

Maryland and the 19th Amendment: Marching Towards Women's Suffrage



Most view Marylander [Margaret Brent](#) as the first suffragist in the United States. An unmarried landholder in colonial Maryland, she appeared before the legislature in 1648 and she asked the Governor and assembly to admit her with two votes, one as a landowner and one as Lord Baltimore's attorney. She was denied both.

Calls for women's suffrage remained quiet in Maryland until after the Civil War, when the Maryland Equal Rights Society was formed. Interest peaked on and off for the next twenty years. Additional organizations, such as the Maryland Woman Suffrage Association,

the Baltimore Woman's Suffrage Association, and their affiliated national groups, began to take root in the state and were active by the early part of the twentieth century. Most sprung up from active women's clubs. One early leader, [Elizabeth King Ellicott](#), advocated for suffrage, but also fought for women's education, and other social and political reforms.

There were disagreements between the pro-women's suffrage groups over the best way for Maryland women to obtain the vote. The Maryland constitution specified men as eligible voters in state elections and some felt they should support a state constitutional amendment rather than push for a federal one. Others favored a focus on granting taxpaying women voting rights in some municipalities.

These disagreements resulted in a split between some groups and leaders. [Edith Houghton Hooker](#) formed the Just Government League in 1907, which became the largest suffrage organization in the state. [Madeleine LeMoyné Ellicott](#) worked closely with national suffrage leaders and following ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment helped found the League of Women Voters of Maryland.

Meanwhile, Maryland legislators continued to reject any women's suffrage petitions and bills brought before the General Assembly. Lobbying efforts by suffragists did increase support from legislators in some political circles and areas of the state, however, never to the point for successful passage. Generally, Republicans supported the movement while Democrats did not, as Democrats feared new voters would favor their opponents. Legislators from Baltimore were largely anti-suffrage, likely due to concerns that female voters would favor prohibition. The closest suffragists came to success was in 1916, when the State Senate passed a statewide women's suffrage bill by a vote of 17-7. The bill was defeated in the House of Delegates by nearly twenty votes.

Some Maryland women did not have to wait until passage of the 19th amendment to exercise their right to vote. On May 14, 1900, women voted in a special municipal bond election in Annapolis. As taxpaying property owners, they continued to vote in bond elections after this, however, were not allowed to participate in elections for the mayor and other city officers. In 1908, the town of Still Pond in Kent County received a charter which granted female taxpayers the right to vote. Three women voted in the town's first election in May 1908. Despite an 1896 charter granting universal suffrage, there is no evidence that women in Loch Lynn Heights in Garrett County voted in municipal elections, despite their efforts to do so.

African American women faced discrimination from many of the leading women's suffrage organizations and had to establish their own groups to promote the cause and educate women about the movement. This was made more difficult by efforts to legally limit African American suffrage generally.

The Maryland legislature rejected the 19th amendment in 1920 when presented to them for ratification because they felt that the amendment impeded states rights. Maryland did not formally ratify the 19th amendment until 1941.

Even after the 19th Amendment reached full ratification, Maryland women faced challenges in fully exercising their right to vote. On October 30, 1920, Oscar Leser, a prominent Baltimore attorney and anti-suffrage activist, and others, filed a petition in court challenging the right of women to be added to the registry of voters as well as the validity of the Nineteenth Amendment. This case made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declared in 1922 that the Nineteenth Amendment was valid and women were legally entitled to be registered voters.

U.S. History Content Standards

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following [United States History Content Standards](#)

Era 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585-1763)

Standard 2: *How political, religious, and social institutions emerged in the English colonies.*

Standard 2a: *The student understands the roots of representative government and how political rights were defined.*

7-12 - Analyze how the rise of individualism contributed to the idea of participatory government. [Assess the importance of the individual]

9-12 - Analyze how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

Standard 1: *How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption.*

Standard 1a: *The student understands the origin of the Progressives and the coalitions they formed to deal with issues at the local and state levels.*

5-12 - Evaluate Progressive reforms to expand democracy at the local and state levels. [Examine the influence of ideas]

5-12 - Evaluate Progressive attempts at social and moral reform. [Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances]

Standard 1b: *The student understands Progressivism at the national level.*

5-12 - Describe how the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th amendments reflected the ideals and goals of Progressivism and the continuing attempt to adapt the founding ideals to a modernized society. [Evaluate the implementation of a decision]

Standard 1c: *The student understands the limitations of Progressivism and the alternatives offered by various groups.*

9-12 - Specify the issues raised by various women and how mainstream Progressives responded to them. [Consider multiple perspectives]

Standard 3: *How the United States changed from the end of World War I to the eve of the Great Depression.*

Standard 3a: *The student understands social tensions and their consequences in the postwar era.*

9-12 - Analyze how the emergence of the “New Woman” challenged Victorian values. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Standard 3d: *The student understands politics and international affairs in the 1920s.*

5-12 - Assess the effects of woman suffrage on politics. [Evaluate the implementation]

of a decision]

Maryland State Content Standards

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following [Maryland Social Studies Standards](#) for Grades 4 and for High School.

Grade 4 - Standard 1.0: Civics

Topic B. Individual and Group Participation in the Political System

Indicator 1. Analyze how individuals and groups contributed to the political system in Maryland

Objective a. Describe the contributions of 17th century English settlers who influenced the early political structure

Indicator 2. Defend the importance of civic participation as a citizen of Maryland

Objective b. Analyze ways people can participate in the political process including voting, petitioning elected officials, and volunteering

High School - Standard 5.0: United States History

Expectation 2 - Students will demonstrate understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments from 1898 to 1929.

Topic A Challenges of a New Century (1898-1929)


Indicator 1 - Analyze the cultural, economic, political, and social impact of the Progressive Movement.

Objective c - Describe the impact of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th amendments to the Constitution

Indicator 4 - Analyze the cultural, economic, political and social changes in society during World War I and throughout the 1920s

Objective f - Describe the changing social and economic role of women and the impact of the women's suffrage movement

Maryland State Common Core Reading Standards

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following [Maryland Common Core Reading Standards](#)  for Grades 6-8:

CCR Anchor Standard #1 - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

RH.6-8.1 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

CCR Anchor Standard #2 - Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

RH.6-8.2- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge of opinions

CCR Anchor Standard #3 - Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of text.

RH.6-8.3- Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCR Anchor Standard #4 - Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

RH.6-8.4- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

CCR Anchor Standard #6 - Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a

text.

RH.6-8.6- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)







CCR Anchor Standard #8 - Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

RH.6-8.8- Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text

CCR Anchor Standard #9 - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.


RH.6-8.9- Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic


Primary Resources


1. TITLE: [Conjectural painting, Margaret Brent arguing for the right to vote before the General Assembly.](#) 
ARTIST: Louis Glanzman
CREDIT: Image courtesy of the National Geographic Society
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Maryland Commission on Artistic Property Collection) [MSA SC 1545-0789](#)
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Art Collection, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
2. TITLE: [Conjectural drawing, "Margaret Brent"](#) 
ARTIST: Edwin Tunis
DATE CREATED: ca. 1934
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Tunis Collection) [MSA SC 1480-1-6](#)
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD
3. TITLE: [Margaret Brent's request for vote and "voyce" in the Maryland Assembly](#) 
SOURCE: GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL (Proceedings), 1647-1651, liber A, folio 130, MSA S1071-4
NOTES: [Transcription of Margaret Brent's request for vote and "voyce" in the Maryland Assembly](#)
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
4. TITLE: ["Woman's Rights: How They Were Denied at the Loch Lynn Heights Election."](#) 
DATE PUBLISHED: 9 May 1896
SOURCE: *The (Baltimore) Sun*, 9 May 1896, pg. 1.
NOTES: Article detailing the refusal of election judges to let women vote in Loch Lynn Heights, Maryland.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Law Library, Annapolis, MD
5. TITLE: ["The Bond Election"](#) 
DATE PUBLISHED: 14 May 1900
SOURCE: *The (Annapolis) Evening Capital*, 14 May 1900, pg. 1. [MSA SC 2733](#)
NOTES: Article detailing the first election in Maryland women voted in.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD
6. TITLE: [Charter for Still Pond](#) 
DATE CREATED: 1908
SOURCE: GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Laws, Original) 1908 Chapter 160, S966-631
NOTES: Town charter for Still Pond, Maryland, which granted universal suffrage in municipal elections.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
7. TITLE: ["Limited or Universal Suffrage"](#) 
CREATOR: Edith Houghton Hooker
DATE PUBLISHED: March 22, 1913
SOURCE: *Maryland Suffrage News*, 22 March 1913, pg. 203. [MSA SC 3286](#)


NOTES: Article from the Maryland Suffrage News, which was published by the Just Government League from 1912-1920.


REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD


8. TITLE: ["Woman Suffrage By Federal Amendment"](#)  and "What Is The Federal Suffrage Amendment" broadsides from the National Woman Suffrage Association
DATE PUBLISHED: February 1917
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Handy Collection) [MSA SC 4062-3-14](#)
NOTES: Educational flyers about the federal suffrage amendment.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD


9. TITLE: [Letter from Cornelia A. Gibbs to Maryland Attorney General Albert C. Ritchie](#) 
DATE CREATED: 8 July 1919
SOURCE: GOVERNOR (General File) MSA S1041-538
NOTES: Letter from the president of the Maryland Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD


10. TITLE: [Letter from Madeleine LeMoyné Ellicott to Alice Leonard Gaule](#) 
DATE CREATED: 26 September 1919
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Madeleine LeMoyné Ellicott Collection) Letter from Madeleine LeMoyné Ellicott to Alice Leonard Gaule, 26 September 1919, [MSA SC 6110-1-21](#)
NOTES: Personal letter from suffragist Madeleine LeMoyné Ellicott to a friend in which she mentions the Maryland legislature's attitude toward the federal suffrage amendment.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD

11. TITLE: [Letter from Matilda B. Maloy to Rozelle P. Handy](#) 
DATE CREATED: 2 January 1920
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Handy Collection) [MSA SC 4062-3-14](#)
NOTES: Letter detailing local suffrage activities.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD


12. TITLE: [Letter from Publicity Chairman of Woman Suffrage League of Maryland](#) 
DATE CREATED: 5 February 1920
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Handy Collection) [MSA SC 4062-6-6](#)
NOTES: Letter showing some of the racial undertones of the suffrage movement
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD


13. TITLE: [Vote on resolution to ratify the proposed amendment to the federal constitution](#) 
DATE CREATED/PUBLISHED: 17 February 1920
SOURCE: *Journal of Proceedings of the Senate of Maryland, January Session 1920*, pp. 202-203, MdHR 821260-1
NOTES: Tally showing that the Maryland State Senate defeated the proposed amendment by a vote of 18-9.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

14. TITLE: [Vote on resolution to ratify the proposed amendment to the federal constitution](#) 
DATE CREATED/PUBLISHED: 17 February 1920
SOURCE: *Journal of Proceedings of the House of Delegates of Maryland, January Session 1920*, pp. 279-281, MdHR 821109-1
NOTES: Tally showing that the Maryland House of Delegates defeated the proposed amendment by a vote of 64-36.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

15. TITLE: [Joint Resolution of the Maryland General Assembly rejecting and refusing to ratify the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) 
DATE CREATED/PUBLISHED: 1920
SOURCE: GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Joint Resolutions) 1920 JR 2, MSA S967-26
NOTES: Joint resolution in which the Maryland legislature explained why they would not ratify the

19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

16. TITLE: [Court opinion in Leser v. Garnett](#) 
DATE CREATED: 28 June 1921
SOURCE: COURT OF APPEALS (Opinions) April term 1921, case no. 43, MSA S 383-188.
NOTES: Opinion of Maryland's highest court upholding the right of women to vote in Maryland elections under the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution despite that state constitution specifying only men could vote.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

17. TITLE: [Joint Resolution of the Maryland General Assembly ratifying the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) 
DATE CREATED/PUBLISHED: 1941
SOURCE: GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Joint Resolutions) 1941 JR 12, S967-29
NOTES: Maryland's ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

18. TITLE: [Panorama photograph of members of the Just Government League \(this contingent known as Army of the Severn\) standing before the steps of the main portico of the State House.](#)
DATE CREATED: 1914
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Margaret Moss Dowsett Collection) [MSA SC 4247-1-1](#)
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD

19. TITLE: [Members of the Just Government League marching in suffrage parade in Washington, D.C.](#)
DATE CREATED: c. 1912
SOURCE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (Baltimore: When She Was What She Used To Be Collection) [MSA SC 2167-1-35](#)
REPOSITORY: Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, Annapolis, MD

Secondary Resources

- Anthony, Susan B., et. al, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage*. 6 vols. New York : Fowler & Wells, 1881-1922.
- Cohen, Jane Whitehouse. "Women's Political Power in Maryland, 1920-1964." Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1993.
- Cooney, Robert P.J., Jr. *Winning the Vote: The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement*. American Graphic Press: Santa Cruz, CA, 2005.
- Cott, Nancy F. *Grounding of Modern Feminism*. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 1987.
- Flexner, Eleanor. *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996.
- Kugler, Israel. *From Ladies to Women: The Organized Struggle for Women's Rights in the Reconstruction Era*. In "Contributions in Women's Studies, no. 77" Greenwood Press: New York, 1987.
- Steiner, Bernard C. *Citizenship and Suffrage in Maryland*. Cushing and Co.,: Baltimore, MD, 1895.
- Weaver, Diane E. "Maryland Women and the Transformation of Politics, 1890s-1930." Ph.D. diss., The University of Maryland, 1992.
- Weiss, Elaine. *Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. Viking Press: New York, 2018.

Associated Heritage and Preservation Organizations

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