

U.S. Women's Suffrage Movement



Historical Committee

Chairs: Ula Olson and Vivian Lee

Welcome to DHWMUN II!

Our names are Ula Olson and Vivian Lee. We are 8th grade students at Dorothy Hamm Middle School. We have been involved in Model UN for two years and have attended many conferences. We are very excited to be your chairs for OAS.

This is a Single Delegation Committee. Read the Background Guide, research your assigned person and their point of view on the topic, as well as the “questions to consider,” to help guide

you. Your position paper should have a Cover Page, be 1-2 pages in length, double spaced and 12 point font. Additionally, please include a Bibliography or Works Cited Page using MLA format with your position paper.

Topic: The U.S. Women's Suffrage Movement

Women now have the right to vote thanks to the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution.

In Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, the first convention for women's rights took place. Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the event along with her husband Henry Stanton and Lucretia Mott. All were avid abolitionists as well as supporters of Women's Rights. Cady Stanton wrote the "*Declaration of Rights and Sentiments*", which was presented and discussed. It outlined women's inferior status and included a radical demand for suffrage. 300 people attended including Frederick Douglass, as did 39 other men.

The American Equal Rights Association was founded in 1866, by Stanton, Mott, and Susan B. Anthony. It was their advocacy for voting "irrespective of race, color, or sex" that first gained traction. A few years later, due to conflicts over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the organization broke up into two factions. Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe and other conservative feminists founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), based in Boston. The AWSA approached the matter through state legislation. The National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), led by Stanton and Anthony, based in New York, concentrated its efforts on securing women the right to vote through federal legislation. Wyoming became a territory in 1869, and that same year, a law granting women full voting rights was passed. It took close to 25 years, before any other state gave its women the right. There were periodic hearings and proposals

at the federal level, but no more votes on women's suffrage were held for some time.

Alice Paul, took up the mantle after the passing of Stanton and Anthony. She had spent time with militant British suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst. She also believed in securing women's right to vote on the federal level and worked with the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to plan the Women's Suffrage Procession in the nation's capital. On March 3, 1913, thousands of women marched in downtown Washington, DC, in support of women's suffrage. They encountered opposition, where spectators began assaulting the women and the police refused to intervene. The U.S. Army's support was necessary for them to continue. The way the women were treated brought international attention and rekindled the women's suffrage movement.

In 1916, Paul founded the National Woman's Party (NWP). The NWP withheld its support from existing political parties until women had gained the right to vote and "punished" those parties who did not support suffrage. Through dramatic protests, marches, and demonstrations, the suffrage movement continued to grow.

Opponents of women's suffrage included men and women for a variety of reasons. Granting women the right to vote, the anti-suffragists argued, would lead to a disruption of the family unit, of a woman's role as a wife and mother, and of what they considered a privileged place in society. The anti-suffragist women generally came from elite, White families on the East Coast, and tended to be married to, or related to, men in politics or law. Anti-suffrage men were often Southern politicians, industrialists, distillers, and brewers who felt threatened by the reforming potential of women voters to work against their interests. Notable anti-suffrage supporters were Josephine Jewell Dodge and Ida Tarbell. Dodge who also led a movement to establish day care centers and help working mothers started

the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) in 1911. Like pro-suffrage groups, NAOWS distributed publications and organized events and state campaigns. Anti-suffragists argued that most women did not want the vote. Because they took care of the home and children, they said women did not have time to vote or stay updated on politics. Some argued women lacked the expertise or mental capacity to offer a useful opinion about political issues. Others asserted that women's votes would simply double the male vote, and that women would be more effective using their influence and moral superiority outside the ballot box.

Wanting to be more radical, in 1917, Alice Paul and the NWP began picketing the White House. When World War I started, people felt that the nonviolent protests by these "Silent Sentinels" was disloyal. The women protesters were harassed and beaten, and were repeatedly arrested and jailed on charges of "obstructing traffic." The women were sent to the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia and the District Jail in DC. Prison conditions were horrible. In October 1917, Alice Paul and others went on a hunger strike. In response, the prison guards restrained and force-fed them through a tube. In November 1917, the superintendent of Occoquan ordered over forty guards to attack the Silent Sentinels. Battered, choked, and beaten, some to unconsciousness, the women described it as the "Night of Terror."

President Woodrow Wilson was not amused by the "Silent Sentinels" or militant suffrage protesters in front of the White House. But Carrie Chapman Catt made a personal plea to Wilson emphasizing how instrumental women voters could be during the first World War in building patriotism. In the beginning of 1918, the House of Representatives passed and approved a resolution in favor of women's suffrage. President Woodrow Wilson made a speech on the Senate floor supporting women's voting rights during the heated arguments in the Senate. Nevertheless, the resolution twice came up just short of passing. In the summer of 1919, the

states were asked to ratify the proposed amendment and Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify on August 18, 1920. The Nineteenth Amendment was added to the United States Constitution on August 26, 1920.

Questions to Consider:

1. What methods and events helped or hindered the women's suffrage movement in the U.S.? It took 74 years to achieve the 19th Amendment.
2. Why were militant protests not welcome by all supporters of suffrage?
3. Which arguments of anti-suffrage supporters were most valid?
4. How could anti-suffrage supporters like Josephine Jewell Dodge lead reforms in daycare and labor, but not suffrage?
5. What did business stand to lose if women got the right to vote?
6. What other reforms were suffrage supporters able to push forward?

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Visual:

Document G: The Anti's Alphabet

A is for Antis with Banner afloat;
B is for Battle against woman's vote.
C is for Children we fight to protect;
D is for Duties we never neglect.
E is for Energy strengthened by hope.
F is for Folly with which we must cope.
G is the germ of unrest in the brain.
H is for Home, which we mean to maintain.
I is Insurgency now in the air;
J is calm Judgement we're bringing to bear.
K is for Knights, our American men;
L, Loyal Service far out of our ken.
M is for Might in our cause to prevail;
N, Noble standards that naught can assail.
O, Obligations we cannot ignore;
P is for Principle marching before.
Q is the Quibble which we must combat;
R is for Reason that answers it pat.
S is Sound Sense, which we have on our side;
T is for Truths that cannot be denied.
U is for Union, whose aid we entreat;
V, Votes for women, we're sworn to defeat.
W is wages the suffragettes claim;
X is for Xanthic, the color and fame.
Y is for Yankee, of Red, White and Blue;
Z is the Zeal to protect them for you.

Context: The Woman's Protest, an anti-suffrage newspaper, published this "Anti's Alphabet" in August, 1912.