

Chapter Seven

The Longest Labor Ends, 1912 to 1920

Much like the election that Abraham Lincoln won in 1860, the 1912 presidential race marked a turning point for women and the country. There were four candidates in 1860 when the Civil War exploded with Lincoln's victory, and, in 1912, there were three candidates. A Republican split enabled Democrats to win in 1912: conservative Republicans went with incumbent President William Howard Taft, while former President Theodore Roosevelt pulled liberal Republicans into his Progressive Party. The result was a victory for Democrat Woodrow Wilson, a former president of Princeton University and governor of New Jersey.

It was the first national election in which women were an important factor. Four million women could vote in nine Western states by 1912, and they were too large a bloc to ignore. In addition, many women who could not vote campaigned on a national level. New York suffragists Mary Ware Dennett and Daisy Harriman, for example, were so helpful to Wilson that he rewarded them with significant appointments; the same was true for young Californian Annette Adams, who worked hard for Wilson and was appointed as the first female assistant attorney general. Roosevelt made a particularly strong effort to recruit women into his campaign, including Jane Addams and Mary Antin, an immigrant whose book, *The Promised Land*, was a bestseller.

As National American historian Ida Husted Harper summarized, the Progressive Party "made woman suffrage one of the principal planks of its platform, and...the Republican Party so long in power was defeated. Woman suffrage never had received any special assistance from this party during its long regime, but the entire situation now changed." For the first time in two decades,

Republicans lost the White House. Incumbent Taft did not reach out to women, and they were now powerful enough to demonstrate that this was a mistake.

The savvy women who studied at the British school of suffrage were determined to keep attention focused on the power of women. Instead of resting after the November election and enjoying the December holidays, young Rosalie Jones led Harriot Stanton Blatch's Equality League through bitter cold in a well-publicized walk from New York City to the state capital in Albany. The women marched for 13 days, stopping periodically to build fires, assemble outdoor audiences, and preach their suffrage message. Many men were moved by the devotion of these women and by the depth of the personal sacrifices they were willing to make merely to cast a ballot.

Other women also noticed and began making plans to join these leaders in Washington for Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, which under the Constitution of that time, was in March. Again, Blatch's young activists led the way: they walked the 250 miles from New York to Washington. Newspapers across the nation followed their route, and even anti-suffragists conceded a grudging respect for women so zealous for liberty. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* published a famous drawing comparing their trip to that of George Washington crossing the icy Delaware.

About 8,000 marchers assembled in Washington for the capital's first giant parade of women. The city's police had no experience with thousands of marching women—or with the thousands of men who lined the parade route to jeer at them. Because of the long association between alcohol and political activity, more than a few of the men had imbibed more than a little, and some of them saw these liberated women as inviting physical contact. Police officers, who had no experience with such unladylike behavior, tended to agree, and they failed to protect the women from assault. A portion of the parade route turned into a mob scene so serious that it ultimately cost the police chief his job. Public sympathy swelled for women who were willing to take such risks for rights.

The parade was organized by Alice Paul, who quickly had risen to leadership since her first appearance at a National American convention three years earlier. The 1912 convention included hot debate on a resolution that the association's officers be nonpartisan, which clearly was aimed at Paul and her supporters, who had worked for Roosevelt. The resolution did not pass because the majority of suffragists understood that a political organization becomes

impotent if its leaders are restrained from working in politics. However, the debate did indicate confusion over Paul's advocacy of the British model.

American women could not easily replicate British strategy because the two systems of government were too dissimilar. In Britain's parliamentary system, the chief executive (the prime minister) is himself an elected member of Parliament; he holds the prime ministership only as long as his party has a majority of the parliamentary seats. Moreover, elections are not necessarily held at fixed dates, but may be called whenever an issue or group brings enough power to bear to force one. In America, the chief executive (the president) not only holds office for a fixed term, but also is elected on his own, and Congress is a wholly independent branch of government. Most important, presidents have no direct role in constitutional amendments, which must be passed by two-thirds of both houses of Congress and ratified by three-quarters of state legislatures.



Suffragists march to the Capitol in Washington on April 7, 1913. (Library of Congress)

Alice Paul and others who wished to import the British style took no cognizance of these basic differences. They simply followed the British plan of opposing the party that held the prime ministership, and thus targeted the president and his Democratic Party. Thus, from the 1912 convention in Philadelphia to the end of the movement, Paul and her coterie would be a

source of both inspiration and turmoil. She energetically followed up the 1913 parade by forming the Congressional Union (CU), which (like a number of other supportive groups) initially functioned under the National American's wide umbrella. The minutes of the 1913 National American convention, which was held in Washington in early December, referred to the group as "the new Congressional Committee."

With Alice Paul as chairman, it included Lucy Burns, Mary Beard, and Crystal Eastman. Like Paul, these women who made their homes in affluent areas of the East Coast were young, educated, and worldly. Burns was akin to Paul in having studied at several prestigious European universities, and Beard was a credentialed historian whose work should have been more recognized. Eastman's mother was famous enough as a clergywoman that she preached at Mark Twain's funeral. Suffrage historian Harper credited them with "excellent arrangements" for the convention, but she was less glowing about their genuine political successes. The ambivalence that the older leaders felt about these younger ones is clearly reflected in a sentence, typical of Harper, about 1913: "The association has cooperated as fully as was possible with the Congressional Committee in all its most creditable year's work."

The CU women opened a highly visible Washington office on F Street near the fashionable Willard Hotel; like everything else the CU did, they funded this themselves. After the March parade, they began "suffrage schools" to educate women on the issue and, according to Paul, they conducted "an uninterrupted series of indoor and outdoor meetings, numbering frequently from five to ten a day." Many of these were in the trendy form of "tableau," or silent skits; other dramatic forms included "theater meetings" and plays that drew attention from women who did not consider themselves interested in politics. During the spring and fall, they arranged parades in New York, Brooklyn, and Newark. In July, the CU greeted "hiking pilgrims" from "all parts of the country" with automobile processions through Washington, which culminated in the presentation of some 200,000 petition signatures to Congress. In November, they began a newspaper, *The Suffragist*. In December, they made the arrangements to lead National American members in an impressive march to the White House on the Monday after the convention ended, where for the first time, a president received an official suffrage delegation.



The "hiking pilgrims" on their way to Washington D.C. in 1913. (Library of Congress)

While the CU was branching off in one direction, another splinter group headed a different way. Louisiana's Kate Gordon, who had been a National American officer for many years, organized the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference in 1913 with exactly the opposite aim of the Congressional Union: instead of working in Washington for a federal amendment, her group concentrated on state activity. Their strategy was to lobby Southern legislatures—which had abhorred the federal government since the Civil War—and to craft carefully worded legislation that would grant the vote to white women while keeping it from black women.

Meanwhile, activity continued in Western and Midwestern states. Just days after the 1912 election, Congress admitted Alaska as a territory, and one of the first acts of the territorial legislature was to enfranchise its women. In 1913, Colorado became the second state to elect a woman to its Senate, but the most significant activity of 1913 was a new model of partial suffrage adopted by Illinois, which enfranchised its women to vote for president, but in no other races. This idea had been long advocated by pioneer suffragist Henry Blackwell, who died three years before its Illinois adoption. He saw it as a mechanism for women to gain at least some voting rights, arguing that while the Supreme

Pages 209-217 deliberately deleted.

The convention's end was historic. Both presidential candidates had been invited to speak, but only President Wilson accepted. He arrived early but



Suffragists advertising the open-air meetings on Labor Day in Atlantic City. (Library of Congress)

insisted on speaking last. He listened through the scheduled agenda, which included speeches by Margaret Dreier Robins, president of the Women's Trade Union League; Julia Lathrop, chief of the National Children's Bureau; and Dr. Katharine Bement Davis, who headed New York City's Parole Commission. All speakers aimed to make the point that women should vote on these important public welfare issues. Wilson, after saying that he "found it a real privilege to...listen," responded with a professor's insight:

One of the striking facts about the history of the United States is that at the outset it was a lawyers' history. Almost all of the questions...were legal questions; were questions of methods, not questions of what you were going to do with your government but of how you were to constitute [it].... There was a time when nobody but a lawyer could run the government....

And then something happened. A great question arose.... That was the slavery question, and is it not significant that it was then, and then for the first time, that women became prominent in politics in America?

The whole nature of our political questions has been altered. They have ceased to be legal questions. They have more and more become social questions, questions with regard to the relations of human beings to one another, not merely their legal relations but their moral and spiritual relations....

I get a little impatient sometimes about the discussion of the channels and methods by which it [suffrage] is going to prevail. *It is going to prevail* and that is a very superficial and ignorant view which attributes it

to mere social unrest. It is not merely because women are discontented, it is because they have seen visions of duty....

I have not come to ask you to be patient, because you have been, but I have come to congratulate you that there has been a force behind you that will...be triumphant.

Wilson's belief in the inevitability of the suffrage victory was good to hear, of course, but he was vague when Anna Howard Shaw expressed the hope that it would come in his administration. Although the women's vote was one of the main topics of the 1916 election, it was overwhelmed by the issue of American involvement in the European war that began in 1914. Indeed, this was still another factor dividing the National American from the National Woman's Party, for many of the latter were pacifists. Throughout 1916, however, Catt generally succeeded in her policy of insisting that the National American deal only with the vote for women, not with what would become World War I, or with any other issue or candidate.

One element of the 1916 election was unequivocally joyful: it marked the first female success in a federal election with Montana's election of Jeannette Rankin to the House of Representatives. A former employee of the National American, Rankin campaigned on a peace platform and thus appealed to both suffrage factions. All suffragists were eager to point out that well before most American women could even vote, progressive Westerners had so much faith in women that they elected an unabashed feminist to the nation's highest lawmaking body.

The National Woman's Party picketed Wilson throughout his 1916 campaign, but he was reelected in November. When he spoke to Congress in December, the Woman's Party was ready: they slipped into seats in the House gallery with a hidden banner and, in defiance of all rules of protocol, unfurled it as the president began to speak. Acutely aware of the workings of the media, they also were armed with press releases. Moreover, in emulation of the British style, members of the Woman's Party began actively seeking arrest. Some already had been arrested for disturbing the peace and other city code violations; Lucy Burns, in particular, was proud of the fact that her arrest record dated to

1913, and by the end of the campaign, she would be jailed more often than any other suffragist.

On January 10, they began picketing—not the Capitol, where congressmen controlled the amendment process—but instead the White House, where they continued to target Wilson. Picketing the president’s home was a new thing in American politics, and women set this precedent. Through rain and snow, day and dark, summer and winter, sign-carrying women would encircle the White House until the suffrage amendment finally passed. Except on Sundays, as many as 1,000 women “of all races and religions,” in the words of Alice Paul, demonstrated their ideas with their feet. Despite the radicalism of the idea, their right to free speech was initially respected, but after the United States entered the European war, administration security officials began to see these enemies at the White House gate as a potential threat to the president’s life, and trouble soon would follow.



National Woman's Party picketers outside the White House, 1917. (Library of Congress)

Meanwhile, there was the first victory in the South. In March, Arkansas adopted still another form of partial suffrage. The legislature granted women the right to vote in primary—but not general—elections. This seemingly odd reasoning actually was very shrewd, for the result was exactly what was

intended: in effect, white women got the vote while black women did not. The very few blacks who dared to register and vote in this era were almost invariably Republicans—“the party of Lincoln”—and in Arkansas, like most Southern states, the Republican Party was virtually nonexistent and almost never held primaries. Thus, there would be few or no elections in which blacks would vote, for the Democratic primaries were the only elections that mattered.

It was a cynical way to win the vote, but Carrie Chapman Catt quietly worked through the strategy with Arkansas leaders, and the next year, Texas replicated it, passing this form of suffrage 17–4. Women set up their headquarters in Austin, and when a legislator from Dallas thought that he had dismissed them by demanding 5,000 petition signatures, they returned four days later with 10,000. Although this form of suffrage was racist, Catt’s view was that it was better that some women have the vote than none, and that any expansion would be helpful in passing the federal amendment—which would be applicable to black women as well as to white ones. The “Negro’s Hour” argument had come full circle: instead of white women being asked to prioritize black voting rights, race was now secondary to gender.

A month after the Arkansas victory, Catt hosted a breakfast for Jeannette Rankin, who made a speech from the outdoor balcony of the National



Jeannette Rankin (Library of Congress)

American’s Washington headquarters, and on April 2, 1917, women had the privilege of escorting the first of their own to the House of Representatives. With Catt and Rankin at the head of a parade of automobiles, they went to the Capitol and proudly watched the young Montana suffragist sworn in. On the very same day, however, Rep. Rankin would be faced with the most crucial decision of her brief elective career. President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany, and she was one of about 50 representatives who voted against it. When Rankin’s reelection

coincided with victory in what initially was called the Great War, her campaign promises for peace would be forgotten and Montana voters would vote against the woman who voted against the war.

In the meantime, however, she would become the ranking Republican on the House committee dealing with suffrage—but the House was the more recalcitrant body on the issue of the vote. In the Senate, years of lobbying had paid off so thoroughly that Ida Husted Harper wrote that the 1917 committee hearing was “largely a matter of routine, as the entire committee was ready to report favorably.” Carrie Chapman Catt exhibited the same confidence when she began her speech by saying: “The Senate Committee of Woman Suffrage was established in 1883. Thirty-four years have passed since then. We confidently believe that we are appearing before the last of these committees.”

Much of the rest of the hearing was given over to senators from the West, who tried to impress their Eastern colleagues with the good sense of equality. Wyoming’s Senator John B. Kendrick, a former governor, reminded his colleagues that “no state that has adopted woman suffrage has ever even considered a plan to get along without it. It is soon realized that the votes of women are not for sale at any price, and, while they align themselves with different parties...they never fail to put principle above patronage.” Senator Reed Smoot of Utah echoed these thoughts, adding that “nothing on earth will stop” the movement. “The country,” he pointed out pragmatically, “will not much longer tolerate it that a woman shall have the privilege of voting in one State and upon moving into another be disenfranchised.”

The Senate committee also heard from their new House colleague, Rep. Rankin, who, as an experienced National American field worker, was ideal for making clear the impossibility of amending the laws of each state in the absence of a federal amendment. Many state constitutions, she said, presented “almost insurmountable difficulties” and a federal amendment was clearly the only way that American women could move freely without losing rights. Other Western congressmen also spoke, and Catt closed the hearing by pointing out that recently “Great Britain and her colonies had recognized the political rights of women as the United States had never done.” This, she said, had “dimmed” the view of women toward “American ideals and lowered their respect for our Government.” If the Congress intended that women be enthusiastic supporters of the war they had declared a few days earlier, she said, then Congress must demonstrate its respect for women.

A week later, the Senate committee granted a separate hearing to the National Woman's Party. Vice Chairman Anne Martin presided, while the speakers included Mary Beard and Rheta Childe Dorr, a syndicated war correspondent and future feminist biographer. Rep. Rankin also testified at that hearing. On May 3, the committee heard from the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Its longtime president, Mrs. Arthur Dodge, and its New York president, the wife of U.S. Senator James W. Wadsworth, Jr., headed a list of women and men who spoke—and the westernmost of this group was from Ohio. Finally, the House Rules Committee held a hearing on May 18, which included speakers from all sides. On June 6, by a vote of 6–5, the committee adopted a motion by Rep. James Campbell Cantrill of Kentucky calling for the creation of a Committee on Woman Suffrage.

This was something for which “suffrage leaders were profoundly thankful,” and Maud Wood Park of Massachusetts, the young head of the National American's Congressional Committee, hoped “never again to address a hostile” Rules or Judiciary Committee. After its summer recess, the full House cast something of a test vote on the amendment by accepting this new committee. With what Park called “cordial support” from House Speaker Champ Clark, the tally was 180–107—but 145 representatives dodged the issue by not voting.

During the springtime Washington action, Catt was also busy with state legislatures, which traditionally met at that time. She concentrated on this more manageable number of better-educated men, rather than trying to appeal to the masses in statewide referenda. As was the case with the Southern partial-suffrage primary rights, she also showed that she was willing to be pragmatic and to accept a half-loaf when a full one could not be had. Thus, in 1917, six other state legislatures joined Illinois in granting women the right to vote in presidential elections, but not in other races. Except for Rhode Island, which had held the first Eastern suffrage campaign back in 1887 when the governor vetoed the bill, and a temporary victory in Vermont, all of these presidential suffrage states were in the Midwest. Catt also managed to get longtime National American friend, Senator John E. Shafroth of Colorado, to sponsor a bill granting voting rights to women in the territory of Hawaii. Congress passed it, but Hawaii's legislature failed to implement it, and again, a potentially historic situation turned full circle. A few decades earlier, western territories had passed suffrage and Congress snatched it away; now the opposite was happening. It was still another demonstration of how difficult this political war

was. Suffragists had to fight on many different fronts simultaneously, lest they go backward.

They in fact did go backward later in the year. The presidential suffrage that Indiana's legislature had granted was overturned as unconstitutional by its courts, while voters in Ohio cancelled out their legislature's grant in a fall referendum. In September 1917, Maine, too, defeated a suffrage referendum. Women there ignored Catt's disapproval and put the issue on the ballot, but Catt's predictions were right: despite a campaign that included motion picture advertisements and endorsements from President Wilson and former President Roosevelt, Maine's men voted it down by almost two to one.

And yet, these disappointments were slight in comparison with the biggest and best event of 1917—the first victory, at last, in a major Eastern state. The parades and other visibility techniques that Harriot Stanton Blatch had begun years earlier in New York finally paid off. Immediately after the 1915 defeat, all of New York's suffrage associations united. With hundreds of trained, full-time workers, the two-year campaign included publicity techniques that ranged from baseball games to advertisements in 728 newspapers—many of them in foreign languages. In late October, President Wilson met with a delegation of New York suffragists to focus public attention on the contributions that women were making to win the war.



A crowd assembled to hear suffragists speak in New York City. (Library of Congress)

Two days later, the last of the giant parades reinforced this point; it included a petition with 1,014,000 signatures. On November 6, 1917, New York men enfranchised their women by a narrow margin. For the first time, it was the urban vote that carried suffrage: Republican areas upstate voted against it by a slight majority, and it was the ads aimed at immigrants and the coalitions with labor that allowed New York City to barely carry the issue. Mary Garrett Hay, who chaired the National American's New York committee, reported:

The campaign represented an immense amount of work in many fields. There were 11,085 meetings reported to the States' officers and many that were never reported. Women of all classes labored together.... The campaign cost \$682,500. The largest gift...was \$10,000.... Most of the money was given in small sums and represented innumerable sacrifices.

The year ended with what may have been the most physically miserable convention suffragists ever experienced. The war was in full swing, and many trains were given over to troop and supply movements, so travel was both difficult and expensive. Beyond that, the weather was terrible: Washington, where the convention met, had below-zero temperatures; snowstorms and railroad washouts from rain made some trains run more than a day late; delegates from Southern states were involved in two train wrecks. When they got to town, they were greeted with what National American historian Ida Husted Harper called a "coal famine." As fuel was going to the war effort, hotel rooms—when they could be found—were cold and damp. They were, according to Harper, "always cold," and because the war also involved a serious food shortage (resulting from America's attempt to feed much of Europe), many delegates went hungry.

Yet excitement about the genuine possibility that Congress would pass the amendment brought 600 delegates who represented over two million members—more than any previous convention. A feeling of confidence suffused the gathering, for as President Catt said in her opening address, "the New York campaign...carried the question forever out of the stage of argument and into the stage of final surrender." She followed through on this optimism by

arranging meetings between delegates and their senators; all but Pennsylvania's senators cooperated. Missouri's meeting was particularly important, for its delegation included Speaker of the House Champ Clark; he promised the suffragists that he would cast an affirmative vote if it became necessary to break a tie. President Wilson also helped; both Cabinet members and another of his daughters, Eleanor Wilson McAdoo, spoke to this convention. More important, he honored Arkansas with an invitation to the White House because of its recent establishment of the first suffrage in the South—and this soon paid off, when Arkansas's congressional delegation was the only Southern one to cast all of its votes for the federal amendment.

Internally, the National American was growing at an exponential rate, spending over \$800,000 this year. In addition to the Washington office, it continued to maintain its national headquarters in New York City, at 171 Madison Avenue. In 1917, its Leslie Bureau of Suffrage Education alone used the entire fifteenth floor, plus rooms on the fourteenth. The annual report of the Leslie inheritance fund director, Rose Young, filled 30 pages of fine print, with the most historic item being the merger of Alice Stone Blackwell's venerable old *Woman's Journal* with two smaller papers, the *Woman Voter* and the *National Suffrage News*, into the *Woman Citizen*.

Innumerable publicity items aided the cause, including almost a million copies of just one speech by suffragist-hero Senator John E. Shafroth of Colorado. An energized press department cultivated newspaper editors on a very personal level and was particularly effective at reinforcing positive relationships with the press; some 2,000 thank you letters were sent to the writers of editorials in 1917 alone. The result of such individual attention was that many editors "who were wavering have been persuaded to come out definitely in favor; this has been especially noticeable in the South." The headquarters also had a data department: it collected official records in the states where women could vote, which was used to counter misinformation.

The biggest problem for the National American's press department, ironically, was what it viewed as the negative press simultaneously generated by the Woman's Party. According to Ida Husted Harper:

When the “picketing” began in Washington last January, almost every newspaper in the United States held the entire suffrage movement responsible for it. At once 250 letters were sent in answer to editorials, stating that the National American Association...had been always strictly non-partisan and non-militant; that it represented about 98 per cent of the enrolled suffragists of the United States...[and] strongly condemned the “picketing.” The letter urged the newspaper...to make a clear distinction between the two organizations.

The women of the unified group that won New York’s campaign also viewed the National Woman’s Party as a burden, especially after Alice Paul and her supporters burned the president in effigy in the summer of 1917. Newspapers associated the New York group with the Washington one, and according to New York’s report in the *History of Woman Suffrage*, “reproaches of disloyalty and pro-Germanism were hurled at suffragists in general.” They called an emergency meeting in Saratoga, hoping to stop the source of the negative publicity. Upon learning that the leaders of the Woman’s Party had refused “a direct appeal to suspend the ‘picketing’ until after the election,” the New Yorkers adopted a resolution of disapproval and publicized it.



Suffrage activists picket in front of the White House, rain or shine. (Library of Congress)

The Woman's Party, in turn, was aghast that mainstream women went so far in distancing themselves from what the militants understandably viewed as the activity that was making the difference. Women had organized and lobbied for years, they argued; there was nothing terribly different about Catt's style of leadership, and they pointed out that while the National American had some victories in 1917, it also had some losses. The Woman's Party firmly believed it was their tactics, not the National American's, that were responsible for the changed tone of the debate and the new respect with which suffrage was treated.

Alice Paul and her members followed the tradition of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, while Catt and the National American were more nearly the intellectual heirs of Lucy Stone and the old American association. Catt, like Lucy Stone in the case of the Fifteenth Amendment, was willing to accept half-victories while working for the larger goal; she saw political action as a chess game with a long series of moves that she could win with cleverness and patience. Paul, like Anthony and Stanton before her, scorned this as mythology and believed in dramatic, uncompromising action. What Paul saw as principled, Catt saw as obdurate—but it is possible that the issue needed both political styles. The merger of the National and American associations arguably had sent suffrage into a long nap, and competition between groups with the same goal is not necessarily a negative.

There is no doubt that the National Woman's Party women reenergized the cause, and they believed they deserved credit for doing so. It was their women, after all, who showed such dedication that more than 200 of them had been arrested during White House demonstrations; almost half of these women were jailed, where they endured particularly harsh conditions, including rotten food and suffocating air. In October 1917, they began a campaign to draw attention to themselves as political prisoners, arguing that they were in jail because of their ideas, rather than for the petty crimes that were the ostensible reason for arrest. The war and Russia's Communist Revolution brought many jailings that were free-speech violations, as male and female pacifists and economic radicals also were jailed. Women, however, had made the point a decade earlier: at the International Woman Suffrage Alliance meeting in 1908, they adopted a resolution objecting to the imprisonment of English women as "common law breakers instead of political offenders."

Led by Lucy Burns, some began hunger strikes to protest a judicial system that refused to recognize their constitutional rights. Burns went without food



Lucy Burns (Library of Congress)

for almost three weeks; only when she was too weak to resist did her guards finally manage to force-feed her. The newspapers were full of stories of the pain that these women endured when jailers shoved tubes down their throats, gagging and nauseating them. Their obvious devotion to the cause brought sympathy from many. More and more, the public responded with anger at those who continued to make the old authoritarian argument against the vote—the fundamental point of the democracy for which the nation allegedly was fighting abroad.

While she would never dream of condemning the antiwar vote of the first woman elected to Congress, National American president Carrie Chapman Catt did not see any reason to take the same pacifist position as Rep. Jeannette Rankin but did see many reasons to take the opposite one. Catt had more international experience than almost any of her contemporaries, for she had traveled the entire globe during her time as president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. She was keenly aware of world politics, and as early as the alliance's Berlin convention in 1904, she noted the growing animosity between German and British women. Like other suffragists, she made genuine efforts for peace, not only within the international alliance, but also by joining Jane Addams and 40 other women in a dangerous 1915 journey across the submarine-infested Atlantic to work for peace in Europe.

When the war continued nonetheless, and especially after the Germans sank neutral ships, Catt joined most Americans in siding with the more democratic British. But more important was her belief that American women could win the vote by supporting the war. To her, and to most National American members, the war offered a unique opportunity to demonstrate that

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Republican women responded to Ludington and pledged not to work or donate to the party as long as suffrage went unratified. Some even went to the national party convention, in Columbus, Ohio, during July, to pressure national officials to make good their platform words. But at the same time, male party officials from Connecticut met with their new presidential nominee, Warren Harding, who, in Porritt's words, "refused to attempt to persuade Governor Holcomb." Catt, who directed much of Connecticut's effort from her nearby New York City home, became convinced that the Yankee State looked hopeless and cast about for alternatives.

The National American's Katharine Dexter McCormick indeed used the right word at the February convention, when she called the opposition "hysterical." Anti-suffragists in several states were so upset by their losses that they filed suits in a number of states against the legislature's ratification. Inventing points of law that had never before been considered in the cases of the first eighteen amendments to the Constitution, they went to court. So stubborn were some about accepting women's new rights that they would pour money into legal fees on these cases until 1922, long after ratification.

The first case to reach the Supreme Court was from Ohio, and on June 1, 1920, the court ruled in *Hawke v. Smith* that the Constitution intended a majority vote in three-quarters of the state legislatures to be enough, and states could not impose additional burdens such as supermajorities or post-legislative referenda. The obstacle to ratification in Tennessee had been that the state constitution barred the legislature from acting until an election occurred, but its Democratic governor and attorney general interpreted the court's ruling to invalidate this. The Justice Department agreed, and on June 24, President Wilson added his voice, telegraphing Gov. Albert H. Roberts and requesting a special session.

Meanwhile, several special elections in Tennessee during the summer boded well for suffragists. T.K. Riddick ran and won explicitly "to lead the fight for ratification in the House," according to state association president Margaret Ervin Ford, and "an arch enemy" of women, incumbent senator J. Parks Worley, was replaced with a supporter. Carrie Chapman Catt arrived in mid-July to help, but she stayed in the background and put Tennessee women in the visible positions. She also worked the phone and telegraph wires to pressure the presidential nominees to announce their support. Republican Warren

Harding's reply was: "If any of the Republican members should ask my opinion as to their course, I would cordially recommend immediate favorable action." Democratic nominee James Cox expressed "confidence that the Legislature will act favorably, which will greatly please the national Democratic Party." Armed with this support, Tennessee Governor Roberts called the special session for August 9, and suffragists returned to the site of their 1914 convention.

It was hot in Nashville in August, and tempers would run hot, too, as the anti-suffragists put up what truly might be their last stand. So many supporters were there that the headquarters spilled over into two hotels, but the opponents were there in powerful numbers, too. "From the time the special session was called," said state president Ford, "anti-suffragists...from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico" arrived in Nashville, "many of them paid workers." Many women also went to Nashville to oppose their own enfranchisement, among them officers of the Southern Women's Rejection League, and of anti-suffrage associations from Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Ohio. Probably the saddest disappointment of all to longtime National American activists was the desertion of their former officers, Kate Gordon of Louisiana and Laura Clay of Kentucky, both of whom joined the opposition because their devotion to states' rights proved greater than their commitment to women's rights.

Despite his delay in calling the session, when the legislature convened, Governor Roberts made a strong speech. "Tennessee occupies a pivotal position and the eyes of all America are upon us," he said. "Millions of women are looking to this Legislature to give them a voice and share in shaping the destiny of the Republic." The next day, both houses moved through their committee structure, and on August 12, a joint hearing was held with long speeches from men and women, legislators and non-legislators, representing all points of view. The following day, the Senate voted overwhelmingly in favor, 25-4. And then the trouble began.

The opponents were down to one house of one legislature, and they were desperate. House Speaker Seth M. Walker had promised suffragists that, although personally opposed, he would be fair. He proved to be anything but. When he saw that his side was about to lose, he adjourned the session, and his members—presumably seeking more time to collect more favors—voted to support the adjournment. Carrie Chapman Catt, who was no stranger to political deception, said later:

Never in the history of politics has there been such a nefarious lobby as labored to block the ratification in Nashville.... Strange men and groups of men sprang up, men we had never met before in the battle. Who were they? We were told, this is the railroad lobby, this is the steel lobby, these are the manufacturers' lobbyists, this is the remnant of the old whiskey ring. Even tricksters from the U.S. Revenue Service were there operating against us, until the President of the United States called them off.... They appropriated our telegrams, tapped our telephones.... They attacked our private and public lives.



Representative Harry Burn of Tennessee. (McLung Historical Collection)

On August 18, the Tennessee House voted. As in Congress earlier, some supporters made superhuman efforts for women. Banks S. Turner literally threw off the Speaker's arm from around his shoulder, perhaps casting away his career as he cast his affirmative vote. R.L. Dowlen came from a hospital bed, and T.A. Dodson came back from a train that was leaving the station to vote, even though his baby was dying. The tally was 48–48—a defeat for women—when conscience struck 24-year-old Harry Burn. He remembered his

mother's letter asking him to "help Mrs. Catt put the rat in ratification," and his promise to her that, in case of a tie, he would vote for suffrage.

After Burns switched his vote to the affirmative, anti-suffragists charged that he had been bribed. He demanded a point of personal privilege to record in the legislative journal this statement: "I changed my vote in favor of ratification because I believe in full suffrage as a right; I believe we had a moral and legal right to ratify; I know that a mother's advice is always safest for her boy to follow and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification." He did so, and by 49–47, American women gained their freedom.



Headline of the *Washington Star* on Congressional passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.. (Library of Congress)

And yet the game was not over. Speaker Walker switched his vote and moved to reconsider. House rules gave the Speaker three days during which only he could call up a move to reconsider, and opponents used that time in a frantic attempt to get one of the 49 to switch. When that did not seem to be happening, the defenders of the status quo reached into their bag of tricks for one more astonishment. At the urging of their lobbyist friends, legislators who

had failed to win democratically hid themselves. Skipping out of Nashville in the dark of night, 36 members of the legislature holed up in Decatur, Alabama, for more than a week. They hoped to prevent a quorum while the Speaker pushed away at the positive 49, who, amazingly enough, stayed loyal.

On August 23, Margaret Ford and other Tennessee suffragists sat in the gallery and noted the “conspicuously vacant” chairs. With the runaways absent, freshman legislator Riddick—who had run for office to lead this fight—assumed the de facto leadership. Speaker Walker repeatedly ruled him out of order, but with Walker’s allies absent, Riddick eventually won their procedural duel. Finally, by a voice vote, the clerk of the House was instructed to transmit the ratification resolution to the Senate. The opposition desperately called for a court injunction, but Chief Justice D.L. Lansden ruled on the spot, effectively dissolving that delaying tactic.

Governor Roberts—whose support was so uncertain only weeks earlier—had seen the depths to which opponents of female freedom were willing to sink, and he took the certificate of ratification and mailed it off to Washington at noon on August 24. When Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby received it on the morning of August 26, he declared the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ratified. Women’s longest labor was over.

Carrie Chapman Catt summed it up. Since the 1848 Seneca Falls call for the vote, she counted: 480 campaigns in state legislatures; 56 statewide referenda to male voters; 47 attempts to add suffrage planks during revisions of state constitutions; 277 campaigns at state party conventions and 30 at national conventions; and 19 biennial campaigns in 19 different congresses. Literally thousands of times, men cast their votes on whether or not women should vote. Literally millions of women and men gave their entire lives to the cause and went to their graves with freedom un-won. No peaceful political change ever has required so much from so many for so long. None but a mighty army could have won.