

Illinois

1869—Mary Livermore, Illinois Equal Suffrage Association (IESA) President and temperance advocate, convened Illinois' first suffrage convention in Chicago. Livermore and Women's Christian Temperance Union founder Frances Willard (based in Evanston) spearheaded a petition campaign for the state legislature to consider suffrage.

1891—Suffragists enjoyed their first victory in 1891 when the legislature passed a bill granting women voting rights in school elections.

Catharine McCulloch, one of the first female attorneys in the state, served as IESA legal advisor and later as IESA President. McCulloch also helped coordinate the National American Suffrage Association lobbying strategy, was a highly visible local and national suffrage leader, and in 1907 was elected as Illinois' first female justice of the peace.

1912—Grace Wilbur Trout took over the IESA presidency from McCulloch, and galvanized public support for suffrage by starting local suffrage clubs. IESA sponsored car parades and public events throughout the state—all of which generated press coverage.

1913—Suffragists' lobbying efforts paid off when the legislature passed the Presidential and Municipal Voting Act. In June 1913, suffragists organized a parade similar to the Washington D.C. parade, with grand floats, banners, and female delegations marching by professional groupings.

With the bill's passage, Illinois became the first state east of the Mississippi to grant women the right to vote for the presidency. Jubilant suffragists rushed to recreate another parade, this time an enormous car parade, to celebrate. It began at Grant Park and proceeded down Michigan Avenue; thousands of spectators arrived to cheer for bill passage!

1916—Illinois suffragists kept the issue alive by hosting a parade in 1916 for the Republican National Convention—to let politicians know that suffrage could not be ignored as the party appealed to voters and delegates.

June 10, 1919—Following the passage of the 19th Amendment, Illinois moved quickly to become the first state to ratify the amendment. Illinois legislators voted unanimously for ratification, but a drafting error forced legislators to vote again on June 17th. Illinois became the seventh state to ratify the 19th Amendment on June 17, 1919.

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