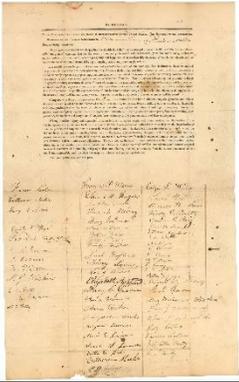
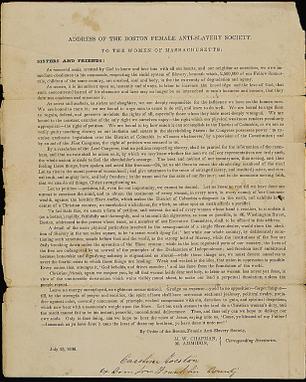


In Their Own Words: Women’s Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 1: Women’s Petitions in the Jacksonian Era 1829 – 1844

The emergence of grassroots movements was a new and important dimension of politics in the 1820s. As the older states dropped property restrictions on voting and people migrated west into new states that did not have property restrictions, the general public became more politically active. People banded together to form political parties and began organizing petitioning drives of unprecedented scale. Also during this time period, women began participating in grassroots politics and petitioned Congress for action on a variety of issues including opposing Indian Removal and calling for the abolition of slavery.

			
<p>Identify the petition and summarize its main point.</p>			
<p>In what historical context does information in the description place the document?</p>			
<p>What social or political change was (were) the author(s) seeking?</p>			
<p>How does each petition show women using political means to achieve a goal?</p>			

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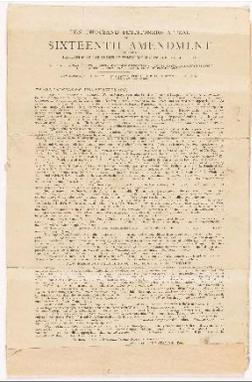
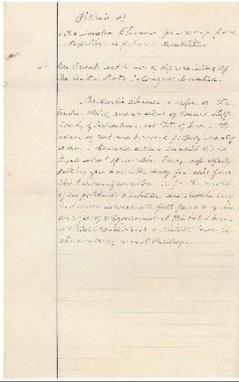


In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 2: Women's Petitions in the Civil War and Reconstruction Era 1860 - 1877

Women were actively engaged in politics through petitioning throughout the Post-Civil War and Reconstruction Era. Before the war, women were leaders in the abolitionist movement, and many notable women, such as Clara Barton and Harriet Tubman, made heroic contributions to the Union war effort. Suffrage advocates asserted that women had proven their equality by virtue of their national service. In light of the war's having brought about what Abraham Lincoln termed "a new birth of freedom," women called for their own emancipation and for Congress to guarantee their political equality by protecting their right to vote.

			
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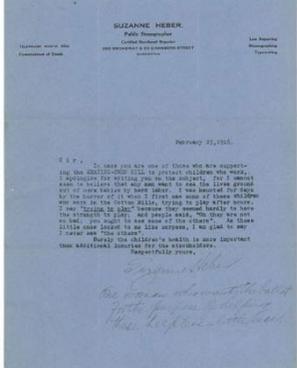
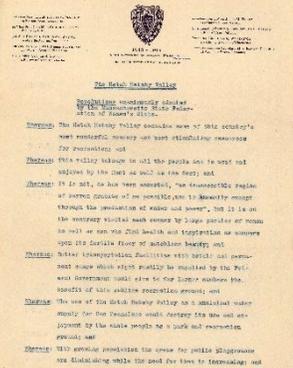


In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 3: Women's Petitions in the Progressive Era 1890 - 1920

The late 19 and early 20th Centuries were shaped by complex forces unleashed by the rapid growth of industry, the nation-wide expansion of transportation networks, unprecedented immigration, and the creation of a national marketplace. Women of the Progressive Era petitioned Congress in support of legislation to address problems that resulted from the rapid changes in American society. Women built powerful regional and national organizations to lobby Congress for social justice. Women advocated for temperance, against child labor, for making lynching a federal crime, and for protecting America's natural beauty.

			
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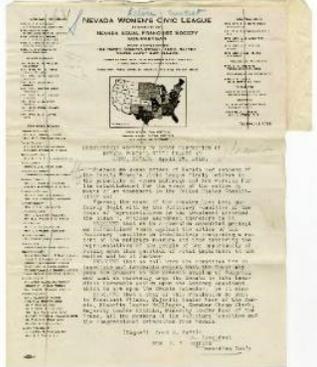
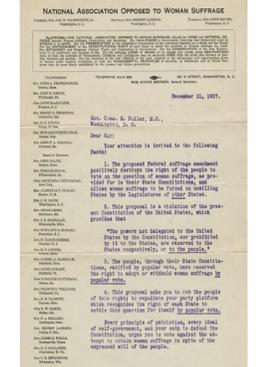


In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 4: Women's Petitions for and against Suffrage in the 20th Century 1900 – 1919

A half-century after women began petitioning for suffrage in the Civil War Era, their struggle for political equality persisted. In the early twentieth-century, Congress received thousands of petitions both for and against woman suffrage. While proponents insisted that a constitutional amendment was necessary for the full realization of democracy, suffrage opponents responded that the status of women would be harmed by granting them the vote. Women's significant contributions to the war efforts during the First World War help fuel the successful final push for suffrage. After decades of hard work and lobbying by individuals and organizations, the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 gave women the right to vote.

			
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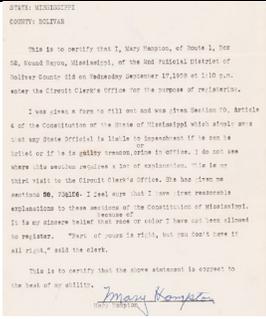


In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 5: Women's Petitions After the 19th Amendment 1920 - 1971

Ratified in 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment seemed to guarantee women the right to vote, but several obstacles to suffrage remained in place. Barriers such as “white primaries” (open only to white voters), poll taxes, and literacy tests prevented African American women and men in southern states from exercising their right to vote. It was not until passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that these discriminatory voting practices were outlawed. In addition to fighting barriers to voting, women argued that suffrage was only part of equality. Advocates for women called for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equality, and in 1923 legislation was introduced proposing an Equal Rights Amendment. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment was introduced repeatedly over the next decades until it finally passed both Houses of Congress in 1971.

			
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