

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

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# RHODE ISLAND

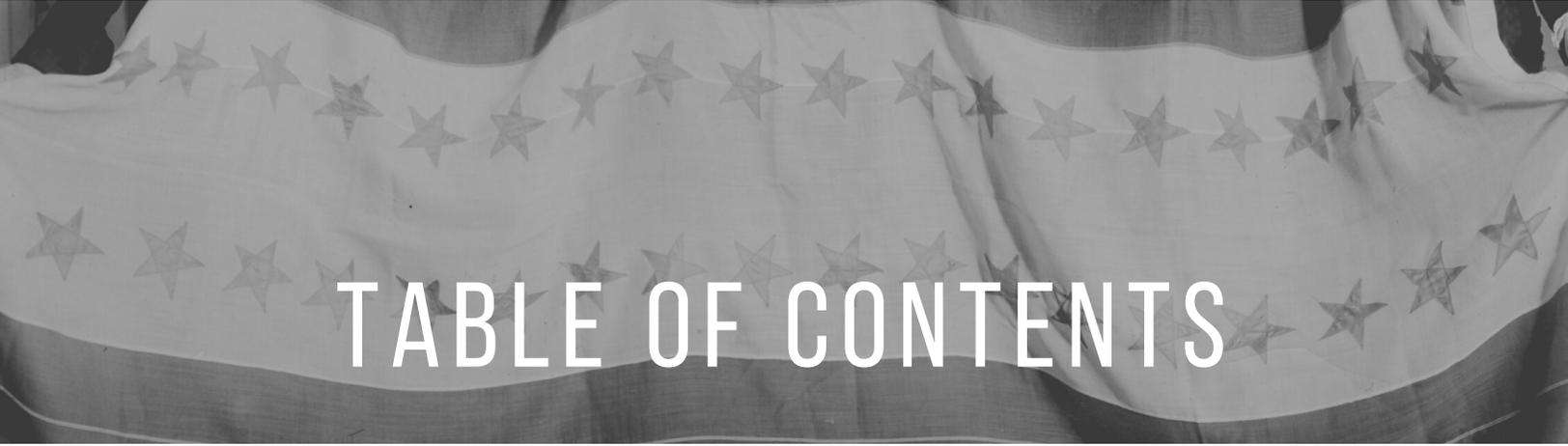
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RATIFIED THE 19TH AMENDMENT ON JAN. 6, 1920



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1920-2020



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"THE RIGHT OF  
CITIZENS OF THE  
UNITED STATES TO  
VOTE SHALL NOT BE  
DENIED OR ABRIDGED  
BY THE UNITED  
STATES OR BY ANY  
STATE ON ACCOUNT  
OF SEX."

The 19th Amendment

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# ABOUT

*The Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSCC) was formed by Congress to commemorate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote and the 19th Amendment.*

Throughout 2020, the United States is celebrating the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which secured women's constitutional right to vote. Today, more than 68 million American women vote in elections because of the courageous suffragists who never gave up the fight for equality. This centennial is an unparalleled opportunity to elevate women's history and to commemorate a milestone of American democracy.

**Use this toolkit as your guide to commemorating the centennial in your state and community.**



ALICE PAUL IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL WOMAN'S PARTY HEADQUARTERS, WASHINGTON, D.C., 1920.

# LEARN THE HISTORY

## THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

Suffragists began their organized fight for women's equality in 1848 when they demanded the right to vote during the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. For the next 72 years, women leaders lobbied, marched, picketed, and protested for the right to the ballot. The U.S. House of Representatives finally approved the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment," which guaranteed women the right to vote, on May 21, 1919. The U.S. Senate followed two weeks later and voted to approve the 19th Amendment on June 4, 1919. The 19th Amendment then went to the states, where it had to be ratified by three-fourths of the then 48 states to be added to the Constitution. Tennessee became the 36th and final state needed to ratify the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920. On August 26, 1920, the U.S. Secretary of State issued a proclamation declaring the 19th Amendment ratified and officially part of the U.S. Constitution. Today, August 26th is celebrated annually as Women's Equality Day.

## RHODE ISLAND QUICK FACTS

- Rhode Island ratified the 19th amendment on January 6, 1920.
- The women's rights movement in Rhode Island had its origins in the abolitionist movement.
- Paulina Wright Davis of Providence co-founded the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association.
- Rhode Island women took advantage of a loophole in the state constitution which did not specifically exclude them from serving on school committees. Women ran for these positions starting in 1873.
- Prominent suffrage organizations in Rhode Island included the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association and the Northeast Federation of Colored Women.
- Suffragists who called Rhode Island home included Pauline Wright Davis, Bertha Higgins, and Mary E. Jackson.



SUFFRAGIST AND  
LAWYER INEZ  
MILHOLLAND AT A  
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE  
PARADE IN NEW YORK  
CITY, MAY 3, 1913.

## LEARN THE HISTORY

ORIGINAL SOURCE: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# RHODE ISLAND AND THE 19TH AMENDMENT

**RATIFICATION DATE: JANUARY 6, 1920**

Women first organized and collectively fought for suffrage at the national level in July of 1848. Suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott convened a meeting of over 300 people in Seneca Falls, New York. In the following decades, women marched, protested, lobbied, and even went to jail. By the 1870s, women pressured Congress to vote on an amendment that would recognize their suffrage rights. This amendment was sometimes known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment and became the 19th Amendment.

The amendment reads:

*"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."*

As in many states in New England, the women's rights movement in Rhode Island had its origins in the abolitionist movement. Although they could not serve in leadership positions, women who participated in anti-slavery organizations were able to make their voices heard. In meetings, their votes were recorded along with the men's.

Paulina Wright Davis of Providence began her career in political activism through her involvement in anti-slavery movement. She also became a lecturer on women's health issues. Davis was one of the organizers of the first National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850. She started a woman's rights newspaper called *The Una* in 1853. After the Civil War, she co-founded the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association. Through their activism, women were able to win enough support in the Rhode Island legislature to pass a state constitutional amendment in April 1887. When put to the voters during the election that same month, the amendment was defeated by a wide margin.

Women suffragists in Rhode Island were unsuccessful in winning the vote in their state.

However, women began taking advantage of a loophole in the state constitution which did not specifically exclude them from serving on school committees. Women ran for these positions starting in 1873. The next year, three women won elected positions. Women continued to serve on school committees for many decades before they could cast a ballot.

In the twentieth century, many Rhode Island women turned their efforts towards passing a federal suffrage amendment. Alva Belmont often hosted suffrage gatherings at the Marble House mansion in Newport. She became the primary benefactor of the work of Alice Paul, who organized the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU) which later became the National Woman's Party (NWP). Belmont helped finance the CU/NWP campaigns which focused exclusively on passing the amendment using increasingly confrontational tactics. Mildred Glines became the chairman of the Rhode Island branch of the NWP and was instrumental in lobbying the US Senators from her state to vote for the amendment.

On January 6, 1920, Rhode Island voted to ratify the 19th Amendment. By August of 1920, 36 states (including Rhode Island) ratified the amendment, ensuring that the right to vote could not be denied based on sex.

### **Rhode Island Places of Women's Suffrage: Oak Glen**

Oak Glen was the home of Julia Ward Howe. While best known for writing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Howe also helped found the American Woman Suffrage Association. Her house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a private residence.

Source:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/rhode-island-women-s-history.htm>

# COMMEMORATE ACROSS YOUR STATE

-  **Issue Proclamations or Executive Orders:** Encourage your Governor and Mayors across the state to issue a commemorative proclamation or executive order to recognize your state's or community's role in the women's suffrage movement, designate August 26, 2020 as Women's Equality Day, or designate 2020 as "The Year of Rhode Island Women." Find samples and templates at [womensvote100.org/resolutionsandorders](https://womensvote100.org/resolutionsandorders).
-  **Pass Resolutions:** Encourage your state legislature, city councils, and town councils to pass commemorative resolutions to recognize your state's or community's role in the women's suffrage movement, designate August 26, 2020 as Women's Equality Day, or reaffirm your state's or community's commitment to the 19th Amendment and to uplifting women's voices. Find samples and templates at [womensvote100.org/resolutionsandorders](https://womensvote100.org/resolutionsandorders).
-  **Join the Forward Into Light Campaign:** On August 26, 2020, buildings and landmarks across the country will light up in purple and gold to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and women's right to vote. This nationwide celebration of the centennial is named for the historical suffrage slogan, "Forward through the Darkness, Forward into Light." Work with leaders, organizations, and communities in your state to celebrate women's right to vote in the official suffrage colors of purple and gold, from the State Capitol to skyscrapers to bridges to city halls.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN RHODE ISLAND

- **In November of 2019, the U.S. Congress passed a bill to name the U.S. Post Office in Central Falls after Rhode Island suffragist and abolitionist Elizabeth Buffum Chace.**
- **Between August and September of 2019, pop-up versions of the National Archives exhibit Rightfully Hers were distributed to 23 venues across Rhode Island including schools, libraries, museums, and community sites—to be displayed for the centennial.**

# GET INSPIRED

## COMING UP IN 2020



**FORWARD  
INTO LIGHT**



**PROJECT 19  
SKYDIVERS**



**VOTES FOR  
WOMEN TRAIL**



**CENTENNIAL  
RIDE**

**Forward Into Light:** As part of the WSCC's Forward Into Light campaign, states across the country will light their buildings and landmarks in purple and gold on August 26, 2020, the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Some states started commemorating the centennial with lightings in 2019, including Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Virginia. Are you in for August 26, 2020? Contact the WSCC for more information.

**Project 19:** Led by the Women's Skydiving Network (WSN), Project 19 is a planned jump of 100 women skydivers in July 2020 outside of Chicago in celebration of the centennial of women's right to vote. The WSN also has a sponsored all-women Professional Demonstration Team, which is scheduling jumps (at no charge!) during 19th Amendment celebrations around the country throughout 2020. For more information, contact Team Captain Melanie Curtis at [mel@melaniecurtis.com](mailto:mel@melaniecurtis.com).

**Votes for Women Trail:** The National Votes for Women Trail is a project led by the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites to place historic markers at locations relevant to the history of the women's suffrage movement in all 50 states. The WSCC is partnering with the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites to complete the Trail in 2020. Visit [womensvote100.org/votes-for-women-trail](http://womensvote100.org/votes-for-women-trail) to follow the Trail and find historic sites in your state.

**Centennial Ride:** In honor of the centennial of the 19th Amendment, hundreds of women and men will participate in a cross-country motorcycle tour in 2020. Riders will leave from ten different starting cities around the country, and more than 1,000 riders will converge on Washington, D.C. on August 26, 2020. Learn more at [www.centennialride.com](http://www.centennialride.com).

# PLAN AN EVENT



"WE KNOCK AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE, ASKING AN EQUAL CHANCE."

-Mary Church Terrell,  
suffragist & founder of the  
National Association of  
Colored Women, 1898

- **What:** Hold a press conference, reception, or public program commemorating the centennial of the 19th Amendment and women's right to vote. Keep reading for examples and ideas!
- **Where:** Host an event at your State Capitol or City Hall, or at a historic site, museum, school, university, or community center. Find a list of historic sites and places in Rhode Island along the National Votes for Women Trail at [womensvote100.org/get-involved](http://womensvote100.org/get-involved).
- **When:** Events celebrating the centennial can be held anytime throughout 2020, but particularly important dates include Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), and June-August 2020, building up to the official centennial date on August 26, 2020.
- **Who:** Invite members of your community to your event, as well as state or local leaders such as your Governor, First Lady/First Partner, Members of Congress, State Legislators, Mayor, or local Council Members. Invite a guest speaker, such as a women's suffrage historian, and invite historic performers to portray famous women of history. Find a list of historians and performers at [womensvote100.org/get-involved](http://womensvote100.org/get-involved).
- **Additional Details:** The suffragists wore white dresses to display their unity, and the yellow rose became a symbol of the movement's ultimate victory. At your commemorative event, decorate the room with yellow roses, suggest your guests dress in white attire, and offer replica Votes for Women pins, which can be provided by the WSCC.

## Relevant Organizations in Your State:

- Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame: [riheritagehalloffame.org](http://riheritagehalloffame.org)
- Rhode Island Historical Society: [visitrhodeisland.com/listing/rhode-island-historical-society/4346/](http://visitrhodeisland.com/listing/rhode-island-historical-society/4346/)

# PLAN AN EVENT

"MEN, THEIR RIGHTS, AND NOTHING MORE; WOMEN, THEIR RIGHTS, AND NOTHING LESS."  
Susan B. Anthony & Elizabeth Cady Stanton, c.1868



## MORE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IDEAS

**Street Renaming:** Through your Mayor's office, change the name of a street in your city in honor of a local suffragist.

**Suffrage Exhibits:** Work with your local historical society to create an exhibit about your community's suffrage story.

**Purple and Gold Fireworks:** At your State Fair, County Fair, or community gathering, feature a display of purple and gold fireworks.

**Musical Performances:** Hold a concert featuring female composers or original music from the suffrage movement, which can be found online through the Library of Congress's searchable archives.

**Film Screenings:** Host screenings of films focused on the suffrage movement or women's empowerment, such as *Iron Jawed Angels*, *Suffragette*, or *A League of Their Own*.

**Suffrage Floats:** Include a suffrage-themed float in state and local parades.

**Community Murals:** Hire a local artist to create a suffrage-themed mural in your community that tells the story of the suffrage movement in your state.

**Suffrage Centennial Races:** Take the lead from the National Park Service's Race to Ratification and hold a suffrage-themed 5K or 10k in summer 2020.

**Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon:** Work with Wikipedia to plan an "Edit-a-Thon" focused on your state and local suffrage history.

**Suffrage Essay or Art Contests:** Hold an essay or art contest for students on topics related to your state and local suffrage history.

**Suffrage Book Club:** Form a book club with a locally owned bookstore to read and discuss books about the women's suffrage movement.

**Plantings of Yellow Roses:** Plant yellow roses in your home, school, or community gardens and share photos on social media using the hashtags #WomensVote100, #SuffrageSisters, and #SuffraGents.

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

## STAY ENGAGED

- Follow @WomensVote100 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Check out the “Suffrage Sisters” YouTube channel
- Subscribe to our e-newsletter at [womensvote100.org](http://womensvote100.org)
- Keep an eye on our Rhode Island page at [womensvote100.org/rhodeisland](http://womensvote100.org/rhodeisland)

## FIND RESOURCES

- [womensvote100.org/learn](http://womensvote100.org/learn)
- [womensvote100.org/news](http://womensvote100.org/news)
- [womensvote100.org/states](http://womensvote100.org/states)

Use these hashtags on social media to engage with your community during this historic moment:

**#WomensVote100**  
**#SuffrageSisters**  
**#SuffraGents**

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

### Instagram



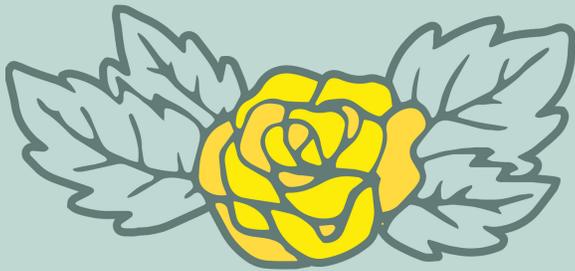
### Facebook



# THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

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## WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE CENTENNIAL COMMISSION



# QUESTIONS?

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