

Michigan

1855—Michigan suffragists began presenting petitions to the state legislature which were generally ignored.

1870—After founding the Michigan State Woman Suffrage Association (MSWSA), suffragists lobbied the legislature for a constitutional amendment and held suffrage rallies and lectures. The legislature allowed women to vote in school board elections—a small, first step.

1874—MSWSA campaigned for a state suffrage amendment, but the amendment failed by a wide margin—only 40,077 votes for and 135,957 votes against.

1893—The legislature granted women municipal suffrage, but imposed a literacy test to limit broader voting. Five months later, the Michigan Supreme Court overturned suffrage expansion not based on the literacy provision, but because it did not believe that the legislature had the authority to expand suffrage rights on its own.

1912—The Michigan Legislature passed legislation authorizing a suffrage referendum. With less than five months to plan, suffragists partnered with other organizations, including labor groups, men's suffrage leagues, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Before the referendum, rallies and car parades took place in Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo, and suffragists canvassed across the state. Amid allegations of missing votes and opposition by the powerful liquor lobby—including saloonkeepers and brewers associations—suffrage failed by approximately 760 votes out of nearly 500,000 cast.

1918—With the U.S. at war with Germany, many Americans associated the liquor industry with Germany and were not as likely to be swayed by its opposition to suffrage. After the legislature again placed a suffrage referendum for presidential and municipal elections on the ballot, voters approved the amendment by a margin of 229,790 to 195,284. Women now had the right to vote in Michigan.

June 10, 1919—The Michigan Legislature unanimously ratified the 19th Amendment.

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