

North Dakota

1875—The Dakota Territory House of Representatives passed a full suffrage bill, but the Council (Upper House) approved a bill only allowing municipal suffrage rights.

1880s—Dr. Cora Smith Eaton, one of the earliest female physicians in North Dakota, served as the first president of the Grand Forks Equal Suffrage Association (GFESA). Eaton worked on suffrage, public health, temperance, and civic reform for her entire career, and was also an accomplished mountaineer. She famously brought “Votes for Women” banners to some of the country’s highest summits and posed for publicity photos.

1885—The Territorial Legislature passed a full suffrage bill, but Governor Gilbert Pierce vetoed the legislation.

1892—The North Dakota Legislature passed a bill granting women full suffrage. After passage, the House Speaker blocked the legislation from the governor’s signature by refusing to sign the bill, a procedural requirement. Elizabeth Anderson, President of North Dakota’s Women’s Christian Temperance Union for 40 years, attended every legislative session to keep records and note the vote counts. The House subsequently expunged its records related to the bill, but Anderson’s record-keeping has preserved knowledge of the Speaker’s block.

1901—Legislators introduced suffrage bills each legislative session for the next decade.

1912—The North Dakota’s Votes for Women League (VWL) was formed. When the legislature considered suffrage legislation in 1913, VWL barnstormed to support suffrage through literature drops and rallies. After the bill’s passage, VWL ramped up its campaigning by organizing a newly-energized, broad grass-roots campaign.

The railroad and liquor industries funded the Anti-Woman Suffrage League (AWSL) and the Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (AOWS). AOWS campaigned relentlessly and flooded voters with literature touting the importance of women’s roles in the home.

1914—The suffrage measure failed with 49,348 votes in opposition and 40,209 votes in support.

1917—The legislature passed a partial suffrage law, granting women the right to vote for presidential electors, county officials, city officials, and township officers.

December 1, 1919—North Dakota became the 20th state to ratify the 19th Amendment.

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