

## West Virginia

1867—State Senator Samuel Young introduced suffrage legislation removing the word male from voting requirements. The bill was not brought to a vote.

1869—Young reintroduced the bill, and this time the legislature rejected the bill.

1895—The West Virginia Equal Suffrage Association (WVESA) was founded. WVESA coordinated suffrage activities across the state and organized lobbying and coordination efforts with national suffrage organizations.

1906— Dr. Anna Howard Shaw was elected WVESA president. Shaw testified before the West Virginia Legislature in 1907 and served as National American Woman Suffrage Association President for 11 years. Shaw also chaired the Woman's Committee of the United States Council of Defense during WWI, to coordinate female participation in the war.

1913—The House of Delegates passed a state constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote; however the Senate did not pass the bill by the necessary two-thirds vote.

1915—The House of Delegates and Senate passed the bill in 1915, which then required approval by a majority of the electorate in the 1916 election.

1916—The West Virginia Association of Women Opposed to Suffrage (WVAWOS) campaigned against the amendment. In local newspapers, WVAWOS argued that equal suffrage was radical, experimental, and lacked evidence of benefits in states that had adopted suffrage.

Despite WVESA's efforts, the amendment failed with 63,540 votes (28) in favor and 161,607 votes (71%) in opposition. Suffragists largely blamed this failure on liquor and business interests, but WVAWOS' opposition also played a significant role.

1920—Governor John Jacob Cornwell called a special legislative session to address several issues, including ratification of the 19th Amendment. After the amendment passed the House of Delegates, the Senate vote appeared tied until Senator Jesse Bloch, who had been in California for vacation, returned to cast his vote and end the stalemate.

March 10, 1920—West Virginia ratified the 19th Amendment, the 34th state to do so.\*

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

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