

# Wisconsin Historical Society: Explore Wisconsin's role in the Suffrage Movement at a new exhibit in the State Capitol Rotunda

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Contact: Kara O'Keeffe  
608-261-9596  
[kara.okeeffe@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:kara.okeeffe@wisconsinhistory.org)

**Madison, WI.** – The Wisconsin Historical Society recently installed a large paneled exhibit, “The Women’s Hour Has Struck, Wisconsin: The First State to Ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment,” in the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda.

The exhibit, which centers on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, giving women the right to vote features images and copies of original documents in the Society’s vast collection. It explores the origins of the movement, a suffrage timeline, the 1912 referendum, Wisconsin’s role in the ratification, how the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was passed, important Wisconsin women to the suffrage moment and the aftermath.

“Not everyone knows that Wisconsin ratified the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment and was the first state to travel to Washington D.C. and fully certify their approval for the rights of citizens of the United States to vote and not be denied by the nation or the states on account of gender,” said Christian Overland, Ruth and Hartley Barker director of the Wisconsin Historical Society. “As the state’s premier storyteller of history, we wanted to celebrate and share the history of this important 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the role Wisconsin had in changing the course of history for women with this new

exhibit.”

The struggle for Women’s suffrage in Wisconsin lasted for over 70 years. Throughout those decades, Wisconsin legislatures introduced dozens of bills that would have granted state and local voting rights to women but the bills needed to pass two consecutive legislatures before being submitted to the people of Wisconsin as a referendum.

“It’s important for the state to celebrate the role Wisconsin women played in getting the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment passed in Congress,” said Simone Munson, collection development coordinator at the Wisconsin Historical Society. “We also hope that the exhibit will spark conversation to those visiting.”

After decades of activism, in 1919, the United States Congress finally passed a proposal to amend the Constitution and grant women the right to vote in federal elections. As with all amendments it needed to be ratified by thirty-six states in order to be approved. From that day on, suffrage supporters in each state had to petition their state legislatures to approve the amendment.

On June 10, Wisconsin legislators voted to ratify the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which would give women the right to vote. On June 13, Wisconsin Senator David James of Richland Center reported to the proper bureau in Washington, DC, to file Wisconsin’s ratification documents making Wisconsin the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment.

The exhibit is part of a larger celebration that will happen on June 10, 2019, the exact date 100 years ago that the state assembly passed the resolution. The celebration in June will include the original 19<sup>th</sup> amendment document on display as well as speakers, other artifacts and objects on display, and more.

The exhibit will be up until it is replaced with the Capitol Christmas tree in November.

### **About Wisconsin Historical Society**

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites,



programs and services. For more information, visit [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org).