

Women's Suffrage in Michigan

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1776 - Declaration of Independence

- ▶ Abigail Adams writes to her husband, John, who is attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, asking that he and the other men--"Remember the Ladies."
- ▶ John responds with humor. "We know better than to repeal our masculine systems."
- ▶ The Declaration's wording specifies that "all men are created equal." It would be over 140 years before women would be granted the right to vote.

1837 - Michigan became a State

- ▶ Only white men could vote
- ▶ Real property and earnings of women were considered property of their husbands
- ▶ 1850 MI Constitution allowed women to control property which they brought into their marriage



- ▶ In 1846, Ernestine Rose, born in Poland and lived in New York, spoke twice to the Michigan Legislature in Detroit about the need for women to have the right to vote!

Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met in 1840 in London when Stanton was 25 and Mott was 47 and they weren't allowed to attend the 1840's World Anti-Slavery Convention



Seneca Falls, NY - Women's Convention

July 19 - 20, 1848

- ▶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton said *“We are assembled to protest against a form of government, existing without the consent of the governed—to declare our right to be free as man is free, to be represented in the government which we are taxed to support, to have such disgraceful laws as give man the power to chastise and imprison his wife, to take the wages which she earns, the property which she inherits, and, in case of separation, the children of her love.”*
- ▶ Adopted the Declaration of Sentiments and 11 Resolutions adopted - only controversial one was #9 that granted women the right to vote (Frederick Douglass spoke in favor)

MI Constitutional Conventions and Legislature

Tried unsuccessfully to amend Constitution in 1850 convention

Tried unsuccessfully to amend Constitution in 1867 convention but women property owners could vote in school elections

1855, 1857 and 1859

1850

1867

Petitions are gathered and submitted to the MI legislature for woman suffrage—but they are ignored

Organizations Developed

1866

- American Equal Rights Association formed. It split.

1869

- National Women's Suffrage Association limited to women started under Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

1869

- Lucy Stone started the American Women Suffrage Association and allowed men.

1870

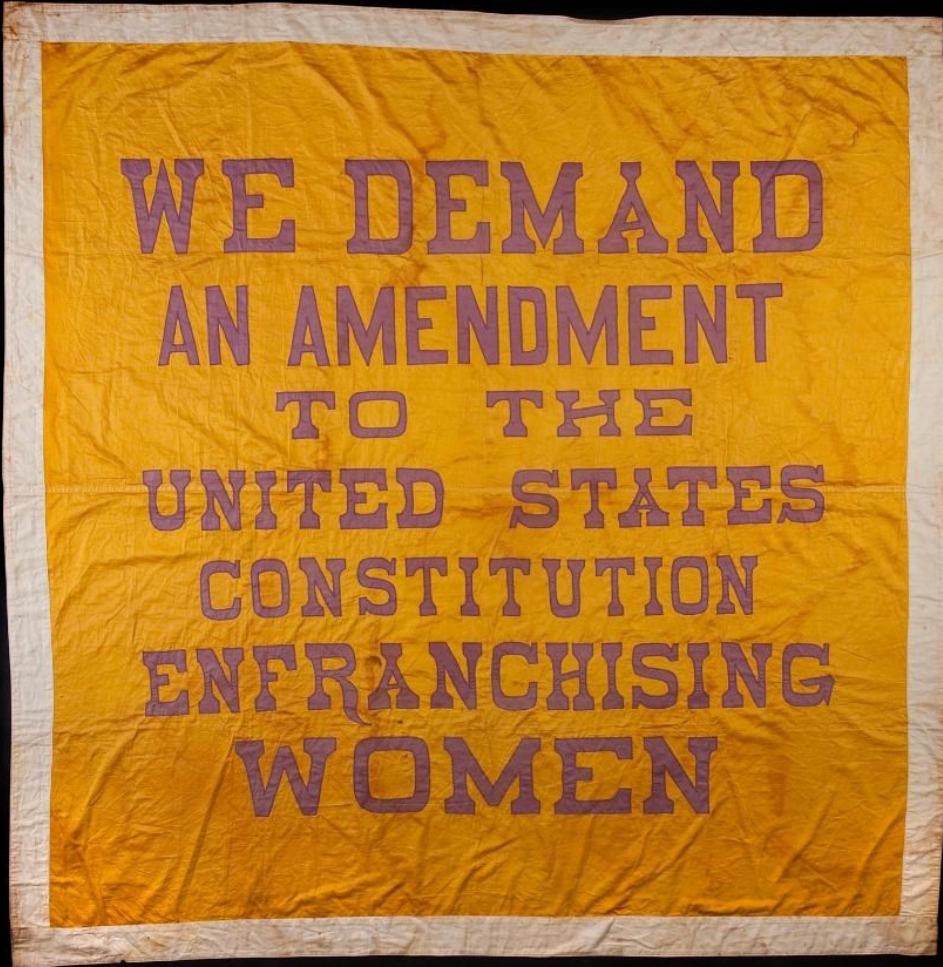
- MI State Women's Suffrage Association started in MI. (MSWSA)

1884

- MI Equal Suffrage Association started in Flint (MESA)

1890

- National American Woman Suffrage Association started



**WE DEMAND
AN AMENDMENT
TO THE
UNITED STATES
CONSTITUTION
ENFRANCHISING
WOMEN**

Attempts to Pass in MI

In 1874, ballot proposal for women voting was defeated 135,957 - 40,077

In 1907, MESA tried to get an amendment in 1907 Constitutional Convention, but failed

In 1913 - on the ballot again and defeated again. 168,738-264,882. A group opposing suffrage formed - MI Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage

1893

1912

1874

1907

1913

In 1893, MESA was successful with passage of a municipal suffrage bill allowing women to vote in certain elections. The MI Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional

In 1912—ballot proposal and it is defeated—although some argue it appears there were problems with that election—losing by 760 votes—recount.





Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, and Ida B. Wells

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VICTORY! Won the Right to Vote in MI

- ▶ In 1917, MI Legislature passed bills for another constitutional amendment on suffrage
- ▶ On November 5, 1918, the amendment passed by a 34,506 majority of over 400,000 votes cast (4th time voted on)

- ▶ Reasons it won:
 - 1) Adoption of prohibition in 1916 in MI (Passed 1919 U.S.)
 - 2) Events encouraged politicians to support suffrage, Black men able to vote after 15th amendment adopted in 1870
 - 3) Women's work in World War I
 - 4) The ability of MESA to organize, educate and agitate

1917 Governor Albert E. Sleeper signs a bill on May 8, granting Michigan women the right to vote for the president.



First Election - March 1919

- ▶ 70% of women registered and up to 50% voted in the spring election
- ▶ MESA became the Michigan League of Women Voters with Belle Brotherton as its first president.



19th Amendment to U.S. Constitution Adopted

- ▶ 1919- The national Suffrage Amendment—the 19th is passed by Congress on June 4 and MI is one of the first three states that ratifies it on June 10
- ▶ Tennessee was the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment, giving it a two-thirds majority it needed to become law. (Rep. Harry Burn)
- ▶ The 19th Amendment reads:
 1. 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.
 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this Article by appropriate legislation.
- ▶ 1920- National American Woman Suffrage Association became the League of Women Voters with Carrie Chapman Catt as president and women voted for the president on November 2.



However, Some Women & Men Were NOT able to Vote

- ▶ Poll taxes were implemented to hamper people's ability to vote
- ▶ Literacy tests were used to deny individuals from voting
- ▶ Selma - March held in March 1965 to highlight the need to demonstrate the desire of African American citizens to exercise their constitutional right to vote, in defiance of segregationist repression; they were part of a broader voting rights movement underway in Selma and throughout the south.
- ▶ Voting Rights Act of 1965 - is a landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States that prohibits racial discrimination in **voting**. It was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.



Women's Equality Day - August 26

- ▶ U.S. Representative Bella Abzug (NY) introduced and passed HJ 52 to designate August 26 as Women's Equality Day in 1973.
- ▶ The date was chosen to commemorate the day in 1920 when Secretary of State **Bainbridge Colby** signed the proclamation granting American women the constitutional right to vote

Equal Rights Amendment

- ▶ Three years later, 1923, Equal Rights Amendment introduced in Congress.
- ▶ U.S. Congresswoman Martha Griffiths (MI) spearheaded passage in 1971-1972

- ▶ ERA says:

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification



ERA Update

- ▶ Working on passage. Two states recently ratified - Nevada (2017) and Illinois (2018).
- ▶ Need one more state. Targeting N. Carolina, Tennessee and Florida
- ▶ <https://www.equalrightsamendment.org/>



Recent Rollbacks

- ▶ Proposes rules to rollback protections under Title IX for sexual misconduct
- ▶ Changes definition of domestic violence
- ▶ Changes definition of sexual assault
- ▶ Reverses order requiring large companies to report to government what they pay employees by race and gender
- ▶ Adds gag rule on abortion counseling to Title X Family Planning Program
- ▶ Reinstates global gag rule on abortion counseling on international family planning programs
- ▶ Changes Affordable Care Act so employer can deny coverage for contraceptives
- ▶ Rescinds guidance to schools on how to address disparities in school discipline
- ▶ Says Title VII Civil Rights Act does not protect LGBTQ employees from discrimination

Recent Achievements

- ▶ 25 women out of 100 (25%) in the U.S. Senate, 1 woman out of 2 from MI
- ▶ 102 women out of 435 (23.4%) in the U.S. House of Representatives, 5 women out of 14 in MI
- ▶ 9 women Governors currently serving
- ▶ Women as Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State and Chief Supreme Court Justice in MI
- ▶ 11 women out of 38 in the MI Senate
- ▶ 42 women out of 110 in the MI House of Representatives
- ▶ 35.3% of women have completed 4 years or more of college
- ▶ **4 of the 112 U.S. Supreme Court Justices ever to serve have been women. Three of those women—Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan—sit on the Supreme Court today. 12 of 115 MI Supreme Court Justices have been women, 3 women serve on MI Supreme Court today**
- ▶ 55% of women voted in 2018 election and 63% voted in 2016 election
- ▶ MI voters approved major changes in redistricting and voting rights in 2018

- ▶ “[Upon the ratification of the 19th Amendment, Carrie Chapman Catt wrote ... to the women voters of the nation:

The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America, the guaranty of your liberty. That vote of yours has cost millions of dollars and the lives of thousands of women. Women have suffered agony of soul which you can never comprehend, that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. That vote has been costly. Prize it! The vote is a power, a weapon of offense and defense, a prayer. Use it intelligently, conscientiously, prayerfully. Progress is calling to you to make no pause. Act!” — Elaine Weiss, [The Woman's Hour](#)

- ▶ “She hoped that things had changed, but she knew that they hadn’t changed enough. All the demonstrations, all the conscious-raising, all the protests, all the pickets, all the books she’d read, all the conversations she’s had, all the ballots she’d cast, all the work and here they were, still.” - Jennifer Weiner, [Mrs. Everything.](#)