

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA:

An Exploration and Celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments  
And a Look at Challenges Facing Voting Rights Today

---

- Henry Hamilton III, ISBA Vice President
- Emily Chafa, ISBA, Diversity & Inclusiveness Committee, Chair
- Disclaimer: These materials and our statements reflect our own personal opinions and interpretations and do not reflect the views of any past, present or future employers.
- These materials and statements are current as of today's date. The laws, policies and practices relating to voting rights may change. Please conduct your own research before taking action.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776
- Written by Thomas Jefferson, adopted by the Second Continental Congress
- “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed”

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, September 17, 1787
- Constitutional Convention
- Preamble: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, Article I
- Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.
- Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature.
- Section 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of Two Senators from each State, [chosen by the Legislature thereof,] for six Years. (Senate selection method changed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment)

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, December 6, 1865
- Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
- U.S. Constitution, 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, July 9, 1868
- Section 1. All person born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.
- Section 2. “when the right to vote at any election...is denied to any of the male inhabitants of [a] State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged” its number of Representatives shall be reduced

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, February 3, 1870
- Section 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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, August 18, 1920
- 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.
- The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified by the Tennessee legislature on August 18, 1920, the 36<sup>th</sup> state to do so. After attempts to rescind the ratification vote, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution on August 26, 1920. Annually, August 26 is celebrated as Women's Equality Day.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment, January 23, 1964
- Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.
- Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- U.S. Constitution, 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment, July 1, 1971
- Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.
- Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the NAWSA, on August 26, 1920.

“That vote of yours has cost millions of dollars and the lives of thousands of women.

The vote has been costly. Prize it. Understand what it means and what it can do for your country. No soldier in the great suffrage army has labored and suffered to get a place for you. Their motive has always been the hope that women would aim higher than their own selfish ambitions; that they would serve the common good. The vote is won. Seventy-two years the battle for this privilege has waged, but human affairs with their eternal change move on without pause. Progress is calling on you to make no pause. Act.”

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Alice Paul, founded the Woman's Party, the radical arm of the woman's suffrage movement
- Alice Paul organized the first picket (signs and banners) protest in front of the White House
- Women stood outside the White House gates every day for 18 months, to persuade President Woodrow Wilson to support ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- Alice Paul and members of the Woman's Party were arrested, placed in jail, tortured, force-fed, several times
- Alice Paul organized the Woman's March in Washington DC, on Pennsylvania Avenue, the day before President Wilson's inauguration. This march included women from every state. Thousands of women marched.
- Carrie Chapman Catt's words apply to the actions of Woman's Party activists: "Women have suffered an agony of soul which you can never comprehend, that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. That vote has been costly. Prize it."

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Ida B Wells-Barnett, active suffragist for Black women's right to vote
- In 1910, in response to the unfair treatment African-Americans received in many areas of daily life, and specifically separate and inferior schools, Ida B Wells-Barnett's connected these injustices to the fact that they were not allowed to vote. Her words, paraphrased: "[You] therefore cannot protest against such legislation by choosing other law makers, or retiring to private life those who legislate against his interest."
- Ida B Wells-Barnett's words: "with no sacredness of the ballot there can be no sacredness of human life itself"
- Ida B Wells-Barnett was a journalist, woman's suffrage activist, and, eventually, a candidate for public office in Chicago
- Ida B Wells-Barnett marched in the pre-inaugural Woman's March in Washington DC with the Illinois delegation, despite requests that the march be segregated

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Arabella Babb Mansfield, the first woman lawyer in the U.S., grew up and was educated at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mt Pleasant, Iowa
- She studied the law, with her husband, in her brother's law office in Mt Pleasant, Iowa
- She passed the Iowa bar examination and was admitted to the Iowa bar on June 15, 1869
- Mrs. Mansfield was active in the woman's suffrage movement, chairing the first Iowa convention in 1870. She gave many speeches on woman's suffrage.
- Her sister-in-law, Alice Bird Babb, was a prolific woman's suffrage speaker. Alice Bird was one of the seven founders of P.E.O., now an international women's organization, in 1869.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Annie Savery, the first woman to speak publicly on woman's suffrage in Des Moines, Iowa
- Annie Savery used her position in high society to attract attention to the importance of women gaining the right to vote, giving speeches in Des Moines and Iowa City in 1868.
- Annie Savery attended the University of Iowa law school, graduated in 1875 and was admitted to the Iowa bar that year. (The first three women to attend and graduate from the University of Iowa's law school were Mary B Hickey, in 1873; then Annie Savery and her friend, Mary Emily Haddock, in 1875.)
- Annie Savery became a lawyer to understand the legal history of women's rights more fully, to support her work in the woman's suffrage movement.
- The Savery Hotel in downtown Des Moines was owned by Annie Savery and her husband.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Harry Burn, the state legislator who cast the deciding vote to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- Harry Burn was the youngest member of the Tennessee legislature, only 24 years old.
- He personally supported women's right to vote, but believed his constituency did not support it.
- His mother, Phoebe Burn, wrote and mailed a letter to her son. It arrived via the USPS and was delivered to Harry at his desk on the morning of August 18, 1920, shortly before the final vote on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.
- Phoebe Burn's letter said "Dear Son: Hurrah and vote for suffrage and don't keep them in doubt....I've been waiting to see how you stood but have not seen anything yet. Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the "Rat" in Ratification. With lots of love, Mama."
- This one vote made all the difference. One vote made the 72-year effort a reality, ratifying the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Want to learn more about the suffragists? Want more her-stories? Read these inspiring books.
- Iowa's Role – Strong Minded Women The Emergence of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Iowa, by Louise R. Noun (1969, Iowa State University Press)
- The detailed story of the final push for ratification in Tennessee – The Woman's Hour The Great Fight to Win the Vote, by Elaine Weiss (2018, Penguin Books)
- Lifting as We Climb Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box, by Evette Dionne (2020, Viking)
- Life stories of Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frances Willard, Alice Paul - Sisters, by Jean Baker (2005, Hill and Wang)
- Roses and Radicals The Epic Story of How American Women Won the Right to Vote, by Susan Zimet (2018, Viking)
- Prefer online information from an Iowa perspective? Visit [19<sup>th</sup>-amendment-centennial.org](http://19th-amendment-centennial.org)

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Want more ideas to share these stories with your family and friends?
- Documentary: Carrie Chapman Catt Warrior for Women (IowaPBS)
- Documentary: The Vote (PBS)
- Movie: Suffragette (Tells the story of woman suffragists in the United Kingdom)
- Art Exhibit: The Suffrage Project, with 19 Portraits by artist Mary Kline-Misol, at Artisan Gallery, 218 Fifth Street, West Des Moines, Iowa (Call ahead to make sure the gallery is open and learn any COVID-19 expectations)

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- Want to take action in your community? Volunteer with the League of Women Voters.
- League of Women Voters was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in February 1920.
- <https://www.lwv.org/about-us/history>
- <https://www.lwv.org/voting-rights>
- <https://www.lwv.org/elections>
- <http://www.lwvia.org/> (Iowa League of Women Voters)
- VOTE – Honor the organization Carrie Chapman Catt founded before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified. She knew the importance of planning ahead.

# VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

---

- 2020 ABA Law Day Theme – Your Vote, Your Voice, Our Democracy: The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment at 100
- Want more? Use the American Bar Association’s Law Day resources. The celebrations and programs scheduled for May 1st were canceled due to COVID-19. But, the celebration and public education can continue from home. Just in time to exercise your right to vote in this election.
- [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_education/law-day/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/law-day/)
- [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_education/law-day/law-day-2020/planning-guide/High-school-lesson-plans/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/law-day/law-day-2020/planning-guide/High-school-lesson-plans/)
- [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/public\\_education/Lawday/2020-suggested-resources.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/public_education/Lawday/2020-suggested-resources.pdf)
- Use these resources to educate yourself and your family and friends on this history. Then, honor the legacy. Vote!

## The Fifteenth Amendment

Section 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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



**"If you don't vote, you don't count."**

