

Maine

1858— Several Bangor women petitioned the legislature urging support of a suffrage constitutional amendment. Although the legislature ignored the petition, suffrage groups had a broad membership, including many female factory workers who marched with a suffrage banner in the 1865 Lewiston Independence Day Parade.

1873—Thousands of women and men gathered in Augusta, founding the Maine Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA), which through the decades held annual conventions, organized local suffrage groups, and lobbied legislators. Between 1901 and 1915, MWSA and other suffrage groups sent petitions to the Maine Legislature seven times—one each legislative session.

1913—Anti-suffragists founded the Maine Association Opposed to Suffrage for Women (MAOSW). Through petitions, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and meetings, MAOSW argued that women did not need the vote, as it was contrary to the common good.

1915— Florence Brooks Whitehouse, Maine's National Woman's Party (NWP) Chairwoman, picketed a Chicago speech by President Woodrow Wilson. Whitehouse also traveled to Wyoming to organize women against Wilson's reelection. MWSA considered these techniques too radical and removed Whitehouse from her leadership position.

1917— In response, Whitehouse's allies formed the Equal Suffrage Referendum League (ESRL) and appointed Whitehouse as chair.

The legislature passed a bill granting women the right to vote via state constitutional amendment. After passage, a majority of Maine voters still needed to approve the state amendment for it to become law.

MWSA reinvigorated its efforts by visiting voters at their homes and farms and by distributing 500,000 leaflets. The National American Woman Suffrage Association aided by sending organizers, literature, and speakers.

Maine voted against suffrage by almost a 2-to-1 margin.

November 5, 1919—Following passage of the 19th Amendment, Governor Carl Milliken called a special legislative session to consider ratification, and Maine ratified the 19th Amendment.

Maine's constitution explicitly excluded Native Americans from voting in federal elections until 1954, and full voting rights in state elections were not guaranteed until 1967.

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