

Rightfully Hers Resource Guide



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Table of Contents

<u>Exhibit Description</u>	page 3
A brief summary of exhibit themes and information on the originating institution	
<u>Assembly and Display</u>	page 4
Detailed assembly instructions and suggestions for proper display	
<u>Exhibit Script</u>	page 5
Full text of the exhibit content	
<u>Educators</u>	page 8
Lesson plans and resources for teachers geared toward a variety of grade levels with learning objectives and links to core standards	
<u>Programming</u>	page 9
Ideas to get you started on programming events and activities for your community	
<u>Reference Resources</u>	page 11
A list of books that you can go to for more information	
<u>Glossary</u>	page 14
A list of frequently used terms and their definitions	

Exhibit Description

The National Archives commemorates the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment with *Rightfully Hers*. This popup exhibit contains simple messages exploring the history of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, women’s voting rights before and after the amendment, and its impact today. The small, unit-based temporary popup exhibition is constructed of cardboard, ships flat, and can be easily set up with no tools.

Panel 1: Before the 19th Amendment

When the nation's founders drafted the Constitution in 1787, they made no mention of women in the document that outlined how our Government was to operate. At the time, women were generally excluded from political and, in many ways, public life. Enslaved women were excluded entirely. White women were considered under the protection and authority of their husbands or fathers. In most cases, they could not vote, own property, make contracts, go to court, or control any money they earned.

Panel 2: How Did Women Win the Vote?

To win access to the polls, a diverse group of suffragists—individuals who supported giving voting rights to women—fought for more than 70 years using many different strategies. Over time, these tactics won the political support necessary for ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

Panel 3: A Constitutional Victory

“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.”

—19th Amendment, August 18, 1920

The ratification of the 19th Amendment was a landmark moment in American history that dramatically changed the electorate. It enshrined in the United States Constitution fuller citizenship for women and a more expansive democracy for the nation.

Panel 4: What voting rights struggles persist?

Even after the 19th Amendment was ratified, millions of women remained unable to vote. The 100 years since the ratification of the 19th amendment has seen voting rights expanded to millions more women after struggles against voter discrimination succeeded. Even today, people continue to fight to expand and protect voting rights.

The Rightfully Hers Popup Display was created by the National Archives and is presented in part by the National Archives Foundation through the generous support of Unilever, Pivotal Ventures, Carl M. Freeman Foundation in honor of Virginia Allen Freeman, AARP, and Denise Gwyn Ferguson.

Assembly and Display

***Rightfully Hers* is designed to be lightweight, easy to set-up, and versatile. You can use this popup unit in any public area—no walls are necessary.**

Set-up

The unit will ship in four pieces—two for the top and two for the bottom. The two bottom and two top pieces attach using an adhesive strip. Peel the backing and press together. Note: the adhesive can only be used once, so ensure proper placement before attaching.

Once the two parts have been assembled, simply slide the top portion onto the bottom using the slots.

Suggested Display

The unit should be placed in a visible high-traffic area with room for people to walk all the way around the unit. The total assembled size is 66½" high by 32" wide. The total footprint is approximately 45 inches square.

Although the four panels of the unit can be read independently, there is an ideal flow for the exhibit. If possible, face the unit so that guests encounter the panels in the following order:

- Before the 19th Amendment
- How Did Women Win the Vote
- A Constitutional Victory
- What Voting Rights Struggles Persist?

Other Display Options

Wrap a pole or column. If space is an issue, you may affix the two parts around a structural support.

Display on a wall. If you cannot accommodate the standing unit, affix the panels to a wall. You may also use this option after the initial display. The text of each panel is designed to stand alone so individual panels may be used for a future event or activity.

Exhibit Script

Panel: Before the 19th Amendment

When the nation's founders drafted the Constitution in 1787, they made no mention of women. At the time, women were generally excluded from political and, in many ways, public life. Enslaved women were excluded entirely. White women were under the protection and authority of their husbands or fathers. In most cases, they could not vote, own property, make contracts, go to court, or control any money they earned.

You can go to meetings; you can vote resolutions; you can attend great demonstrations on the street; but, after all, the only occasion where the American citizen expresses his acts, his opinion, and his power is at the ballot-box.

—Zerelda G. Wallace at hearing of Senate Judiciary Committee, January 1880

So how did women exercise their voice?

Many women participated in boycotts, signed public pledges and petitioned, fundraised, and organized other women into activist groups to voice their opinions about the anti-slavery movement, the sale and consumption of alcohol, working conditions, and public education.

Some women could vote before the 19th Amendment

Before the 19th Amendment changed the Constitution to read the right to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," millions of women already had the right to vote. The Constitution leaves voting eligibility requirements up to the states. Therefore who can vote, and what they can vote on, has varied from state to state over time. Before the 19th Amendment's ratification, 15 states had already granted women at least some voting rights. However, because states decide voter qualifications, some women remained unable to vote after the 19th Amendment for other reasons.

Panel: How Did Women Win the Vote?

The fight to win women the right to vote in the United States was not easily or quickly won.

To win women access to the polls, a diverse group of suffragists—individuals who supported giving voting rights to women—fought for more than 70 years using many different strategies:

- Some focused on amending the U.S. Constitution while others worked to change state election laws.

Exhibit Script

- Suffragists lobbied privately in their parlors and publicly in the halls of Congress.
- They wrote articles, circulated petitions, gave speeches, organized marches, and were sometimes imprisoned for their protests.

Over time, these tactics won political support for woman suffrage necessary for ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

Government of the people, for the people and by the people is but partially realized so long as woman has no vote.

—Adella Hunt Logan, 1905

A Struggle within the struggle

African Americans played an important and active role in the woman suffrage movement. Because of their race, however, black women were not always welcome at white-led suffrage meetings and demonstrations. African American women formed their own clubs to pursue reform issues, including woman suffrage. By 1900, there were more than 300 black women's clubs nationwide.

Many resisted opening polls to women. Why?

Some men and women argued, among other reasons, that women's involvement in politics would change her role in the family and take power away from men. Others believed the decision of who votes belonged to the states. Formed in 1911, the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage had branches in 25 states by 1916.

Panel: A Constitutional Victory

The ratification of the 19th Amendment was a landmark moment in American history that dramatically changed the electorate. It enshrined in the United States Constitution fuller citizenship for women and a more expansive democracy for the nation.

"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"

—19th Amendment, August 18, 1920

It was a continuous, seemingly endless, chain of activity. Young suffragists who helped forge the last links of that chain were not born when it began. Old suffragists who forged the first links were dead when it ended.

—Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler

Exhibit Script

Why is Tennessee's ratification of the 19th Amendment significant?

After Congress passed and proposed a woman suffrage amendment, three-fourths or 36 states at that time, had to ratify the 19th Amendment before it could be added to the Constitution. Many states quickly approved the 19th Amendment, and by the end of March 1920 only one additional state was needed for ratification. On August 18, 1920, after calling a special session of the state legislature, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment.

Our Ability to Amend

The Founders personally made it hard, but not impossible, to change the Constitution. In 1869 the first amendment proposing suffrage for women was introduced in Congress. It took 50 years and 900 proposals for Congress to pass a resolution that became the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

Panel: What voting rights struggles persist?

Even after the 19th Amendment was ratified, millions of women remained unable to vote.

- Puerto Rican women were excluded from the 19th Amendment. All adult women didn't gain the vote till 1935.
- The lack of U.S. citizenship limited voting rights for many Native Americans and Asian immigrant women. All Native Americans were granted U.S. citizenship in 1924. Asian immigrants couldn't become citizens until 1952.
- African American voters, especially in the South, faced discriminatory measures meant to keep them from the polls until most of those practices were outlawed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- Many Latin American and other immigrant or indigenous citizens faced language barriers to voting.

It's important that young people know about the struggles we faced to get to the point we are today. Only then will they appreciate the hard-won freedom of blacks in this country.

—Amelia Boynton Robinson

Your vote is your voice

The 100 years since the ratification of the 19th Amendment has seen voting rights expanded to millions more women after many ongoing struggles against voter discrimination succeeded. However, people continue to fight to expand and protect voting rights today. The best protection for your voting rights is to use the most powerful political tool any citizen has— your voice!



Exhibit Script

Another landmark voting rights victory

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was landmark civil rights legislation that outlawed discriminatory voting laws and practices designed to keep blacks and other voters of color from the polls. The act enfranchised millions of new voters. In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down an important provision to enforcing the law. In recent years, some states have passed election laws that advocates say prevent fraud, but critics argue are intended to suppress voting rights.

Educator Resources

Online Primary Sources and Learning Activities:

<https://www.docsteach.org/topics/women>

On this special topic page, you can find activities focused on:

- Extending Suffrage to Women
- Why Did Women Want the Right to Vote?
- The Amendment Process: Ratifying the 19th Amendment
- The Suffrage and Civil Rights Reform Movements



And explore our holdings that relate to:

- Susan B. Anthony and other women arrested for illegally voting in 1872
- Women of Color in the Suffrage Movement
- Photos of women's suffrage protests and activities
- The Anti-Suffrage Movement
- Political Cartoons
- Women's Clubs
- Progressive Era Reform Movements

Free video to share in your classroom or library: [How Do We Amend?](#)

An animated video showing the process of amending the Constitution, using the 19th Amendment as an example.

And, there's more!

Browse the wealth of records and information documenting the women's rights movement in the United States, including photographs, documents, audiovisual recordings, exhibits, articles, blog posts, lectures and events.

<https://www.archives.gov/women>



Programming

The *Rightfully Hers* popup is more than a display; it is a conversation starter. Developing programming around the display allows you to engage with your visitors, make connections in your community, or provide a window into our history for your students. Think creatively: how can you put together a program or activity that offers your audience something they cannot simply find online? There are many ways to engage with the display.

Collaborate

Partnering with other local organizations can be beneficial and enriching experiences for both the public and the organizations—allowing you to offer something neither of your institutions could do alone.

It is best to first familiarize yourself with the subject. Then, think about how to relate the topic to your current audience. Is there an audience you would like to reach? Think about who in the community currently serves that audience. Contact local organizations and secure some commitments. You will likely find a variety of groups in your community who will have an interest in this topic, such as those listed below:

- Civics education organizations
- Local political offices
- Courthouses and City Hall
- Law Offices
- Public libraries
- Historic interest groups (reenactors, round tables, book clubs)
- Museums that interpret the topic

Collaborate with partnering organizations in the planning stages of your programming. Different types of institutions will bring different things to the table, so communicating early will help you determine the best fit for everyone.

Localize

The display gives your institution an opportunity to offer something new to your community. Tell the story of a local individual that was a suffragist. Or simply use the display to start a conversation about what the 19th Amendment means today. Collect their stories and display them in your museum or online.

Programming

Here are just a few ideas to explore:

Invite local experts

Research who in your community has expertise on the subject matter. Ask a local historian to give a lecture or host a discussion session. Invite an author to hold a book signing at your institution. Partner with a historical interest group to stage a reenactment.

Bring the topic to the present

Give the community a voice in your programming by simply hosting a discussion. Explore your community's connection to the woman suffrage movement or women's equality more broadly.

Hold a film festival

Find films that relate to the suffrage movement or women's equality. Think of the subject in broad terms. Begin with a period drama and hold a discussion afterwards about the accuracies and inaccuracies presented in the film. This is a great way to start a discussion about historical memory and its impact on our lives. Get creative—show a film that explores how women have redefined their roles in society. The options are nearly limitless.

NOTE: If you wish to present public film showings at your own site, please be sure to clear the rights through a recognized licensing agent.

*****Help visitors learn more about voting in your state*****

For this milestone anniversary of the 19th Amendment, we want to share that the National Association of Secretaries of States (NASS) is an organization that can provide resources on your state's register-to-vote laws.

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Glossary

Amendment

To alter, modify, rephrase, or add to or subtract from by formal procedure.
Article V of the Constitution allows us to change, or amend, the Constitution.

American Equal Rights Association (AERA)

Formed in 1866 the AERA was created in a united effort to secure universal suffrage, or voting rights for all regardless of race or gender.

Anti-suffragist

A person opposed to giving women the right to vote

Article V

Describes the process how the Constitution can be amended.

Transcript of Article V.:

“The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.”

American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA)

Established in 1869 and rival to National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). AWSA supported the 15th Amendment, which granted African American men the right to vote and a state-by-state strategy for women’s voting rights

Citizen

A native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection

Constituent

One of a group of voters who elect a public official



Glossary

Declaration of Sentiments

Also known as the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments. This document was written in 1848 and signed by 100 of the attendees at the first women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, NY.

Discrimination

Being treated differently or worse because of race, color, gender, religion, and class.

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

The Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1923 and proposed to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens. Sent to the states for ratification in 1972, it failed to achieve the necessary ratifications from states before the deadline.

Electorate

All of the people in a country or area who are entitled to vote in an election

Enfranchise

To give the right to vote in elections.

Engrossed

To write or copy in a clear, attractive, large script or in a formal manner, as a public document or record.

Federalism

A system of government in which power is divided between a national (federal) government and various regional governments. As defined by the United States Constitution, federalism is a fundamental aspect of American government, whereby the states are not merely regional representatives of the federal government, but are granted independent powers and responsibilities. With its own legislative branch, judicial branch, and executive branch states are empowered to pass, enforce, and interpret laws, provided they do not violate the Constitution.

Joint Resolution

A resolution adopted by both branches of a bicameral legislative assembly and requiring the signature of the chief executive to become law.



Glossary

National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)

Created in 1890 when AWSA and NWSA merged, the NAWSA played a pivotal role in the woman suffrage movement.

National Association of Colored Women (NACW)

Hundreds of local black women's clubs formed to make the NACW in 1896. The local clubs supported their communities and advocated for them. One platform was woman suffrage.

National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA)

Created in 1869 after a split in the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) over whether the women's movement should support the 15th Amendment. The NWSA maintained a strategy of pursuing woman suffrage through an amendment to the Constitution.

National Women's Party (NWP)

Formed by Alice Paul in 1910, the NWP broke from the NAWSA to focus on a woman suffrage amendment to the Constitution. Once the 19th Amendment was ratified, they focused their efforts on an Equal Rights Amendment.

19th Amendment

Change to the U.S. Constitution passed in 1920 that prevented discrimination on the basis of sex, legally enfranchising women.

Petition

An appeal to an authority, signed by many people.

Picket

The act of standing outside a building to protest about something.

Ratify

To confirm by expressing consent, approval, or formal sanction. For constitutional amendments, after an amendment is proposed by Congress three-fourths of states need to approve or ratify it before it can be added to the Constitution.

Seneca Falls Convention

The first women's right convention in the United States held in Seneca Falls, NY, on July 19–20, 1848. Activists and attendees called for women's equality and suffrage. It resulted in the creation and signing of the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments.

Glossary

Suffrage

The right to vote, especially in a political election. Five of the 27 amendments to the Constitution have expanded suffrage for citizens.

Suffragist

A supporter of voting rights for women.

True Womanhood

Belief common in the United States in the 19th century that married women should limit themselves to housework and childcare.

United States Constitution

The fundamental or organic law of the United States, framed in 1787 by the Constitutional Convention. It went into effect March 4, 1789.

Woman suffrage

The unique topic of a woman's right to vote, which was not included in the original United States Constitution.



For more information, visit

<https://museum.archives.gov/rightfully-hers>