

# Women's Suffrage in the West

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This lesson will focus on:

- where women won the right to vote in the West
- when and how women won the right to vote in the West
- that equality for women beyond the right to vote was not guaranteed

Part I uses primary sources to establish the background on voting rights in the United States Constitution prior to the 19th Amendment and the ratification—approval—of the 19th Amendment.

Part II helps define the American West through a mapping activity (Part A). The mapping activity continues, adding what type of suffrage women won in western states along with when they won it using information on State Suffrage Cards (Part B).

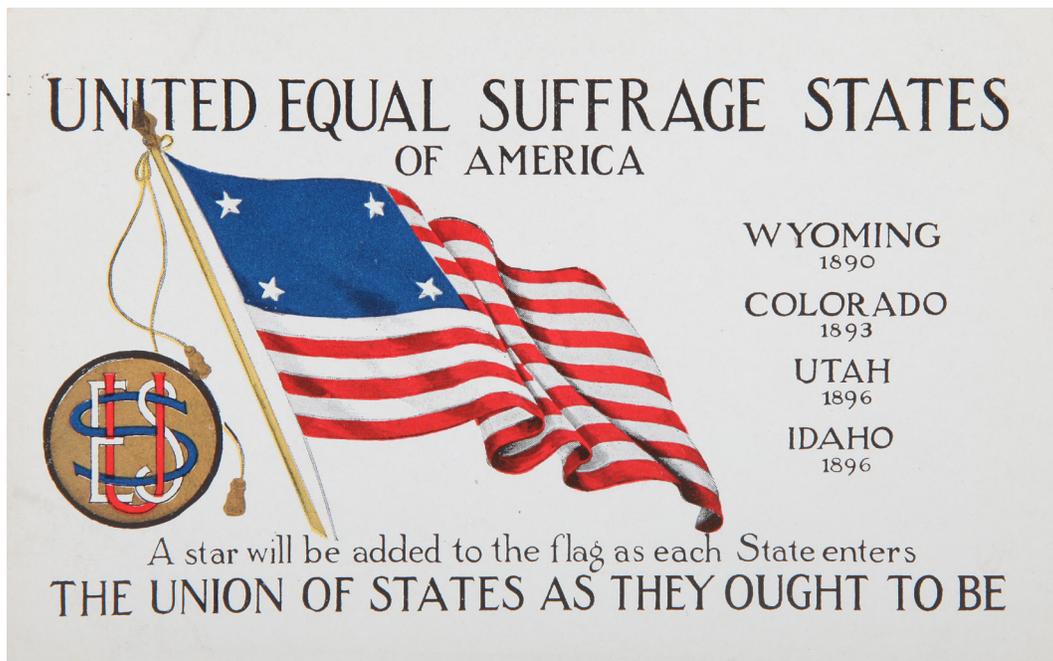
Part III introduces the Paths to State Suffrage infographic and documents evidence from the map and State Suffrage Cards on how suffrage was won and what type of suffrage (full or partial). Questions are posed for further analysis and to assist in writing a claim about women's suffrage.

Part IV provides an exploration of the 19th Amendment, evaluating which western states ratified the amendment, adding it to the map and making a claim about western states and ratification.

Part V offers an investigation about how the right to vote for women did not mean equality for women and what inequalities still exist today.

There is a survey at the end of the lesson to gauge interest in complementary lessons and activities on why women won given the right to vote in the West, equal suffrage and minority women's right to vote, tactics used by activist women and organizations, and other topics to further delve into women's suffrage in the West.

# Women's Suffrage in the West



Women's suffrage—the right to vote—was not part of the United States Constitution until the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920. The 19th Amendment added to the Constitution “the right of the 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.” However, long before the 19th Amendment, women won the right to vote in either full or partial suffrage in territories and states across the West.

The West led the way for women's suffrage in the United States beginning with the women's suffrage law of 1869 in the Territory of Wyoming. Women won the right to vote in other areas across the West as Western territories became states, but well before the national amendment passed. Although they hadn't received full suffrage yet, women won the right to vote in local school and Presidential elections in certain states. While women in many states east of the Mississippi River failed to win their campaigns for full or partial suffrage, women in 23 of the 24 territories/states west of the Mississippi River won some type of suffrage by the time the passage of the 19th Amendment. In 14 of those territories/states, women had full suffrage rights compared to the eastern states, where only Massachusetts, New York, and Michigan had women's suffrage by the time of the 19th Amendment's ratification in 1920.

Despite the West's advancements for women through suffrage, the right to vote didn't apply to all women in western states and territories. Even the 19th Amendment did not include women's suffrage for all. In 1920, Native Americans and Asian immigrants in the U.S. were not considered United States citizens. So state and federal laws and guarantees to rights such as suffrage didn't apply to them. After the 19th Amendment passed, many states created local laws that limited the rights of Black and Latina women to vote by imposing literacy tests, taxes, and voting laws requiring an understanding of the English language.

Although women gained representation with the right to vote, they still faced inequality or discrimination in the workforce, education, and in other ways. Throughout the years, additional federal laws and amendments have been proposed to provide equal rights for women. But the larger question would remain, did the right to vote guarantee equality for women?

# Women's Suffrage in the West

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## Part I: Background – Voting Rights in the United States Constitution

**Task:** Individually, in groups, or as a class (per your teacher's instructions), read through the following excerpts and answer the questions that follow.

Suffrage—the right to vote—is a right guaranteed in most democratic constitutions. However, the United States Constitution does not say citizens have the right to vote. Instead, the Constitution infers, or suggests the right to vote for representatives in the legislature, the U.S. Congress.

“The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members **chosen every second Year by the People of the several States ...**” Article I Section 2, United States Constitution.

“The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, ...” changed in 1913 to “**elected by the people** thereof, ...” Article I Section 3, United States Constitution. Amendment XVII (17), United States Constitution.

The Constitution gives states the power to make laws and rules about voting and elections but says the federal government can change or alter those laws through Congress.

“The times, places and manner of **holding elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each state** by the legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations.” Article I Section 4, United States Constitution.

In 1870, Congress created the first change to voting through an amendment, or addition to the Constitution. The Fifteenth Amendment gave African American men the right to vote.

“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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude** - The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.” Amendment XV (15), Sections 1-2, United States Constitution.

**Who had the right to vote in the United States per the Constitution and amendments prior to the 19th Amendment in 1920? (Use the bolded sections from the text to help you).**

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**How did the 19th Amendment (excerpted below) change the right to vote in the United States in 1920?**

“The right of **citizens** of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States **or any state** on the account of **sex**.” Amendment XIX (19), United States Constitution.

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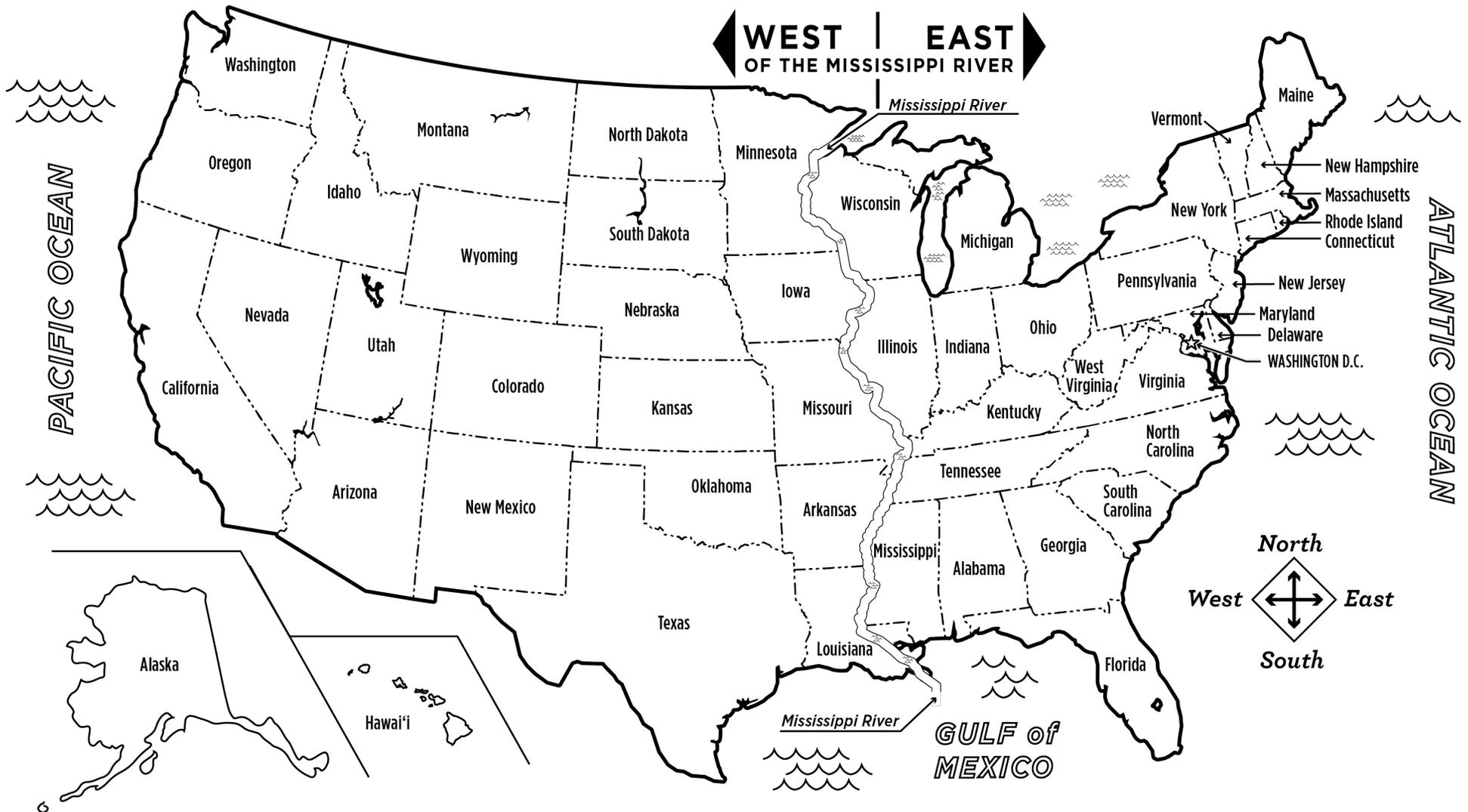
# Women's Suffrage in the West

## Part II - A: What is the American West?

To understand how western states in the United States led the way for women's suffrage, we need to answer the question What is the West? The Autry Museum defines the West as everything west of or to the left of the Mississippi River as shown on this map.

Task: Trace the line of the Mississippi River. How many states are in the West? \_\_\_\_\_

SUFFRAGE IN THE WEST MAP



# Women's Suffrage in the West

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## Part II – B: Mapping Suffrage in the West

**Task:** Use State Suffrage Cards to find the information to map out what type of women's suffrage (full or partial) women won in states in the West along and when. Document the answers on the map from Part II-A.

### 1. In which territories did women win suffrage—the right to vote—**before statehood**?

- Classmates read their State Suffrage Card and share with the class if their state answers the question.

On the map,

- Color those territories yellow (or shade in the states with a pencil) on the map.
- Write the territorial date on the map and label it “Territory.”
- Write the date when women won the right to vote before statehood on the map and label it “Vote.”

For territories that won suffrage and had it revoked,

- Put dots in the territory.
- Next to “Vote” put the date when full suffrage and label it “Restored.”

For territories that won suffrage in the territory but did not have suffrage in federal elections,

- Put diagonals in the territory.
- Next to “Vote” put the date of federal elections and label it “Federal.”

### 2. In which states did women win suffrage - the right to vote - after statehood, **but before the 19th Amendment** (August 1920).

- Classmates read their State Suffrage Card and share with the class if their state answers the question.

On the map,

- Color those states light green (or put dots in the states with a pencil) on the map.
- Write the statehood date on the map and label it “Statehood.”
- Write the date when women won the right to vote after statehood, but before the 19th Amendment on the map and label it “Vote.”

### 3. In which states did women win the **partial suffrage - the right to vote - before the 19th Amendment** (August 1920) through voting in Presidential elections or in state, local, and other elections.

- Classmates read their State Suffrage Card and share with the class if their state answers the question.

On the map,

- Color those states light blue (or put diagonals in the states with a pencil) on the map.
- Write the statehood date on the map and label it “Statehood.”
- Write the date when women won the partial right to vote before the 19th Amendment on the map and label it with the type or types of voting right – “Schools” or “President” “Tax” or “City.”

# 1. INCLUDED IN STATE CONSTITUTION

(territory or state)

Women's suffrage was debated and voted on by the state legislature at the state constitutional convention. With enough legislative votes, women's suffrage was included in the state constitution.



**AUTRY MUSEUM**  
OF THE AMERICAN WEST

# 2. INITIATIVE: Process to Amend the State Constitution

People of the state petitioned to place a women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution on the ballot, and it was approved by the people.



SIGNATURES

People gathered signatures of residents in favor of placing a women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution on the ballot.



BALLOT

With enough signatures (as required by the state), the women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution was put on the ballot.



PUBLIC VOTE

The people of the state voted on women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution.



ADDED TO STATE CONSTITUTION

With enough votes, women's suffrage amendment added to the state constitution.

# Three Paths to Women's Suffrage in States

(THE RIGHT OF WOMEN TO VOTE IN ELECTIONS)



# 3. REFERENDUM: Process to Amend The State Constitution

The state legislature passed a women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution and it was approved by the people.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE BILL PROPOSED  
State legislators proposed a women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution.

1ST CHAMBER/HOUSE

2ND CHAMBER/HOUSE



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

FLOOR DEBATE

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

FLOOR DEBATE

The bill to amend the state constitution had to pass both chambers/houses of the state legislature.



STATE LEGISLATURE PASSED SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT



STATE GOVERNOR APPROVED SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT



(This was only in some states)



PUBLIC VOTE

The people of the state voted on women's suffrage amendment to the state constitution.



ADDED TO STATE CONSTITUTION

With enough votes, women's suffrage amendment added to the state constitution.

# *Women's Suffrage in the West*

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## **Part III-A: Paths to Suffrage in the West**

Notes on Infographic: Three Paths to Women's Suffrage in States

1. Written into the constitution. How it works:

How the process could fail:

2. Put to a vote by the people in an initiative. How it works:

How the process could fail:

3. Passed by the legislature and then approved by voters through a referendum. How it works:

How the process could fail:

# Women's Suffrage in the West

## Part III-B: Analyzing Suffrage in the West

This activity will help answer the following questions about Women's Suffrage in the West:

- Which states in the West led the way for women's suffrage?
- What type of suffrage (full or partial) did they win?
- How was suffrage won in these states?

### Table A: Full Suffrage Prior to Statehood

In which states did women win full suffrage before they became a state, as a U.S. Territory?

**Task #1:** Use the *Suffrage in the West* map to fill out the last column for the date women won full suffrage in each territory.

STATE NAME	U.S. TERRITORY/STATEHOOD DATE	FULL SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN DATE
Wyoming	1869 (territory); 1890 (state)	
Utah	1848 (territory); 1896 (state)	
Washington	1853 (territory); 1889 (state)	
Alaska	1912 (territory); 1959 (state)	

**Task #2:** Classmates who have the states in the table should use information on their State Suffrage Card to find the answers to the following questions and share with their classmates.

1. Why was women's suffrage revoked in **Utah** Territory? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why was women's suffrage revoked in **Washington**? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why was different about the **Alaska** Territory? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why is **Wyoming** important? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How did women win the right to vote in each of these territories? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Summary Question:** What does this data and information tell you about women's **suffrage prior to statehood**?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Women's Suffrage in the West

**Table B: Full Suffrage Before the 19th Amendment**

**In which states did women win full suffrage before the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920?**

**Task #1:** Use the *Suffrage in the West* map to fill out the last column for the date women won full suffrage in each state.

STATE NAME	U.S. TERRITORY/STATEHOOD DATE	FULL SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN DATE
Wyoming	1869 (territory); 1890 (state)	
Colorado	1876 (state)	
Idaho	1862 (territory); 1890 (state)	
Utah	1850 (territory); 1896 (state)	
Washington	1853 (territory); 1889 (state)	
California	1850 (state)	
Arizona	1912 (state)	
Oregon	1859 (state)	
Kansas	1861 (state)	
Alaska	1898 (territory); 1959 (state)	
Montana	1889 (state)	
Nevada	1914 (state)	
Oklahoma	1907 (state)	

**Task #2:** Use the table and classmates to answer the following questions.

Look at Table B.

1. In many of these territories and states, partial suffrage was won prior to full suffrage. Which states that had full suffrage by 1920 also had partial suffrage?

- School elections: \_\_\_\_\_
- Municipal/city elections: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tax issues: \_\_\_\_\_

Classmates who have the states in the table should use information on their State Suffrage Card to find the answers to the following questions and share with their classmates.

2. How did women win the right to vote in each of these states? Put a tally mark or the state abbreviation next to the options as your classmates share the answers from the State Suffrage Card.

- Women's suffrage was written into the **state constitution**: \_\_\_\_\_
- Women's suffrage was an **initiative** where voters in the state put forth the suffrage question directly to voters: \_\_\_\_\_
- Women's suffrage was a **referendum** where voters in the state required the suffrage law passed by the legislature to be approved by voters: \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary Question:** What does this data and information tell you about the states where women won **full suffrage** before the 19th Amendment (1920)?

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# Women's Suffrage in the West

**Table C: Partial Suffrage Before the 19th Amendment**

**In which states did women win partial suffrage before 1920?**

**Task #1:** Use the *Suffrage in the West* map to fill out the last column for the date women won partial suffrage in each state.

STATE NAME	FULL SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN	PARTIAL SUFFRAGE – local elections (school, city, taxes)	PARTIAL SUFFRAGE – President of the U.S.
Louisiana	1920 (with 19th Amendment passage); ratified: June 1970		
New Mexico	1920 (19th Amendment passage); ratified: Dec. 1919		
Nebraska	1920 (19th Amendment passage); ratified: August 1919		
Minnesota	1920 (19th Amendment passage); ratified: Sept. 1919		
North Dakota	1920 (with 19th Amendment passage); ratified: Dec. 1919		
Iowa	1920 (with 19th Amendment passage); ratified: July 1919		
Arkansas	1920 (with 19th Amendment passage); ratified: July 1919		
Texas	1920 (with 19th Amendment passage); ratified: June 1919		
Missouri	1920 (19th Amendment passage); ratified: July 1919		

**Task #2:** Use the table and classmates to answer the following questions.

Look at Table C.

1. In many of these states, partial suffrage was won prior to full suffrage. Which states won partial suffrage prior to 1920 for the following?

- School elections: \_\_\_\_\_
- Municipal/city elections: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tax issues: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presidential elections: \_\_\_\_\_

Classmates who have the states in the table should use information on their State Suffrage Card to find the answers to the following questions and share with their classmates.

2. Were there other political efforts to gain full suffrage prior to the 19th Amendment? Put a tally mark or the state abbreviation next to the options as your classmates share the answers from the State Suffrage Card.

- State Constitution: Attempts to have suffrage written into constitutions at constitutional conventions: \_\_\_\_\_
- State Legislature: Suffrage bills or amendments introduced to the legislature but never passed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Initiative: Suffrage Amendment put to a vote by the people but not approved by voters: \_\_\_\_\_
- Referendum: Suffrage Amendment put to a vote by the people after passing the legislature but not approved by voters: \_\_\_\_\_

# Women's Suffrage in the West

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**Task #3:** There is one state we haven't heard from. Look at the map. What state is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this state different than all the others in how women's suffrage was won? \_\_\_\_\_

*Summary Question:* What does this data and information tell you about the states where women won only **partial suffrage** before the 19th Amendment (1920)?

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## Part III - D: Making a Claim About Suffrage in the West

Use the evidence from Part III - C to make a claim about women's suffrage in the West.

Claim 1: The West led the way in women's suffrage because...

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Claim 2: However, suffrage in the West varied...

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# Women's Suffrage in the West

## Part IV: Ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

### AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, 1920.

BAINBRIDGE COLBY,

August 26, 1920.

SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME,  
GREETING:

KNOW YE, That the Congress of the United States at the first session, sixty-sixth Congress began at Washington on the nineteenth day of May in the year one thousand nine hundred and nineteen, passed a Resolution as follows: to wit—

#### JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution extending the right of suffrage to women.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States.

#### “ARTICLE —.

“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.

“Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”

And, further, that it appears from official documents on file in the Department of State that the Amendment to the Constitution of the United States proposed as aforesaid has been ratified by the Legislatures of the States of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

And, further, that the States whose Legislatures have so ratified the said proposed Amendment, constitute three-fourths of the whole number of States in the United States.

NOW, therefore, be it known that I, Bainbridge Colby, Secretary of State of the United States, by virtue and in pursuance of Section 205 of the Revised Statutes of the United States, do hereby certify that the Amendment aforesaid has become valid to all intents and purposes as a part of the Constitution of the United States.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Department of State to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this 26th day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and

[SEAL.] twenty.

BAINBRIDGE COLBY.  
1823

*United States' Secretary of State's recognition of ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution.*

Congress must introduce an amendment and pass the proposal to amend the United States Constitution with a two-thirds vote of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. (This can also be done by constitutional convention, but that has never been used). Once Congress passes the proposal to amend the Constitution, three-fourths of states' legislatures must approve the amendment.

On May 19, 1919, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a joint resolution (agreement) of Congress to amend the Constitution to include women's suffrage. On June 4, 1919, the U.S. Senate passed the resolution. Thirty-six of the forty-nine states at the time had to ratify it (Alaska and Hawaii were territories). Tennessee was the thirty-sixth state to ratify the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920. The United States Secretary of State certified the ratification on August 26, 1920. All states were required to give women the right to vote.

**Part IV-A:** Look at the excerpt from the document. Circle the western states below that ratified the 19th Amendment. On the map from Part II, put a star in those western states that ratified the 19th Amendment.

Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

## Part IV-B: Making a Claim About the Ratification of the 19th Amendment in the West

Use the evidence from Part IV to make a claim about the ratification of the 19th Amendment in the West. Then add information to complete the counterclaim.

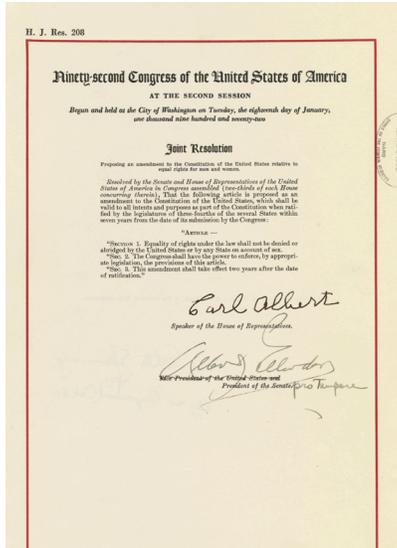
Claim: The West led the way in ratifying the 19th Amendment because...

Counterclaim: While the West led the way ratifying the 19th Amendment, one western state, \_\_\_\_\_, did not officially ratify it until 1970.

And two states, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ did not ratify it because in 1920 they were U.S. Territories, not states.

# Women's Suffrage in the West

## Part V – A: Connect to Today Women's Equality Today



*Joint Resolution of March 22, 1972, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States Relative to Equal Rights for Men and Women.*

August 2020 was the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which made women's right to vote in all states guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. As you learned in this lesson, many women in western territories and states of the U.S. had some form of suffrage long before the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920.

Though women won the right to vote, did women achieve equality?

Many women didn't think so. In 1923, an Equal Rights Amendment was introduced in Congress to provide equality for all. It didn't pass. It has been reintroduced at every session of Congress since then. In 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment passed both houses of Congress and was submitted to the states for ratification. Unlike the 19th Amendment, which states ratified in 14 months, the Equal Rights Amendment had still not passed ten years later in 1982.

**Do women have equality today? Think about women in politics, property, marriage, jobs, sports, etc.**

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## Part IV – B: Researching Women's Equality Today

1. Research equal rights for women today.
2. Find a present-day example of an individual, organization, campaign, political action, protest, etc.
3. Pick an image that represents that person, organization, or campaign's fight for equal women's rights.
4. Add the image to a Class Collage (physical collage or digital collage).
5. Share out to classmates; classmates take notes.

## Making a Claim about Women's Equality Today

Use the evidence from Part IV to make a claim about the status of equality for women 100 hundred years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment in the West.

Claim: While the West led the way for full women's suffrage and the 19th Amendment made it a federal constitutional guarantee, it didn't mean equality for women. One hundred years later ...

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# Resources

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Cloth sash promoting the women's suffrage movement, circa 1912. Purchase made possible by the 2006 Gold-level Acquisitions Committee and an anonymous donor. Autry Museum; 2006.25.1

Postcard supporting women's suffrage, published by the Cargill Company, circa 1896-1910. Purchase made possible by the 2006 Gold-level Acquisitions Committee and an anonymous donor. Autry Museum; 2006.25.4

Facsimile of the 1920 United States' Secretary of State's recognition of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, authorizing women's right to vote. From <https://loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/images/41stat1823.pdf>; accessed Oct. 2020

Facsimile of the Joint Resolution by the Congress of the United States, proposing the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, authorizing women's right to vote. From <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7455549>; accessed Oct. 2020

## Survey

Please complete a survey for additional and complementary lessons on the following topics:

- Why did women win suffrage in the West before other states?
- Suffrage for All? Minority Women's Suffrage in the West
- State Activist Individuals, Organizations and Tactics for Women's Suffrage
- Anti-Suffragists in the West: Men and Women

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VVN68NX>