



Michigan suffrage timeline: 1846-1922

March 7, 2009

1846: Ernestine L. Ross addresses Legislature about need and right of women to vote. Nothing happens.

1849: A state Senate committee proposes a universal suffrage amendment. No action taken because of the "unusualness" and "needlessness" of the franchise for women.

1867: Legislature passes an act that allows women taxpayers to vote in school elections, the first step toward voting rights for women.

1870: Michigan Suffrage Association is formed in January, and a Northwestern Association in November.

1874: Voters defeat a women's suffrage amendment to Michigan Constitution by a margin of more than three to one.

1879: Susan B. Anthony speaks in Traverse City on March 7 and in Manistee, Ludington and Frankfort in early December.

1880: Many state suffrage groups send delegates to the 12th Annual Convention of the Michigan Woman Suffrage Association in Grand Rapids. "Notable among these societies (were) those of Manistee, Frankfort, Big Rapids, Grand Traverse, Hartford, Flint, etc.," recording secretary Fannie Fowler of Manistee noted in the convention report.

1881: School suffrage extended to parents and guardians of children of school age.

1883: Manistee suffrage advocates collect more than 3,000 signatures on a petition asking the state Legislature to allow women to vote in municipal elections.

1884: Michigan Equal Suffrage Association organizes, and a systematic campaign for municipal suffrage bill begins. Senate defeats it by one vote.

1893: Legislature approves municipal suffrage bill that the State Supreme Court declares unconstitutional, saying the Legislature had no right to create a new class of voters.

1895: State House defeats another proposed constitutional amendment to grant women suffrage.

1907: State constitutional convention delegates debate woman suffrage but defeat a proposed amendment 57-38 in 1908. They adopt a compromise that allows women taxpayers to vote on public spending issues.

1912: The Progressive Party endorses woman's suffrage, as does Gov. Chase Osborn, who persuades Legislature to put it on the state ballot. It passes, but a suspicious recount results in a defeat by 762 votes.

1913: The Michigan Association Opposed to Equal Suffrage forms. A new suffrage proposal is defeated easily: 264,882 to 168,738 votes.

1918: Male voters approve a state constitutional amendment granting suffrage to Michigan women, a full year before Congress approves the National Suffrage Amendment, or 19th Amendment, to the U.S. Constitution.

1919: Women vote for statewide offices for the first time in 1919, and Michigan is the second state to ratify the 19th Amendment.

1920: 19th Amendment becomes U.S. law on Aug. 26.