# "IDe Stand on their Shoulders

A History of Wisconsin Women and Voting



t the founding of the United States, only land-owning white men over the age of 21 could vote in the vast majority of states.



## "It Is Coming as the Harvest Follows the Patient"

A Timeline of Wisconsin's Suffrage History

**1846** Wisconsin Constitutional Convention delegate James Magone of Milwaukee asks that the word *male* be left off of the constitution before the word *suffrage*. Other delegates laugh, and the idea is abandoned.

**1848** Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and other abolitionist women host the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. **1857** Wisconsin voters defeat a referendum on suffrage for African American men.



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"It is coming as the harvest follows the patient" — Theodora Winton Youmans, I

## "I Received a Signed Statement that Wisconsin was First"

### Wisconsin Ratifies the 19th Amendment



Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois all ratified the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment on June 10, 1919. Wisconsin then sent 76-year-old former state senator David James, the husband of suffragist Laura James and father of

n testimony whereof I, <u>Prank L. POIR</u> ng Secretary of State, have hereunto caused the Seal of the Department of State to be affixed and my name subscribed by the Chiej Clerk of the said Department, at the City of Washington, this <u>5th</u> day of <u>June</u>, 1919 -<u>Store</u> Boy Acting Secretary of State

This official certification accompanied the proposed 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment that was sent from the US Congress to states for ratification on June 5, 1919.

WHS ARCHIVES



political leader Ada James,racing to Washington, DC,to file the official paperwork.

Thirty-six states had to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment before women could vote. Women officially gained their right on August 26, 1920. <text>

By direction of the Acting Secretary of State

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of a certified copy of

June 13th. 1919.

This receipt of Wisconsin's ratification documents confirms the state as being the first to file papers with the Department of State in Washington, DC.

WHS ARCHIVES

"I received a signed statement that Wisconsin was first . . . just in time for the entrance of the messenger from Illinois. He walked up and slapped his papers down on the table. 'I've brought papers to show Illinois was first,' he said, and was interrupted by our peals of laughter."

### Ada James (center, facing forward) with supporters of the suffrage movement, ca. 1911–1912.

The James family made Richland Center a hotbed of suffrage activity for over forty years. Ada's father took her handbag and borrowed money from the Wisconsin Secretary of State as he raced off to Washington, DC.

WHI IMAGE ID 1991

—David James, 1919

David James stands with suffragists outside the National Woman's Party building in Washington, DC, after delivering Wisconsin's ratification documents, likely on June 13, 1919.





## "Wisconsin is Already in Advance of Most Other States"

## Passing the Equal Rights Amendment of 1921

\*Women shall have the same rights and privileges under the law as men in the exercise of suffrage, freedom of contract, choice of residence for voting purposes, jury service, holding office, holding and conveying property, care and



**custody of children and in all other respects.**" So read Wisconsin's Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), signed into law by Governor John Blaine in 1921. In 1922, 9 states tried to pass similar legislation, but all failed. Unfortunately, generalities in the Wisconsin ERA's language made the law basically meaningless.



Governor Patrick Lucey signs the proposed Federal Equal Rights Amendment, 1975.

Standing, from left to right: Lloyd A. Barbee, Marlin Schneider, two unidentified people, Midge Miller, unidentified, Mary Lou Munts, David Clarenbach. This poster from Milwaukee lists Democratic candidates who were left off the ticket, including Jessie Jack Hooper, who ran for the US Senate in 1922.

WHI IMAGE ID 9815

"This makes Wisconsin the only spot in the United States where women have, or ever have had since the beginning of our country, full equality with men."

Wisconsin delegates hold a banner at the Seneca Falls Equal Rights Convention and Historical Pageant in 1923.

From left to right: Antoinette Jackowsky-Peterson, Caroline Hipke, Anne Rotter, Lenore Cawker.

WHS ARCHIVES PH 3044

ERA advocate Alice Paul
 congratulating Wisconsin National
 Woman's Party Chair Mabel Raef
 Putnam, 1921

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## "Declared to be Citizens of the United States"

### Affirming American Indian Suffrage

Prior to Wisconsin statehood, Native women played varying key roles within their respective communities. For example, Ho-poe-kaw (Glory of the Morning) led the largest Ho-Chunk village for 40 years starting around 1727 and is one of the first women



noted in the written record of Wisconsin.

The 1848 Wisconsin Constitution extended the vote to American Indian men if they were citizens of the United States. However, American Indians not considered citizens were denied the voting rights provided by the federal 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments. Finally, in 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act declared all people born within the territorial limits of the United States to be citizens, extending suffrage to all American Indians and providing them with the right to vote in US elections while also retaining tribal citizenship to sovereign Native nations.

Emily Skenadore demonstrates the importance of voting at the Big Apple Fest in Oneida, Wisconsin, in 2018.

The Oneida Nation is part of the Iroquois Confederacy, and the rights of women belonging to the Iroquois nations are said to have inspired suffrage leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the mid-1800s.

Courtesy of Engage: Native Vote

"It is a cause of astonishment to us that you white women are only now, in this twentieth century, claiming what has been the Indian woman's privilege as far back as history traces."

-Oneida Nation member Laura Cornelius Kellogg, 1915



Karlie Mae Lemieux urges others to act on her behalf at an event at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, 2018.

Courtesy of Engage: Native Vote



#### Betsy Thunder, 1913.

Betsy Thunder was a Ho-Chunk medicine woman and a descendant of Ho-poe-kaw (Glory of the Morning).



## "No Uoting Qualification or Prerequisite to Uoting"

Protecting Voting Rights

Despite previous legislation, many state laws and regulations still kept people from the polls in the mid-1900s. These laws, sometimes called Jim Crow Laws, required individuals to pay additional taxes, take literacy tests, perform memorization tasks, and more in order to vote. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, part of a larger civil rights movement in which Wisconsin women were active, banned any voting law that

discriminated against racial or language minorities. Further legislation in 1970, 1975, and 1982 reaffirmed and strengthened voting protections.



Peggy Rozga, Leesa McGhee Nelson, and Wisconsin Historical Society employees David Driscoll and Tanika Apaloo, 2017.

Nelson donated the artifacts on the table so the Wisconsin Historical Society could better tell the stories of the Civil Rights movement in Wisconsin. Rozga and Nelson are activists from Milwaukee.

Columns, Wisconsin Historical Society, May–July 2017

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This card must be returned to the Registrar	

Pages from a literacy test used in Louisiana ca. 1963.

Courtesy of Civil Rights Movement Veterans

"My mother and father were always involved in

some kind of organization for the betterment of people . . . especially my mother—ooh! My father was the worker but my mother was out there."

-Milwaukee-based activist Shirley Butler, 2007

### Bernice Lindsay posing with the street sign named after her, 1967.

Bernice Lindsay worked as an activist and community leader in Milwaukee. In 1957, she was appointed to the Governor's Council on Human Rights.





"Women Will Have to Make as Hard a Struggle for Positions in our Governing Bodies as We Did for Suffrage"

### Wisconsin's Women Leaders



Belle Case La Follette speaking outdoors, 1915.

Belle Case La Follette was the wife and political teammate of Robert M. La Follette, Sr. Upon her husband's death in 1925, she was offered his seat in the United States Senate, but she turned down the opportunity, which would have made her Wisconsin's first woman senator. It would take almost 90 years before a woman represented Wisconsin in the US Senate.

WHI IMAGE ID 10803

**Doris Oiyotte Emery addressing the Tribal Council, 1974.** 

Doris Oiyotte Emery held various positions including councilperson, tribal judge, chief judge of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, health director, housing authority director, and tribal administrator.

WHI IMAGE ID 126952

#### Front cover of *Somos Latinas*, 2018.

Today, there are scores of politically active women making advancements in communities across Wisconsin. Some oral history projects have been

established to capture the voices and stories of these women, like the Somos Latinas Project Oral Histories and Collected Papers at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Wisconsin Historical Society Press

"Each generation is accountable, at



least, from birth for the next 200 years. It is a perpetual state of responsibility held in common by each new generation."

—First Nations organizer Denise Sweet, 2019

#### Wisconsin Secretary of State Vel Phillips, 1979.

Vel Phillips served as a Milwaukee Common Council member, Milwaukee County judge, and Wisconsin secretary of state. She was the first woman and first African American to serve in each of these positions.





# "IDe Stand on their Shoulders

Continuing to Fight for Voting Rights



UD omen have voted in higher numbers than men in every election since 1964. In 2018, about 10 million more women than men reported as registered voters. Yet only 55% of eligible women and 51.8% of eligible men cast ballots in the November 2018 midterm election.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was a watershed moment that future movements built upon, and the fight for voting rights continues. Today, questions surrounding citizenship, identification, and gerrymandering, among other issues, are being discussed. Generations of Americans have fought for access to the polls. Stand on their shoulders and let your voice be heard.

6	State of Misconsin 2019 - 2020 LEGISLATURE LRB-2264/1 CMR:amn				2010 0000 5
<section-header><text><text></text></text></section-header>		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	2019 - 2020 Legislature - 2 - certification to Washington, D.C., with James hand-delivering moments before the Illinois messenger arrived; and Whereas, Wisconsin became the first state to file the certific soon followed; and Whereas, the necessary 36 states soon ratified the 19th Amer U.S. population was enfranchised on August 26, 1920; and Whereas, the fight for women's suffrage, from the first convention to enfranchisement, lasted 72 years, with women from political views, and demographic backgrounds asking for the ri-	endment; half of the st women's rights om all walks of life,	2019 - 2020 Legislature       -3 -       LRE-3         1       Whereas, it took male allies to support women in their endeavor to vote, was sons, husbands, and fathers who ultimately heard the calls of women and this historic vote on June 10, 1919; and       Whereas, daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters of women who fought so hard to vote have been making their voices heard at the point for nearly 100 years; and         7       Whereas, most of the women who began asking for the right to vote never in to see the enfranchisement of women; and         9       Whereas, women are running for office in unprecedented numbers, material for these great suffragists; and
1	Relating to: cereat attack	11	Whereas, Wisconsin women by the thousands advocated for t	the right to vote on	<ol> <li>Whereas, the Wisconsin Women's Suffrage Association was empowered by the</li> <li>slogan "Women's Suffrage Yesterday. Today.</li> </ol>
2	19th Amendment. Whereas, June 10, 2019, marks the 100th anniversary of Wisconsin leading the	12	the streets, in newspapers, and in the state and federal capitols;	; and	13 slogan "Women's Suffrage Yesterday, Today and Forever," and Wisconsin still 14 embodies this principle today; now, therefore he is
3	Whereas, June 10, 2019, marks the 100th anniversary nation as the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment, allowing women the right to	13	Whereas, Wisconsin-born Carrie Chapman Catt led the na	ational movement,	14 embodies this principle today; now, therefore, be it 15 Recolved to an analysis of the second
	vote; and	14	meeting with President Woodrow Wilson to secure his support fo	for suffrage in light	nesolved by the assembly the
	Whereas, Wisconsin women fought for the right to vote the	15	of women's contributions during World War I; and Whereas, Wisconsin women, like former First Lady Belle C:	I a Pallette and	16 State Legislature celebrates June 10, 2019, as the 100th Anniversary of ratifying the 17 19th Amendment and reaffirms Wisconsin
7	before it was granted and persevered in the face of real for women's suffrage passed	16	Reverend Olympia Brown, garnered national attention for their su	18	17 19th Amendment and reaffirms Wisconsin's commitment to empowering and uplifting the voices of women across our great state.
8	overwhelmingly in the Wisconsin Assembly 54 to 2 and in the to 1; and	18	Whereas, Ada James took women's right to vote to the streets	19	19 (END)
9		19	suffrage efforts in 1912; and	S did te-cheighess	
10		20	Whereas, Theodora Winton Youmans helped heal the state	e's suffragists after	
11	Whereas, to be the first state, Wisconsin Tacco with appointing former State Senator David James as special messenger to transfer the	20	the failure of the 1912 referendum and continued the move		
12	appointing former State Schator 2		Wisconsin residents on the benefits of women voters; and	childre to cancare	
		22	Whereas, women had been organized under the statewide	de structure of the	



**Truesillia Ruth Shank and Mary Kae** Nelson, members of the League of Women Voters, 2016.

Founded on February 14, 1920, the League is still active today as a nonpartisan organization promoting women's political platforms.

Courtesy of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

Columbus Ohio

Follette,

Belle Case

stand

#### Wisconsin Assembly Joint Resolution 30, 2019.

On April 25, 2019, a bipartisan effort recognized the work and legacy of Wisconsin suffragists.

consin Woman's Suffrage Association since 1869; a

#### Wisconsin Supreme Court, 2018.

In 2018, 6 of the 7 justices were women, including the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Patience Roggensack. Justices in Wisconsin are elected to serve 10-year terms.

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Supreme Court

Actions are being taken to collect, preserve, and share the stories of Wisconsin women in history. To learn more visit wisconsinhistory.org/ votesforwomen



