

Kentucky

1838—Kentucky passed its first suffrage law, allowing unmarried women and widows in rural counties who owned property to vote for school boards, which made it the first state to accord any women voting rights since New Jersey revoked women's voting rights in 1807.

1894—Women in Lexington, Covington, and Newport gained broader voting rights, but the legislature rescinded them in 1902, alarmed that Black women were impacting election outcomes.

1881—Mary Barr Clay and Laura Clay, the daughters of Cassius Clay* (a nationally-famous abolitionist and politician) brought the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) national convention to Louisville, the first national suffrage convention held south of the Mason-Dixon line. Mary also served as vice-president of both AWSA and the National Woman Suffrage Association, and Laura took the helm as the inaugural president of the Kentucky Woman Suffrage Association (KWSA) in 1888.

1912—Suffragists successfully advocated for restoration of these voting rights, but new provisions included a voting literacy test specifically designed to exclude Black women. Kentucky suffragists continued to press for state suffrage bills, and at times, legislative victory seemed close, but state legislators' opposition prompted many suffragists to focus on federal suffrage legislation.

January 6, 1920—Following the 19th Amendment passage, the Kentucky Legislature ratified the amendment on the first day of its legislative session.

March 1920—Kentucky also took an unusual precaution of passing an additional bill granting women the right to vote in presidential elections, in case the required 36th state failed to ratify the 19th Amendment.**

* Not to be confused with the boxer who took the name Muhammad Ali.

** Jim Crow laws were enforced in Kentucky until passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and Black women were not able to vote post-1920.

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