

Montana

1895—Ella Knowles founded the Montana Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA).

1889—As Montana gained statehood, Knowles persuaded legislators to amend existing law to permit women to take the bar exam. Although the new state constitution did not include full suffrage for women, it did allow women to vote in school elections.

1895— Ahead of the legislative session, *The Great Falls Leader*, published by Herbert and Martha Rolfe, advocated for suffrage, regardless of gender and race. With help from the Political Equality Club of Great Falls, the Rolfes submitted a 1,200 signature suffrage petition to the Montana Legislature. The Montana House passed the suffrage amendment (42-12), but the Senate committee chairs blocked the amendment from a Senate vote.

1911—Jeannette Rankin became the first woman to address Montana's Legislature about suffrage. Rankin had been active in the suffrage movement at the University of Montana and the University of Washington. Rankin served as both MWSA president and national field secretary of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

1912—Montana suffragists formed the Montana Equal Suffrage Association (MESA). With its headquarters in Butte, MESA mailed letters to women's clubs and other organizations, asking for support on pro-suffrage resolutions. From September to November 1914, MESA also published *The Suffrage Daily News*, arguing that suffrage was an act of simple justice and that women's ingrained morality would reduce the amount of corruption in politics.

1914—Montana's Legislature included a suffrage amendment on the ballot. The Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU) organized a 1,500 member neighbor-to-neighbor campaign, while the Missoula Teachers' Suffrage Committee wrote and distributed 30,000 leaflets.* Margaret Smith Hathaway, the former Helena County Superintendent, traveled over 5,700 miles in Montana to promote suffrage. The amendment passed with 41,302 votes in support and 37,588 votes in opposition.

1916—Rankin made history by becoming the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

July 30, 1919—The Montana Legislature ratified the 19th Amendment.

*The WCTU predicted that suffrage would allow women to vote for Prohibition and other moral issues.

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