

The History of Women in the Washington State Legislature

In **1854** as Washington Territory was being formed, the Territorial Convention nearly granted women the right to vote, but the women's suffrage proposal was defeated by a single vote. In 1881, the Territorial House passed legislation granting women the right to vote, but it failed in the Council on a 5 to 7 vote. The issue was debated every session thereafter. The constant protesting and pushing by the Washington Equal Suffrage Association, organized by Susan B. Anthony and Abigail Scott Duniway in 1871, led the Territorial Legislature to grant full voting rights to women in **1883**. But in 1887, the Territorial Supreme Court overturned that law. Another law was enacted in 1888, but that was also quickly overturned. The efforts of women voters opposing the sale of liquor led others to fight to remove their voting rights. The State Constitutional Convention of 1889 did not include women's suffrage in its constitutional proposal to Congress. The questions of voting rights for women, prohibition and siting the state capitol were submitted **as** separate ballot actions and the male voters disapproved of women's suffrage and prohibition.

In **1910**, voters in Washington approved Amendment 6 to the State Constitution granting women the right to vote. This broke a 14-year gridlock in the national woman suffrage crusade; the state became the fifth in the nation to enfranchise women - the first on the Pacific coast. In **1920**, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution won the necessary two-thirds ratification from state legislatures and women's suffrage became the law of the land on August 26.

Nationally, the number of female lawmakers in state legislatures steadily climbed after women first entered state office in the 1920s and gained more with the women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, according to research by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. In 1998 and 2004, Washington State had the distinction of electing the highest percentage of women to its Statehouse, 40 percent in 1998 and 37 percent in 2004. The state consistently ranks among the top three of all states.

Year	Senate	House	Total	Members	Pct.	Year	Senate	House	Total	Members	Pct.
1889-1911						1971	0	8	8	148	5.40%
1913	0	2	2	139	1.40%	1973	0	12	12	147	8.20%
1915	0	0	0	139	0.00%	1975	4	14	18	147	12.20%
1917	0	1	1	139	0.70%	1977	6	16	22	147	15.00%
1919	0	1	1	139	0.70%	1979	7	20	27	147	18.40%
1921	0	1	1	138	0.70%	1981	8	26	34	147	23.10%
1923	1	4	5	138	3.60%	1983	8	20	28	147	19.00%
1925	1	3	4	139	2.90%	1985	7	28	35	147	23.80%
1927	1	1	2	139	1.40%	1987	7	30	37	147	25.20%
1929	1	4	5	139	3.60%	1989	10	32	42	147	28.60%
1931	0	3	3	139	2.20%	1991	12	35	47	147	32.00%
1933	1	5	6	145	4.10%	1993	17	41	58	147	39.50%
1935	2	9	11	145	7.60%	1995	20	38	58	147	39.50%
1937	3	6	9	145	6.20%	1996	21	39	60	147	40.80%
1939	4	4	8	145	5.50%	1997	23	35	58	147	39.50%
1941	4	4	8	145	5.50%	1998	22	35	57	147	38.80%
1943	3	10	13	145	9.00%	1999	23	37	60	147	40.80%
1945	1	7	8	145	5.50%	2000	23	37	60	147	40.80%
1947	0	3	3	145	2.10%	2001	23	34	57	147	38.80%
1949	0	7	7	145	4.80%	2002	23	34	57	147	38.80%
1951	0	7	7	145	4.80%	2003	21	33	54	147	36.70%
1953	0	9	9	145	6.20%	2004	23	31	54	147	36.70%
1955	0	9	9	145	6.20%	2005	20	29	49	147	33.30%
1957	0	12	12	145	8.30%	2006	20	29	49	147	33.30%
1959	0	10	10	148	6.80%	2007	20	28	48	147	32.70%
1961	1	9	10	148	6.80%	2008	20	32	52	147	35.40%
1963	1	9	10	148	6.80%	2009	19	29	48	147	32.70%
1965	1	10	11	148	7.40%	2010	19	29	48	147	32.70%
1967	1	7	8	148	5.40%	2011	17	30	47	147	31.29%
1969	0	7	7	148	4.70%	2012	18	29	47	147	31.29%