washington.”
- “Miss Paul Removed to Prison Hospital, Transferred from Psychopathic Ward on a Stretcher, She Writes in Smuggled Note,” *New York Times*, November 19, 2017.
 - “Her note, given out by the National Women’s Party managers, says she was carried from one ward to another on a stretcher, perhaps too weak to walk on account of her hunger strike and forcible feeding. Miss Paul’s story, as told in her note, follows.”



Protest, arrest, workhouse



19th Amendment approved by Congress May 21, 1919



19th Amendment
ratified August 18, 1920

Alice Paul unfurls
ratification banner at
NWP headquarters in
Washington, D.C.



Suffragettes celebrate 1920

- A right mostly for White women
- Jim Crow voter suppression
 - Literacy tests
 - Poll taxes
 - Intimidation
 - Violence
- Lack of citizenship
 - Asian immigrants
 - Native Americans

Protesting for voting rights (1965)





How far do we go to protect the vote?

- Ending Census count early
- Gerrymandering districts
- Felony disenfranchisement
- Purging voter rolls
- Closing registration sites
- Closing polling places
- Voter ID laws
- Disinformation
- Limiting early voting
- Voter intimidation
- Threats to mail-in voting

Comments? Questions?
