



GEORGIA
HISTORY FESTIVAL

THE WOMEN'S

SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

IN GEORGIA

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The Women's Suffrage Movement in Georgia

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Educational Resources and Opportunities

Women's Suffrage at 100: The 19th Amendment and Georgia History

From public programs, events, and activities to new classroom resources, in-school programming, and training opportunities for teachers, GHS has explored the legacy of women's suffrage in Georgia and the United States in commemoration of the struggle to pass the 19th Amendment in which women won the right to vote 100 years ago.

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The Women's Suffrage Movement in Georgia



Suffragists Marching, probably in New York City in [1915]. *Bain Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, LOT 11052-4. Library of Congress.*

Suffrage—the right to vote—is an important part of being an American. It is the basis of American democracy and gives citizens the power to choose leaders, shape communities, and participate in civic life.

However, voting has not always been a right given to all Americans. Throughout American history various people and groups have fought to secure and maintain their right to vote, best exemplified by the women's suffrage movement (1848-1920).

"Votes for Women" buttons. *National Museum of American History.*



The women's suffrage movement was born out of the movement to abolish slavery and was heavily influenced by the passage of the 15th Amendment that granted all men, regardless of race, the right to vote.

The women's suffrage movement was a struggle between those who fought for and those who fought against women's participation in politics. It was a critical battle over civil rights that set the stage for events like the Civil Rights Movement where African Americans fought for full civic participation and rights later in the 20th century.

During the summer of 1919, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed by both houses of the U.S. Congress, granting women the right to vote. One year later, in August 1920, the amendment was ratified by the 36th state—meeting the three-fourths, constitutional requirement needed for its approval. As one of the most important events of the 20th century, its passage marked the culmination of a 70-year struggle.

The women's suffrage movement in Georgia began in the late 1800s. In 1890, Helen Augusta Howard of Columbus formed the first women's suffrage group in Georgia, called the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA). The GWSA was Georgia's first chapter of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

Throughout the early 1900s in Georgia, suffragists and anti-suffragists created organizations that advocated for and against women's voting rights. Both sides used newspapers and other media to make their arguments to the public and the Georgia General Assembly. After the U.S. Congress passed the 19th Amendment in 1920, it would be two more years, in 1922, before women voted in Georgia since the General Assembly refused to waive



Artwork from women's suffrage postcard.
National Museum of American History.

the six-month voter registration law. Many black voters wouldn't gain full suffrage until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Today, the legacy of the passage of the 19th Amendment still lives on through the women and men who exercise their right to vote in city, county, state, and federal elections. In this edition of *Newspapers in Education* by the Georgia Historical Society, learn about the struggle for women to gain the right to vote throughout Georgia's history.

Suffrage and the Temperance Movement

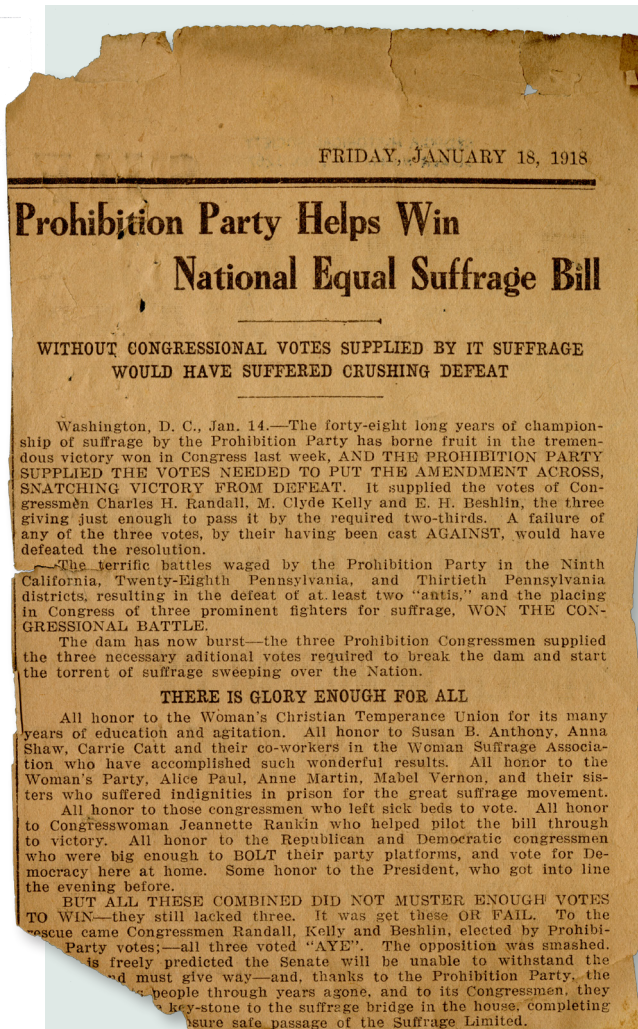
The American women's suffrage movement reached its height during the Progressive era. From 1890-1920, the Progressive era was a period of social and political reform in the United States. During this time, many women sought more political and social freedom and many did so through organized groups or clubs.

Women's Clubs were often a means for social reforms during the Progressive era. Women's

clubs raised money, and helped call attention to areas of society that needed reform, such as child labor laws and access to medical care. These clubs also encouraged women's education and involvement in American society.

The Temperance Movement, another Progressive Era reform crusade, sought to ban or limit the sale and consumption of alcohol.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) advocated for abstinence from alcohol and believed that alcohol caused most of society's problems. A Georgia chapter of the WCTU (GWCTU) was established in 1883.

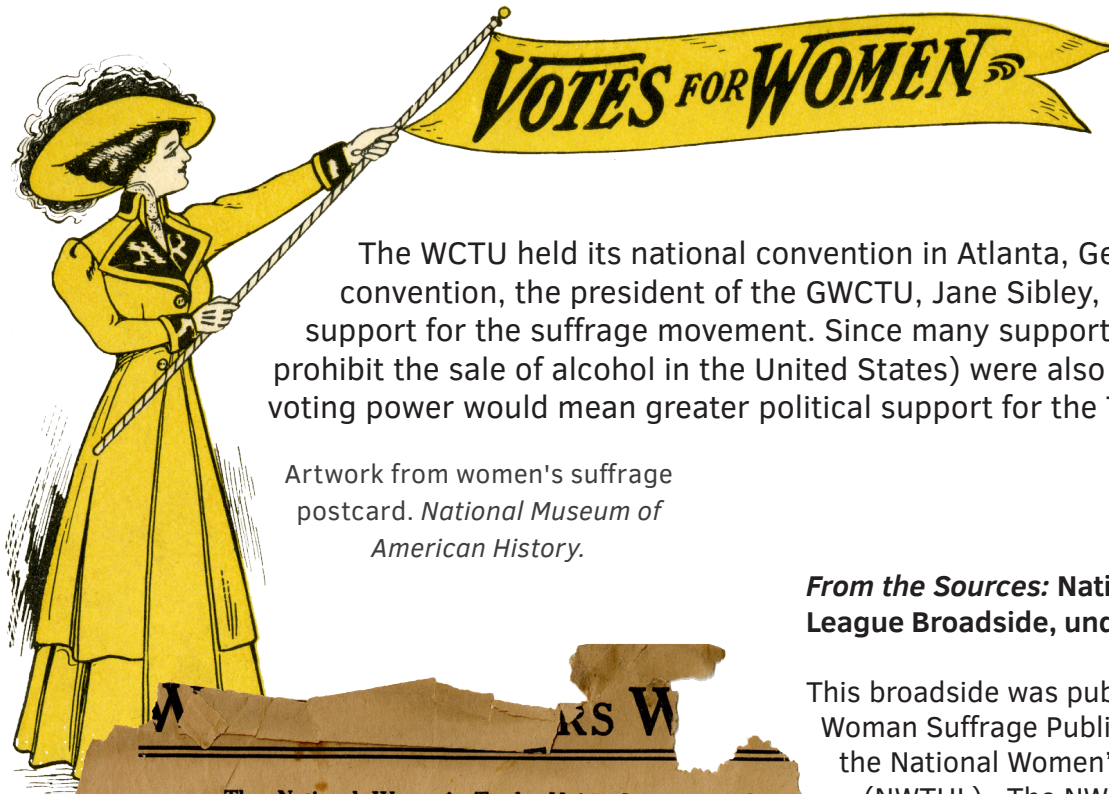


From the Sources: Prohibition Party Handbill, 1918

This handbill, published by the Prohibition Party in 1918, showcases the relationship between the temperance movement to ban the consumption of alcohol and the women's suffrage movement to gain votes for women. Both movements heavily influenced the Progressive Era, a time characterized by social change in America.

The Prohibition Party formed in 1869 and gave the temperance movement—the effort to ban the sale and consumption of alcohol—a political platform. The temperance movement culminated in the passage of the 18th Amendment, which prohibited the production, transport, and sale of intoxicating liquors in the United States and was later repealed by the 21st Amendment.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was established in 1873 as a national temperance organization. However, banning the sale and consumption of alcohol was not its only objective. Leadership of the WCTU worked closely with leaders in the Prohibition Party, both men and women, to fight for women's suffrage. According to this handbill, in 1918 three congressmen in the Prohibition Party voted in favor of the 19th Amendment, narrowing the gap needed for its passage in the US House of Representatives.



The WCTU held its national convention in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1890. At this convention, the president of the GWCTU, Jane Sibley, announced the group's support for the suffrage movement. Since many supporters of prohibition (to prohibit the sale of alcohol in the United States) were also women, women having voting power would mean greater political support for the Temperance Movement.

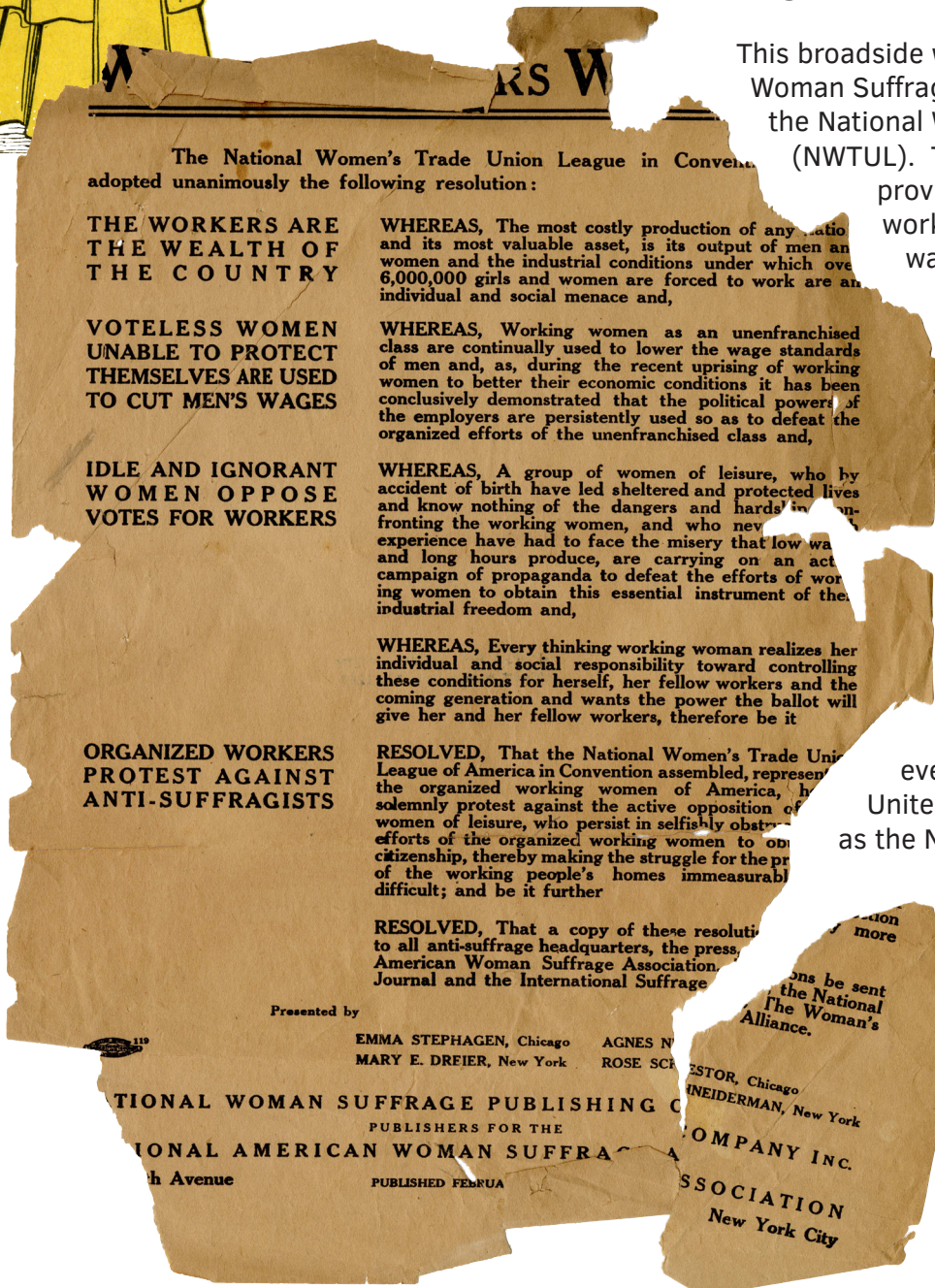
Artwork from women's suffrage postcard. *National Museum of American History.*

From the Sources: National Women's Trade Union League Broadsheet, undated

This broadside was published by the National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company for the National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL). The NWTUL, founded in 1903, provided a way for unenfranchised working women to fight against low wages, long hours, and dangerous working environments.

Promoting women's suffrage was a priority for the NWTUL because members knew that the power to vote was the power to effect change.

This broadside announces that the NWTUL will rally against people who oppose women's suffrage. The broadside uses fierce language against anti-suffrage supporters and was sent to the headquarters of every anti-suffrage group in the United States. Pro-suffrage groups such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, The Woman's Journal, and the International Suffrage Alliance, used propoganda such as this broadside to promote suffrage among labor groups.



The National Women's Trade Union League in Convention assembled, adopted unanimously the following resolution:

THE WORKERS ARE THE WEALTH OF THE COUNTRY

VOTELESS WOMEN UNABLE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES ARE USED TO CUT MEN'S WAGES

IDLE AND IGNORANT WOMEN OPPOSE VOTES FOR WORKERS

ORGANIZED WORKERS PROTEST AGAINST ANTI-SUFFRAGISTS

WHEREAS, The most costly production of any nation and its most valuable asset, is its output of men and women and the industrial conditions under which over 6,000,000 girls and women are forced to work are an individual and social menace and,

WHEREAS, Working women as an unenfranchised class are continually used to lower the wage standards of men and, as, during the recent uprising of working women to better their economic conditions it has been conclusively demonstrated that the political powers of the employers are persistently used so as to defeat the organized efforts of the unenfranchised class and,

WHEREAS, A group of women of leisure, who by accident of birth have led sheltered and protected lives and know nothing of the dangers and hardships confronting the working women, and who new experience have had to face the misery that low wages and long hours produce, are carrying on an active campaign of propoganda to defeat the efforts of working women to obtain this essential instrument of the industrial freedom and,

WHEREAS, Every thinking working woman realizes her individual and social responsibility toward controlling these conditions for herself, her fellow workers and the coming generation and wants the power the ballot will give her and her fellow workers, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the National Women's Trade Union League of America in Convention assembled, representing the organized working women of America, hereby solemnly protest against the active opposition of women of leisure, who persist in selfishly obstructing the efforts of the organized working women to obtain citizenship, thereby making the struggle for the protection of the working people's homes immeasurably difficult; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to all anti-suffrage headquarters, the press, the American Woman Suffrage Association, the National Woman Suffrage Journal and the International Suffrage Alliance.

Presented by

EMMA STEPHAGEN, Chicago
MARY E. DREIER, New York

AGNES NEIDEMAN, New York
ROSE SCHMIDT, Chicago

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The Rivoli Theater in Douglas, Georgia, with the audience in segregated seating, 1924.
Rogers Studio glass plate negatives and film, Georgia Historical Society.

Segregation and the Suffrage Movement

The post-Civil War era known as Reconstruction was characterized by the abolition of slavery and the newly granted citizenship rights for formerly enslaved men. During this time, many African-American men ran for political office as Republicans and were elected to the Georgia General Assembly. It was the first time black men held political office in Georgia.

The Reconstruction period lasted from 1865 to 1877. After the end of Reconstruction, white southern Democrats reclaimed power in Georgia's legislature. They worked to remove black congressmen and other elected officials from state offices and began to pass "Jim Crow" laws in the 1870s and 1880s. Jim Crow laws legalized segregation and other forms of race-based discrimination in the South.

Examples of Jim Crow laws in Georgia:

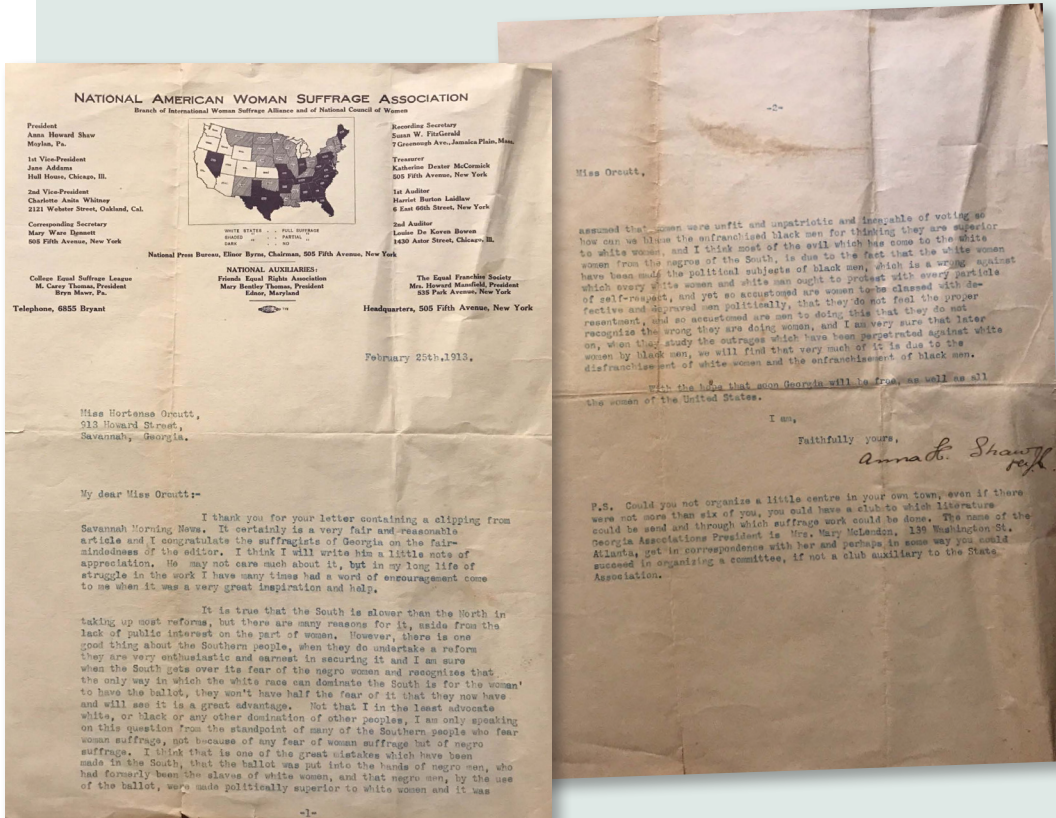
- Racial segregation was enforced by law. This included public transportation, schools, and even hospitals.
- Black men were often prohibited from voting and holding government office through state policies such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and even threats or acts of violence.

Jim Crow laws also influenced the women's suffrage movement in Georgia. Both suffragists and anti-suffragists used race-based arguments for and against women's suffrage. Some white suffragists feared that allowing black women to vote would disrupt the status quo of white supremacy in the state and advocated that only white women should vote.

In the *From the Sources* "A letter regarding race in the women's suffrage movement," suffragist Anna Howard Shaw explains how racial tensions in the South could be used to convince southern white women to participate in the suffrage movement.

From the Sources: A letter regarding race in the women's suffrage movement, 1913

This letter, written in 1913, from Anna Howard Shaw of Massachusetts to Miss Hortense Orcutt, Savannah resident and suffragist, highlights one of the many complexities in the suffrage debate—race. White and black women alike fought for nation-wide suffrage, but the movement was widely segregated by race and divided by racial politics.



Shaw, the president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, explains how racial tensions in the South could be utilized to persuade southern white women to participate in the suffrage movement.

In the letter, Shaw alludes to the passage of the 15th Amendment decades earlier, granting black men the right to vote in 1870. She explains that black men who had formerly been enslaved and

considered property had gained more political power than white women.

Despite the passage of the 15th Amendment southern legislatures dominated by white men enacted measures to prevent black men from voting, including poll taxes and literacy tests. Acts of racial violence, including lynching, were also means of voter intimidation and disenfranchisement.

Shaw argues that anti-suffragists feared that giving white women the right to vote would ultimately lead to black women voting as well. She makes the point that many whites feared that suffrage threatened to unravel the fabric of southern society by diminishing the power of white supremacy in the political sphere. Shaw counters that point by implying that granting white women suffrage would reinforce white supremacy by adding additional strength to the white vote (note that when she refers to “women” voting, she often means white women).

This letter highlights the raw and complex history of racial segregation and discrimination in the women's suffrage movement and the limitations of its commitment to freedom. Through this letter she reveals the racial bias carried throughout the women's suffrage movement by many of the white women, whose commitment to equality was defined by gender, but not by race.

Anti-suffragists argued that granting black women the right to vote would give African Americans too much political power and feared that a federal amendment for women's suffrage would lead to the re-enfranchisement (or right to political participation) of black men in the South. Despite the 15th Amendment, black men had been successfully excluded from southern polls by Jim Crow "reforms," such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and even forms of violence and intimidation.

Due to segregation in the suffrage movement, black women created their own organizations. Black women in Georgia formed the Georgia Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (GFCW) whose mission was doubly important. GFCW members worked towards reforms in their communities and aimed to uplift African Americans socially, culturally, and politically. They fought for their own rights and those that had been stripped from black men in the South, including the right to vote.

Legacy of the 19th Amendment: How to Exercise Your Right to Vote Today

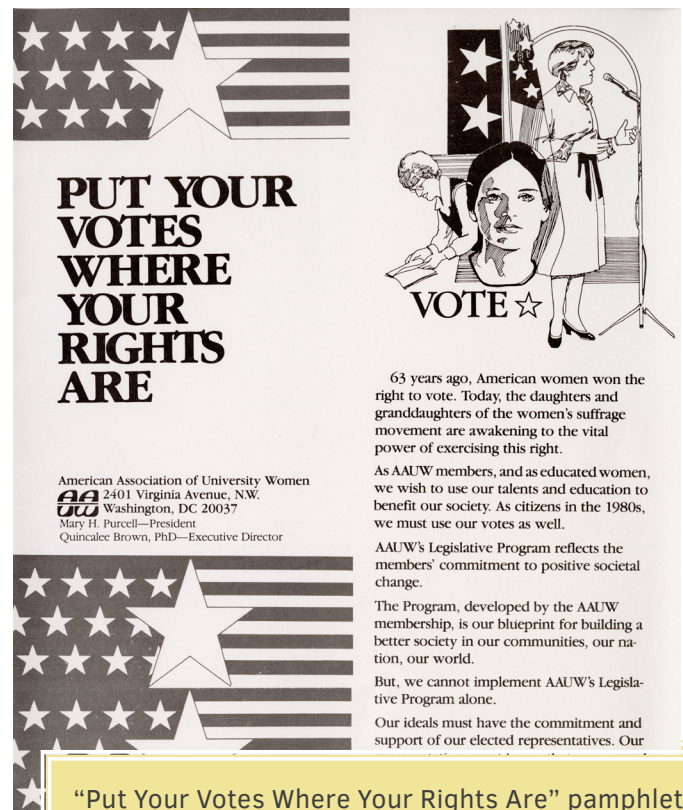
Today, American citizens have the right to vote regardless of their gender or race. Americans vote in a variety of elections including city, county, state, and federal elections. These elections determine who will hold a variety of government positions including mayors, city councils, governors, legislators and even the president of the United States.

Federal guidelines state that eligible voters...

- must be eighteen years of age by Election Day.
- must be a U.S citizen through birth or naturalization.
- must be registered by the state's registration deadline.
- may not be able to vote as a convicted felon (determined by state law).

In order to vote in Georgia, voters should...

- Fill out a voter registration form found online, or at a local government office such as a public library.
- Learn election dates and find local polling locations.
- Consider voting early (if available) or by Absentee Ballot. Absentee Ballots are available by application and must be returned to local election offices by Election Day.



"Put Your Votes Where Your Rights Are" pamphlet.
American Association of University Women Records.

A Resource for Voter Education

Extension Activities:

- Complete one or more of the primary source explorations in the **“Winning the Vote: Women’s Suffrage in Georgia” Project Box**. Each activity explores the New South era through the lens of voting rights and the women’s suffrage movement. Each activity can be downloaded for free at <https://georgiahistoryfestival.org/educators/>.
- Complete one or more of the primary source explorations in the **“Finding My Voice”** classroom program aimed at challenging students to explore the process of developing points of view, exercising civic rights, and examining how the women’s suffrage movement inspired later movements and changes in society, such as the Civil Rights Movement. Each activity can be downloaded for free at <https://georgiahistoryfestival.org/educators/>.
- Complete one or more of the primary source inquiries in the **“Does Voting Matter?”** C3 Inquiry that focuses on Article IV of the United States Constitution and the relationship between citizens and their representatives in state government. The inquiry provides students an opportunity to learn about republican government and the Constitutional guarantee that each state shall have a republican form of government. This inquiry can be downloaded for free at <https://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/for-educators/georgia-c3-inquiries/>.

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From the Sources: *Woman Citizen* cover, 1920

The *Woman Citizen* was a journal published by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Its main goal was the enfranchisement of American women, but it also broached topics like child labor and the plight of the working woman. This issue is a special edition published for the NAWSA convention held in Chicago in February 1920—five months after Congress passed the 19th Amendment and approximately six months before its ratification. Featured on the cover is an illustration entitled “Handing on the Work” by C. D. Batchelor. The illustration is a vivid representation of the sentiments that members of suffrage organizations felt as their work to pass the Amendment reached its culmination. The elder woman represents the suffrage movement “handing on the work” of citizenship to future generations.



The Women's Suffrage Movement in Georgia

by



About the Georgia Historical Society

Georgia Historical Society (GHS) is the premier independent statewide institution responsible for collecting, examining, and teaching Georgia history. GHS houses the oldest and most distinguished collection of materials related exclusively to Georgia history in the nation.

Whether through hands-on activities with primary sources in the GHS Research Center, in-school presentations by GHS staff, or curriculum aligned with state and national education standards, the Georgia Historical Society enables students of all ages to experience history beyond the textbook.

About the Georgia History Festival

The Georgia History Festival is the signature K-12 educational program of the Georgia Historical Society. A variety of public programs, in-school events, and educational resources bring history to life for students of all ages and encourage Georgians to think critically about the world in which we live and the future we hope to build. The Festival kicks off in September to coincide with the school year and culminates in February, the founding month of the Georgia colony, with Founding City events like the popular Colonial Faire and Muster living-history program held at Wormsloe State Historic Site, Savannah's colorful Georgia Day Parade, and the annual Trustees Gala.

For more information about GHS's educational programs and resources visit georgiahistory.com.

