

Washington Women Win the Vote

Washington Women's Suffrage Timeline

- 1854 — Women's suffrage is proposed in first Territorial Legislature but fails to be enacted.
- 1870 — Three women tender their ballots at courthouse in Olympia but are rejected. Fifteen women in Black River (Littlerock) and Grand Mound successfully vote.
- 1871 — Susan B. Anthony, accompanied by Abigail Scott Duniway, tours the Northwest and addresses the legislature. Anthony also dines at the Bigelow House in Olympia. Anthony and other activists participate in the first Territorial Suffrage Convention in Olympia and form the Washington Territory Woman Suffrage Association.
- 1877 — Women can vote in school board elections but not for county superintendents.
- 1878 — Abigail Scott Duniway and others petition to include women's voting rights in a proposed constitution for Washington statehood which is not approved by Congress.
- 1883 — Territorial Legislature enacts women's suffrage which includes African American women.
- 1887 — Territorial Supreme Court invalidates women's suffrage.
- 1888 — Legislature re-enacts women's suffrage—it is again invalidated by the Territorial Supreme Court.
- 1889 — Activists advocate for women's suffrage in State Constitution—the separate ballot issue fails but the State Constitution is ratified.
- 1890 — Women can again vote for school trustees and directors but not for county superintendents.
- 1892 — Women vote for the state flower. The rhododendron wins.
- 1897 — Women's suffrage state constitutional amendment passes legislature—the ratification vote fails in 1898.
- 1909 — Women's suffrage constitutional amendment passes the legislature and is ratified by male voters in November 1910. African American women have voting rights. Washington was the 5th state in the union to permanently enact women suffrage and the first in the 20th century.
- 1912 — First women elected to the state legislature and first statewide elected woman.
- 1920 — State legislature ratifies the 19th Amendment to the U.S.



*Mary Olney Brown tried to vote in 1870.
(WSHS C1954.469.2)*

Constitution for women's voting rights. The 19th Amendment becomes effective August 26, 1920.

1924 — Native Americans become citizens.

1940s, 50s and 60s — Citizenship restrictions are lifted on immigrant Asians and national Voting Rights Act, 1965.

1971 — Voting age reduced to 18.

2018 — Washington Voting Rights Act.

2019 — Native American Voting Rights Act.

Sources for Washington Women Win the Vote

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Josephine Corliss Preston was the first state-wide elected woman as Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1912. (Library of Congress Photograph)



Bernice Sapp was a suffrage activist in 1909-1910. (WSHS 1961.18.29)