

Talking points for Speaker's Bureau volunteers

Longer Talks (30 to 45 minutes)

Taking much of this information from the Wisconsin Historical Society's toolkit entitled "Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration". You can find a copy of that entire work at:

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/whs-womens-suffrage-toolkit.pdf>

There are also some great videos produced by PBS Home Video:

One Woman, One Vote Narrated by Susan Sarandon

The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony – Not For Ourselves Alone a film by Ken Burns and Paul Barnes

Important points for Appleton area speakers to include

Key definitions:

- Suffrage: from Latin suffragium, a vote given in deciding a controversial question or electing a person for office
- Partial Suffrage: A term in the suffrage movement referring to the ability to vote in elections on specific matters, such as municipal elections, school board elections, liquor licenses, etc.
- Suffragist: A woman who fought for the right to vote
- Suffragette: At the time of the Women's suffrage movement, a term used to belittle and demean suffragists. Over time, suffragette has become a popular term used to describe suffragists.

Origins of the movement

- At the founding of the United States, only land-owning (tax paying) white males over the age of 21 could vote. Each state decided who could vote, but most outlined similar qualifications. In New Jersey during the Colonial Era, a widow who owned land could vote, but this right was short lived.
- Declaration of Sentiments: In 1848, the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, was convened. The women drafted the [Declaration of Sentiments](#), modeled on the Declaration of Independence, stating, "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal." The document then outlined the inequalities women faced because of their gender.

There were many leaders and participants over the years. Wisconsin leaders included:

- Olympia Brown from Racine (1835-1926). First woman to be ordained a minister in the US. President of the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association for 28 years.

- Belle Case LaFollette (1859-1931) from Summit, Baraboo, Madison. First woman to graduate from law school in Wisconsin, served as First Lady of Wisconsin and was an outspoken writer and orator for women's right to vote.
- Jessie Jack Hooper (1865-1935) from Oshkosh. Suffragist and president of the Wisconsin League of Women Voters; she ran for the US Senate in 1922.
- Carrie Chapman Catt (1859-1947) from Ripon, but active at the national level, she was integral in gaining passage of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution.
- Many others, both national and state leaders, can be found in the toolkit referenced above or by visiting <http://womeninwisconsin.org> .

Timeline for Wisconsin Women's Suffrage

- 1846 – At the constitutional convention, a delegate asks that the word “male” be left off of the constitution before the word “suffrage”. Other delegates laugh, and the idea is abandoned.
- 1867 – Janesville hosts the first state universal suffrage convention in Wisconsin.
- 1867 – Assemblyman John Dow of Rock County introduces a joint resolution for women's suffrage in Wisc. It passes the senate and the assembly, and the Governor approves it.
- 1868 – The resolution was introduced to the next legislative session as required for passage. It fails in the assembly.
- 1885-86 – Sen. N.L. James of Richland Center introduces a measure that would give women the right to vote in “any election pertaining to school matters.” It passes both houses, is approved by Gov. Rusk, and goes to a referendum, where Wisconsin men vote to pass it 43,581 to 38,988.
- 1887 - Reverend Olympia Brown test the school suffrage law and attempts to vote in a municipal election that impacts school matters. The Wisconsin Supreme Court decides women can vote only in school elections.
- 1919 – On June 10, Wisconsin becomes the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment. Wisconsin legislators vote to ratify the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which would give women the right to vote. On June 13, Wisconsin Senator David James of Richland Center (followed closely on the heels by the Illinois representative) reports to the proper bureau in Washington, DC, to file Wisconsin's ratification documents.
- 1920 – The 19th Amendment takes effect throughout the United States on August 26, and Wisconsin white women over the age of 21 are finally allowed to vote in all elections. Thirty-six states were required to ratify the amendment before it could become law.

Criticism of Suffragists

- Racism and Suffrage. Many of the major suffragists were middle and upper class white women. The movement is sometimes criticized for its lack of diversity and, at points, blatant racism. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/02/opinion/sunday/women-voting-19th-amendment-white-supremacy.html>
 - Millions of women of color still barred from the polls, blocked by poll taxes, literacy tests and other racial barriers
 - Native Americans and Asian immigrants were largely excluded from citizenship entirely
 - Many women of color were important activists in the Suffragist movement but have been rarely acknowledged in historical accounts. Examples:

- Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin, a member of the Metis Turtle Mountain band of Chippewa, marched in the 1913 Women’s Suffrage Parade in Washington
 - Ida B. Wells and investigative journalist, defied demands that black women march in the back of the 1913 parade.
 - Mary McLeod Bethune, a black educator, led voter registration drives after women gained the vote in 1920.
- Prohibition and suffrage. Often suffragists were classified as man-hating spinsters who disliked alcohol. After the Civil War suffrage and temperance became linked when alcoholism ran rampant and women did not have property rights, so husbands with alcoholism could ruin and entire family. The 18th amendment prohibited alcohol and the 19th gave women the right to vote.

Local Appleton Involvement

Note: there are many local newspaper articles found by the Appleton Public Library local history librarian. Speakers should be able to access the articles by following this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/989zj2p6nsrk1fs/AADU6xsvqYeAVSd87y-J8ymta?dl=0>

- Appleton Post Crescent articles were sometimes dismissive of the Suffrage movement or reporting on local lack of interest. Saying things like this in a 1909 article entitled “Roses and Gum May Enter Into Politics”:
- “the proposed law would also make a difference in the appearance of candidates, as the handsome man is conceded as having the best chance in the future campaign.”
 - “It is doubtful, however, if many Appleton women are in favor of the so-called women’s rights principles, and the probabilities are that even in the not expected event of full suffrage being extended to them, not one in ten women would go to polls on election day”
- But sometimes more positive:
 - In 1911 “If any city can boast of an intelligent and progressive womanhood, Appleton is that city.”
 - In 1920 after Tennessee senate voted to ratify giving hope that their house would as well: “Ratification of the suffrage amendment by the state senate of Tennessee was an agreeable surprise to Appleton women who are eager for the opportunity to take an active part in politics.”
- Important Appleton Women in the Suffrage movement
 - 1916 - **Janet Strathern** elected temporary chairman of the local branch of the National College Equal Suffrage League organized at Lawrence University.
 - 1914 – Mrs. Rush Winslow elected president of the Outagamie County Political Equality league. (No article was found that gave her first name, only her husband’s.)

Other Interesting tidbits

- Throughout the entire process there was much pushback and resistance to the notion of women voting. In Watertown in 1912, a poster was created that reads: “Danger! Women’s Suffrage

would double the irresponsible vote! It is a menace to the Home, Men's Employment and All Business!" (see the Wisc. Historical Society toolkit, page 9, for a picture of the poster.)

- The timeline above says, correctly, that Wisconsin was the first to ratify. But it's a bit more complicated. Illinois actually completed the process about an hour and a half before Wisconsin did. Mrs. Jessie Jack Hooper asked the Governor (Emanuel Philipp) to appoint David James as a special messenger. Several days later, after a long and difficult trip, James arrived at the offices of the Secretary of State where he received a signed statement that Wisconsin was first. Illinois' messenger arrived just as he left and slapped his papers on the table saying "I've brought papers to show Illinois was first". Wisconsin messengers laughed. Plus, the papers he brought were incomplete and he had to return a week later with correct papers. So, while Illinois was the first to vote to ratify, Wisconsin was recognized as the first state to complete the ratification process.
- On June 10, 2019, the Wisconsin Legislature passed an Assembly Joint Resolution: "Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That the Wisconsin State Legislature celebrates June 10, 2019, as the 100th Anniversary of ratifying the 19th Amendment and reaffirms Wisconsin's commitment to empowering and uplifting the voices of women across our great state."