

Suffrage Amendment
Grades 4-5
TN History for Kids Lesson 1

Voting

As you know, we pick leaders by choosing between candidates in an election. This process is known as voting.

The president of the United States is elected by voting. So are all the members of Congress; the governor of Tennessee; all the members of the Tennessee General Assembly; and your county and city mayor.



People voting in Tennessee (THFK photo)

Today in the U.S., all people who are older than 18 years old and who have not been found guilty of committing a serious crime can vote.

It doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman. It doesn't matter what color your skin is. It doesn't matter whether you own property or not.

It has not always been like this.

When Tennessee first became a state, only men who owned property were allowed to vote. The Tennessee Constitution of 1834 changed this law. Since that time, you haven't had to own property to vote.

The American Civil War was fought between 1861 and 1865. One the reasons this

war took place was that many parts of the United States, including Tennessee, had slavery. Most African Americans who lived in the United States before 1865 were kept in slavery.

After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution made slavery illegal, and the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution made it illegal to keep a person from voting because of his race or color.

However, even after the Civil War, women still weren't allowed to vote.

In the late 1800s, many women (and some men) argued that women should be allowed to vote. It took a long time. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment made it illegal for a state to deny the right to vote to women.

Tennessee played an important part in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. This year we will learn more about how this happened.

Questions:

1. What are some examples of leaders who are chosen by voting in the United States today?
2. Before 1834, men had to _____ to vote in Tennessee.
3. TRUE OR FALSE: All Americans who are older the age of 18 are eligible to vote today.
4. Which amendment to the U.S. Constitution made slavery illegal?
5. Which amendment made it clear that women could vote?

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TN History for Kids Lesson 2

Dollar Coin

In the late 1800s, many women (and some men) began arguing that women should be allowed to vote.

Perhaps the most famous of these was Susan B. Anthony.

Anthony was born in 1820 in Massachusetts. She was raised to believe that everyone (men and women, black and white) should be treated equally. Several members of her family were abolitionists, which means they were active in the fight against slavery.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony
PHOTO: Library of Congress

In 1851, Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton and began writing and speaking in favor of women's rights. After the Civil War, Anthony and Stanton were angry because the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution didn't say anything about women. They co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association, which had as its goal the passage

of an amendment that would guarantee that women could vote.



Susan B. Anthony's image on the dollar coin

In 1872, Anthony was arrested for voting. The case brought national attention to the women's suffrage cause. Although she was found guilty and fined \$100, Anthony's words during her trial have inspired people since. "You have trampled under foot every vital principle of our government," she said to the judge. "My natural rights, my civil rights, my political rights, my judicial rights, are all alike ignored."

Four years later, in 1876, Anthony led a protest at the Centennial of America's independence.

Susan B. Anthony died in 1906—14 years before Tennessee's General Assembly approved the suffrage amendment, which made it part of the U.S. Constitution.

Questions:

1. In what cause were several members of Anthony's family active in the early 1800s?
2. Why were Anthony and Stanton upset about the Fifteenth Amendment?
3. Susan B. Anthony was arrested in 1872 for _____.
4. If someone hands you a Susan B. Anthony coin, how much money are they giving you?

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TN History for Kids Lesson 3

State by State

Many people think American women were not allowed to vote before the Nineteenth Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution in 1920. That's not really true.

By the time the suffrage amendment passed, women in 37 of the 48 states were already voting.

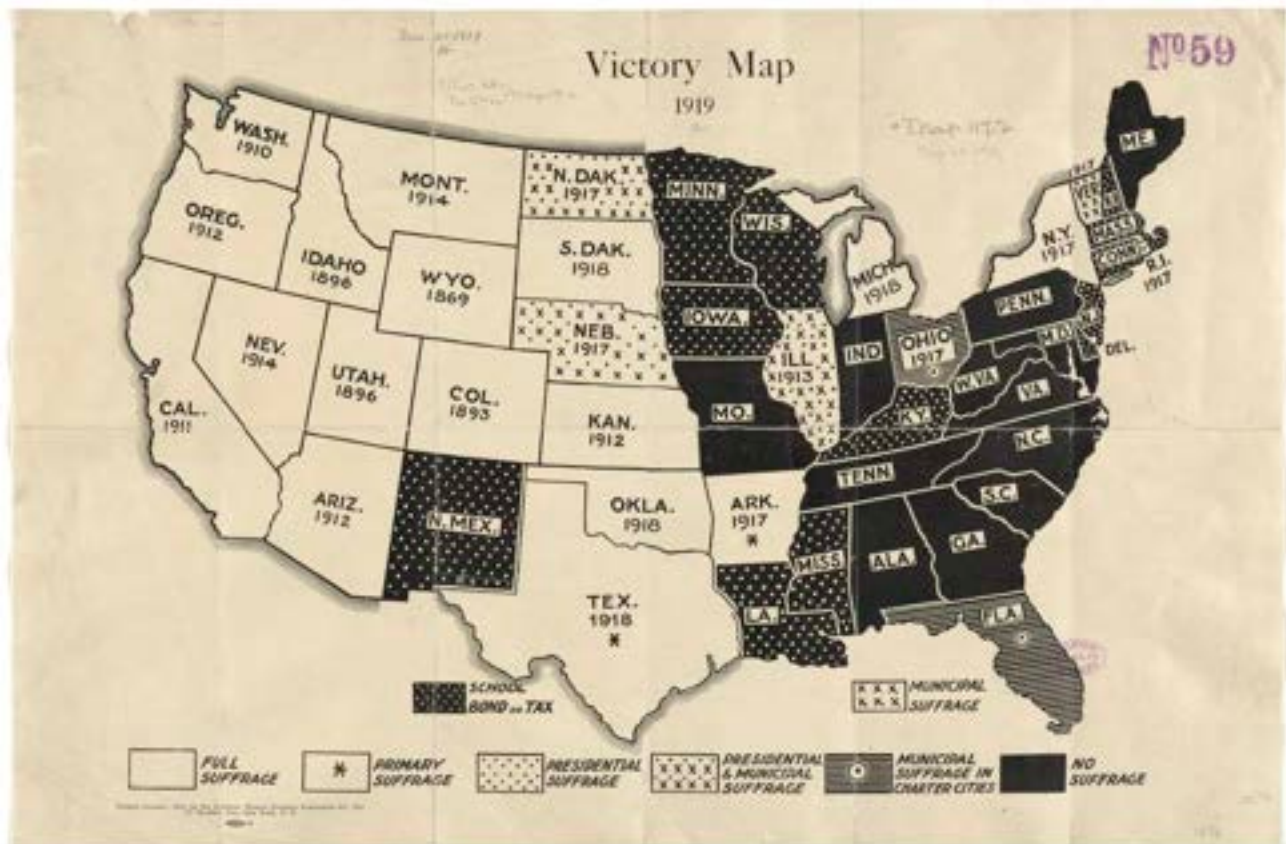
This story goes back to just after the American Civil War. You see, in 1869, the woman's suffrage movement split into two organizations. One, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, worked for a U.S. Constitutional Amendment that would make it clear that women all over the country could vote. The other, led by Lucy Stone, worked for women's suffrage one state at a time.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (seated) and Susan B. Anthony
PHOTO: Library of Congress

The two organizations would later merge, but the early split resulted in two strategies within the suffrage movement. Although it would take more than half a century to pass a Constitutional Amendment on women's suffrage, many states did grant women the right to vote.

In 1869, Wyoming became the first state or territory in the United States to grant women the right to vote.



MAP: Boston Public Library

As you can see from this map, other western states and territories followed Wyoming's lead. Women in some states could vote in all elections; women in others could only vote in some elections; while women in others couldn't vote in any elections.

In the years leading up to World War I, a number of large states such as California, New York and Texas voted to grant suffrage to women. By this time, however, it became obvious that southern states weren't going to grant suffrage to women.

Focus then shifted to a suffrage amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Questions

- 1) How did the strategy of the Susan B. Anthony's organization differ from those of the Lucy Stone's organization?
- 2) When did Colorado guarantee the right of suffrage to women?
- 3) In what section of the United States did the woman's suffrage movement make the least amount of progress?
- 4) Based on this content, which state do you think was the first to elect a female governor?

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TN History for Kids Lesson 4

Half a Century

In 1878, a senator from California proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which said that women in all states would have the right to vote.

This measure, known as the woman **suffrage** amendment, took 42 years to pass. For most of that time, Congress did not take it seriously.

Meanwhile the state-by-state strategy discussed in the previous lesson made slow progress. By 1905, women could only vote in four states.

All the while, suffrage leaders met, made speeches, wrote letters, and staged protests.

So, for a long time, the American woman suffrage movement achieved very little. Why?

Here are three reasons:

- The **abolition** of slavery and the social changes brought on by it were a lot for the country to absorb in the late 1800s.
- Suffrage activists found it difficult to get Congress to pass a measure which they perceive as benefitting someone else—in this case, an all-male House and Senate granting voting rights to women.
- Many people believed that woman suffrage would be “bad for business”—that women voters would lead the country to pass laws that would hurt the economy.

Finally, it is not as if women weren't politically active during these years. Many women were involved in other political movements, such as improving conditions for the poor and the abolition of alcohol (known as **temperance**).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton died in 1902; Susan B. Anthony in 1906. Before her death, Anthony named Carrie Catt as her replacement.



Carrie Catt

PHOTO: National Woman's Party Records

Woodrow Wilson was elected president in 1912. Throughout most of his life he made it clear he was not a fan of the woman suffrage movement. “I believe that the social changes it would involve would not justify the gains that would be accomplished by it,” he wrote in 1911.

However, national opinion towards woman suffrage was changing. California voted for woman suffrage in 1911; Arizona, Oregon and Kansas in 1912 and Illinois in 1913.

Also in 1913, suffrage leader Alice Paul broke away from the National American Woman Suffrage Association and started a group which later became known as the National Woman's Party. On the day before Wilson's **inauguration**, Paul helped organize a protest parade in Washington, D.C., with about 8,000 participants (and an estimated half a million onlookers.)

Most suffrage leaders put their demands for a new amendment on hold during World War I, asking activists to work hard toward the war cause.



Alice Paul
Library of Congress

After the war ended, they renewed their demand for the amendment's passage. The suffrage protests got more radical. In one case, activists who were arrested in Washington D.C. went on a **hunger strike**, refusing to eat food in jail. Once freed, they went all over the country making speeches about their experiences in jail.

Finally, the suffrage amendment passed the House in May 1919, and the Senate a few weeks later, in June 1919. Now all that was left was for two-thirds of the states to approve it.



The official program of the 1913 suffrage protest
Library of Congress

Some states approved the amendment quickly. By June 1920, 35 of the necessary 36 legislatures had approved the amendment, but the only former Southeastern state that had approved it was Texas.

In July 1920, America waited to see if any of the remaining states would approve the Nineteenth Amendment.

Questions:

- 1) What are some of the reasons the suffrage amendment took so long to pass?
- 2) How was the National Woman's Party different than the National American Woman Suffrage Association?
- 3) Why did most of the woman suffrage activists stop their efforts to pass the Nineteenth Amendment in 1917 and 1918?

Glossary:

Abolition—to make illegal or abolish

Hunger strike—to refuse to eat as a form of protest

Inauguration—the ceremony where someone becomes president

Suffrage—the right to vote

Temperance—the use of little or no liquor or alcohol

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Long Road to 36

We interrupt this history lesson for some math.

Under the U.S. Constitution, an amendment must be approved by Congress and then the **legislatures** of three-fourths of the states to become the law of the land.

There were 48 states in 1919, and three-fourths of 48 is 36. Therefore, 36 state legislatures had to approve the Nineteenth Amendment (also known as the woman suffrage amendment) for it to become law.

In the months after Congress passed the woman suffrage amendment, **activists** from Carrie Chapman Catt's National American Woman Suffrage Association and Alice Paul's National Woman's Party worked hard to get states to **ratify** it.



Carrie Chapman Catt
PHOTO: National Woman's Party Records

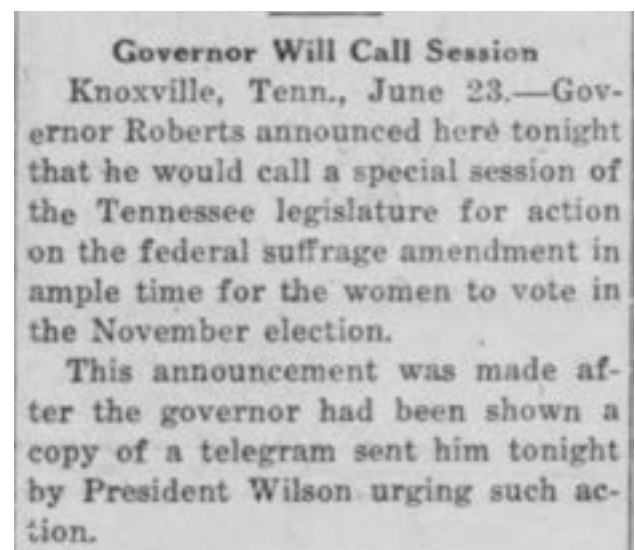
As you may remember, many states—especially in the Northeast and West—already allowed women to vote by this time. That being the case, everyone knew that states in the Northeast and West were more likely to approve the Nineteenth Amendment. Southeastern states were more likely to **reject** it.

As expected, states such as Illinois, New York, California and Nevada approved the Nineteenth Amendment. In March 1920, Washington became the 35th state to do so.

But in May, Delaware's legislature voted no on the suffrage amendment, which took suffrage activists by surprise. It began to look like there might not be a 36th state.

President Woodrow Wilson had come out in favor of the suffrage amendment in 1918. After it passed Congress, he was hoping that 36 states would ratify it without him having to get involved. But after Delaware rejected the amendment, suffrage activists such as Catt and Paul put pressure on him to speak out.

In June 1919, Wilson sent a message to Tennessee Governor Albert Roberts asking him to call the General Assembly into **special session** and ask them to pass the amendment. Roberts told Wilson that he would call a special session, but not until after Tennessee had an election on August 5.



Kingsport Times, June 25, 1920

Four days after that election, on August 9, 1920, Roberts called the legislature into special session.

All 99 members of the Tennessee State House and 33 members of the Tennessee State Senate left their home districts and came to Nashville. Reporters from newspapers from all over the country came. So did activists who were in favor of the amendment (such as Carrie Catt) and activists who were against it (such as Josephine Pearson).

The whole nation cast its eyes on Tennessee.

Questions:

- 1) Why didn't the Nineteenth Amendment become part of the Constitution as soon as Congress approved it in 1919?
- 2) Why was it assumed that states in the Northeast and West were more likely to approve the Nineteenth Amendment than states in the Southeast? (Hint: Look at a previous lesson)
- 3) What state rejected the suffrage amendment, making activists wonder if it was going to become law after all?
- 4) Why did Governor Roberts wait until August to call the legislature into special session?

Glossary:

activist—a person who is especially active for a political cause

legislature—a lawmaking body (also often referred to as the General Assembly)

ratify—to formally approve

reject—to say no to something

special session—a period when a lawmaking body is called to decide on something outside of the normal period

Suffrage Amendment Middle School TN History for Kids Lesson 6

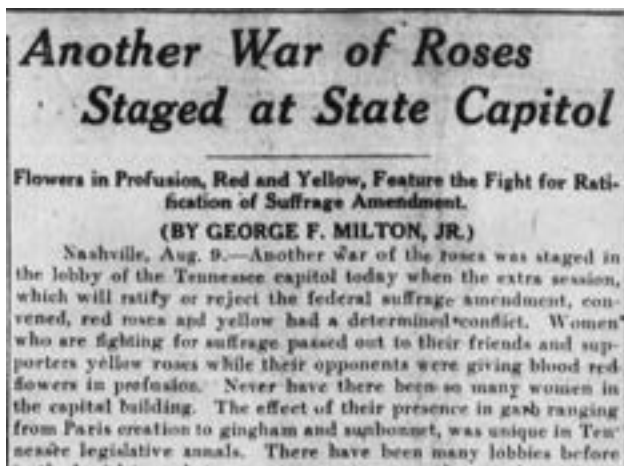
Volunteer State Showdown

As members of the General Assembly arrived in Nashville, national attention focused on Tennessee.

Supporters and opponents of the woman suffrage amendment greeted lawmakers as they got off their trains. They received **pledges** of “yes” votes from some legislators and pledges of no votes from others.

Some lawmakers, meanwhile, said they hadn’t yet decided whether to vote for or against the Nineteenth Amendment.

Legislators in favor of the amendment were given yellow roses. Legislators against it wore red roses. This led many reporters to refer to the special session as the “war of the roses.”



Chattanooga News, August 9, 1920

In those days, many legislators stayed at Nashville’s Hermitage Hotel. During the special session in August 1920, much of the **debate** took place in the rooms, hallways and **lobbies** of this hotel.

We estimate today that there were as many as 100 women in downtown Nashville trying to talk Tennessee legislators into passing the suffrage amendment in August 1920. “Never

have there been so many women in the capital building,” one article stated.

The most famous woman was Carrie Chapman Catt, who came from her home in New York. Criticisms of Catt being an “outsider” kept her in her hotel room at the Hermitage much of the time.



**The lobby of the Hermitage Hotel in 1920
PHOTO: Hermitage Hotel**

Most face-to-face **lobbying** for the Nineteenth Amendment was done by woman suffrage activists from Tennessee, such as Anne Dallas Dudley of Nashville, Sue Shelton White of Henderson, Elizabeth Avery Meriwether of Memphis, Lizzie Crozier French of Knoxville and Abby Crawford Milton of Chattanooga.

Today, many of these women are honored in statues across Tennessee.

It may be hard to believe, but there were also women in Nashville arguing *against* the suffrage amendment. Josephine Pearson of Monteagle was president of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. She and her colleagues were in full force as the legislators arrived in Nashville.



This photo was taken at the door of the Anti-Ratification headquarters. Josephine Pearson is on the right. The man is a Confederate veteran who opposed woman suffrage.

PHOTO: TN State Library and Archives

What types of arguments for and against the suffrage amendment were these women using?

We'll talk about that in the next lesson.

Questions:

- 1) What did it mean in 1920 if a legislator wore a yellow rose?
- 2) Why did Carrie Chapman Catt mostly stay in her room at the Hermitage Hotel during the special session?
- 3) Who is the most famous Tennessee woman who argued against the suffrage amendment?

Glossary:

debate—a discussion involving different viewpoints or opinions

lobby—A word that means several things. If used as a *noun*, it means an entrance hall or public room. If used as a *verb*, it means to try to influence a member of a legislative body.

pledge—a promise to do or not do something

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TN History for Kids Lesson 7

A Woman's Place

What arguments were people using for and against the suffrage amendment?

Women and men in favor of the Nineteenth Amendment often the following three points:

Point number one: Woman suffrage is only fair. Women are adults, just like men. Women make decisions, just like men. Women raise children, just like men. Women pay taxes, just like men. Since men can vote, it stands to reason that women should also be able to vote.



The official program of the suffrage parade in Washington, D.C., in March 1913

Point number two: Women served the country during World War I and have earned the right to vote. Even though they couldn't fight in the U.S. Army, women worked as ambulance drivers, nurses and in other jobs during the war.

Point number three: Other countries are extending the right vote to women: The government of Finland extended the right to vote to women in 1906. The same happened in Norway in 1913; Uruguay in 1917; Russia in 1918; and Great Britain in 1918. Since many people believe that the United States started the world on a course toward democracy, American women should be allowed to vote!

People opposed to the Nineteenth Amendment often made the following two points:

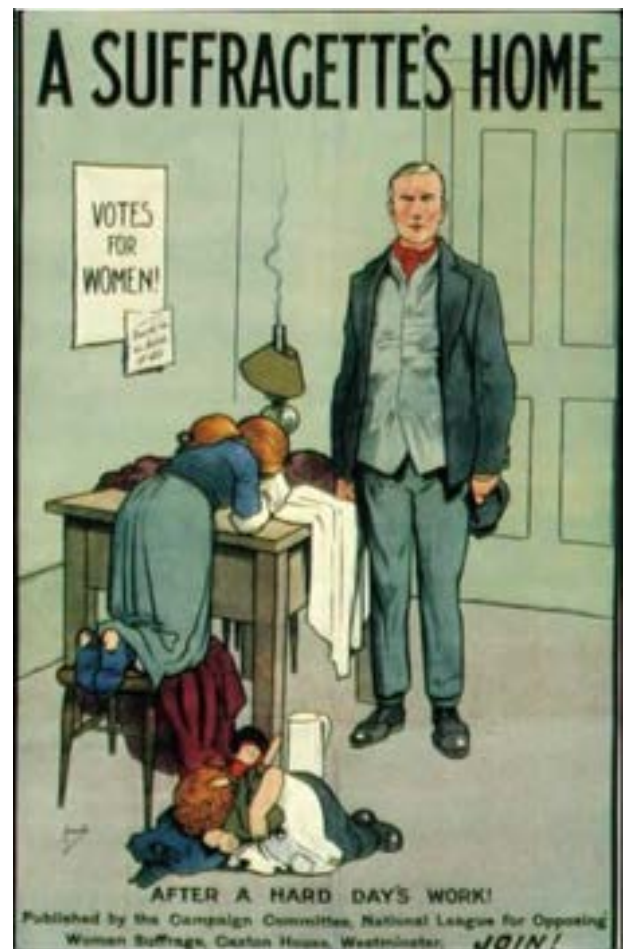
Point number one: If women become involved in politics, they will become more likely to

work outside of the household—damaging the family. In fact, the assumption that woman suffrage would result in neglected husbands and children was the most common argument made against the suffrage amendment.

“No woman can be higher than when she is a mother,” anti-suffrage leader John Vertrees said. “Her rights and duties should be such as motherhood requires.”

“Anything that takes her abroad, whether it is business or politics, injures the race, the family and her.”

Many newspaper cartoons also made this point. Some, such as this one (below) showed a man coming home from work, only to find that his suffragist wife had abandoned his children.



Point number two: If the suffrage amendment passes, it would help African Americans at the expense of white Southerners. This argument was used a lot in the South. You see, in the quarter century after the Civil War, many African-American men voted and even elected other African Americans to public office in Southern states. However, this changed in the 1880s, and

black Southerners had almost no power at the voting booth by 1920. White Southerners were afraid that the Nineteenth Amendment would result in another period of “Reconstruction” that would help black Americans.

In addition to these arguments, people who were opposed to the suffrage amendment often made mean, personal attacks on suffrage activists. Some claimed that women suffrage activists were physically ugly. People opposed to the suffrage amendment claimed that the behavior of suffrage activists was bad, or not “lady-like.”



This cartoon made fun of suffrage activists and implied that they were physically ugly.

Today it may be hard for us to understand some of these points. However, they were very clearly made at the time in debates, articles and editorial cartoons. In fact, when the Tennessee General Assembly met in special session in August 1920 to consider the Nineteenth Amendment, people on both sides of the argument bought advertisements stating their case.

Today, whenever there is an election or referendum, both sides of the argument do something similar, using television commercials rather than newspaper ads.

Questions:

- 1) What do you think was the most effective argument in favor of the suffrage amendment?
- 2) What do you think was the most effective argument against the suffrage amendment?
- 3) The women in favor of the suffrage amendment distributed this photo (below) of suffrage activist Anne Dallas Dudley during the debate over the amendment. Can you guess why?



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TN History for Kids Lesson 8

“Don’t Keep Them in Doubt”

For Tennessee to approve the Nineteenth Amendment, a **majority** of the members of both the House and Senate had to pass it. The Senate did so easily. However, as the amendment came up for a vote on the morning of August 18, suffrage activists were afraid they were about to lose.

They knew that they needed 50 yes votes. However, they had talked to every single member of the Tennessee State House several times. By every count, they were about two votes short. In fact, House Speaker Seth Walker (an **opponent** of the amendment) was so certain that the amendment didn’t have the votes to pass that he called for a final vote, confident it was about to fail.

The roll call vote took a long time. One at a time, the House clerk called out the last name of every member of the state House. Those in favor of the amendment said “aye.” Those against it said “nay.”

After the last vote, members of the House clerk’s staff looked at each other with confusion, because they weren’t sure about the final **tally**. So they did the entire roll call vote again.

Sure enough, the resolution on the Nineteenth Amendment passed—by a single vote!

People in the audience screamed and applauded; some began to cry for joy. Speaker Seth Walker hit his gavel on his desk and tried to call for order in the House chamber.

Leaders on both sides immediately turned their attention to state representatives who had said they would vote against the amendment but who instead voted yes.

One was Representative Banks Turner of the tiny Gibson County community of Nebo. In the days leading up to the suffrage vote, Turner said he intended to vote against the amendment. But on the day of the vote, he voted yes. To this day, not a lot is known about why Turner changed his mind.

Another member who changed his vote was Harry Burn of the McMinn County town of Niota. After the vote was counted, opponents of woman suffrage nearly **mobbed** Burn with questions about



HARRY T. BURN.

**BURN CHANGED
VOTE ON ADVICE
OF HIS MOTHER**

Suffrage Victory Largely Attributed to Youthful Representative.

Back of the man whose change of vote Wednesday enfranchised the womanhood of America stood a woman—his mother.

“Vote for suffrage and don’t keep them in doubt,” she wrote him.

So when perhaps the tensest and most dramatic moment in the history of the many fights which have been waged on Capitol Hill came, Harry T. Burn, Republican, of McMinn county, cast his vote “aye”, and the seventy-year suffrage fight was won.



Suffrage activists, including Sue Shelton White (on the right) thank Harry Burn for his vote on the suffrage amendment.

why he changed his mind. One story claims that the crowd was so large that he only escaped the House chamber by climbing out of a window.

Later that day, a *Nashville Tennessean* reporter caught up with Burn and wrote a story about him. In the article, Burn said he had voted yes on the Nineteenth Amendment because his mother had told him to do so in a letter that he had received from her the day before.

“Vote for suffrage and don’t keep them in doubt,” she told her son.

Harry Burn was 24, and the youngest member of the Tennessee State House. After he cast his vote, he was heavily criticized by some people, who accused him of taking a **bribe**. However, he was praised by many other people and received telegrams from all over the nation.

“Now Harry T. Burn is considered the man who gave 27,000,000 women of America their complete political freedom,” the *Tennessean* reported.

A few days later, the U.S. Secretary of State **certified** Tennessee’s ratification. The Nineteenth Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution.

Questions:

- 1) Why were suffrage activists worried when the Tennessee State House of Representatives finally voted on the suffrage amendment?
- 2) Why do you think Harry Burn is better known than Banks Turner?
- 3) What was Harry Burn accused of after he voted yes on the suffrage amendment?

Glossary

bribe—money given in exchange for something else, such as a vote

certify—to make official

majority—more than half

mob—to crowd

opponent—someone who is against something

tally—the score of a game or the number of votes

Suffrage Amendment

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TN History for Kids Lesson 9

Forgetting and Remembering

For many years, Tennessee had limited interest in the fact that its state was responsible for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. There were no statues of suffrage leaders; no historical markers about the suffrage movement; and little mention of Tennessee's role in the passage of the suffrage amendment in history textbooks.



This “bas relief” sculpture about the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment hangs in the State Capitol
THFK Photo

Then, in the early 1970s, Carol Lynn Yellin of Memphis began researching the suffrage movement. She interviewed everyone who played an active role in the passage of the amendment, including former state House members Harry Burn and Joe Hanover. Her long article about the passage of the suffrage amendment for *American Heritage* magazine came out in 1978.

Nearly twenty years later, Yellin worked with two other women to **reprint** this article, along with other material about Tennessee's suffrage movement, into a book called *The Perfect 36*. “We made sure copies were donated to every public library and public

school in the state,” said Paula Casey, one of Yellin's partners.

The book project included the creation of a sculpture by Nashville artist Alan LeQuire which now hangs in the Tennessee State Capitol (see photo on the left).

Since that time, Tennessee has seen the creation of a series of monuments about the suffrage movement:

The first consisted of three statues in Knoxville's Market Square. They honor Anne Dallas Dudley of Nashville, Lizzie Crozier French of Knoxville and Elizabeth Avery Meriwether of Memphis.



Artist Alan LeQuire works on one of the suffrage statues that now sits in Centennial Park in Nashville.

PHOTO: Alan LeQuire

The second is in Centennial Park in Nashville. It honors suffrage activists Dudley, Carrie Chapman Catt, Sue Shelton White, Abby Crawford Milton and J. Frankie Pierce.

Casey served as president of this fundraising group, which had to raise nearly a million dollars from private **donors**—people such as you!

Since that time, Jackson has unveiled a statue of White. Knoxville created a second monument. Memphis began work on a huge memorial to more than a dozen suffrage leaders as well as “female firsts.” Finally, Clarksville and Chattanooga have announced memorials in the works.



The Centennial Park suffrage monument is unveiled in 2016
PHOTO: Alan LeQuire

“The support from people who believe in this hasn’t **waivered**,” says Casey, who has been working on woman suffrage projects for more than 30 years. “We wanted to honor these women for what they did. We want Tennesseans to never forget what they did.”



Paula Casey
PHOTO: Paula Casey

Questions:

- 1) Why do you think that Tennessee didn’t honor its suffrage leaders and suffrage history for many years?
- 2) Do you think that the women now being honored in these sculptures would have predicted that they would one day be honored in sculptures? Why or why not?

Glossary:

donor—a person who gives time or money

reprint—to publish a second time

waiver—to lose interest in something