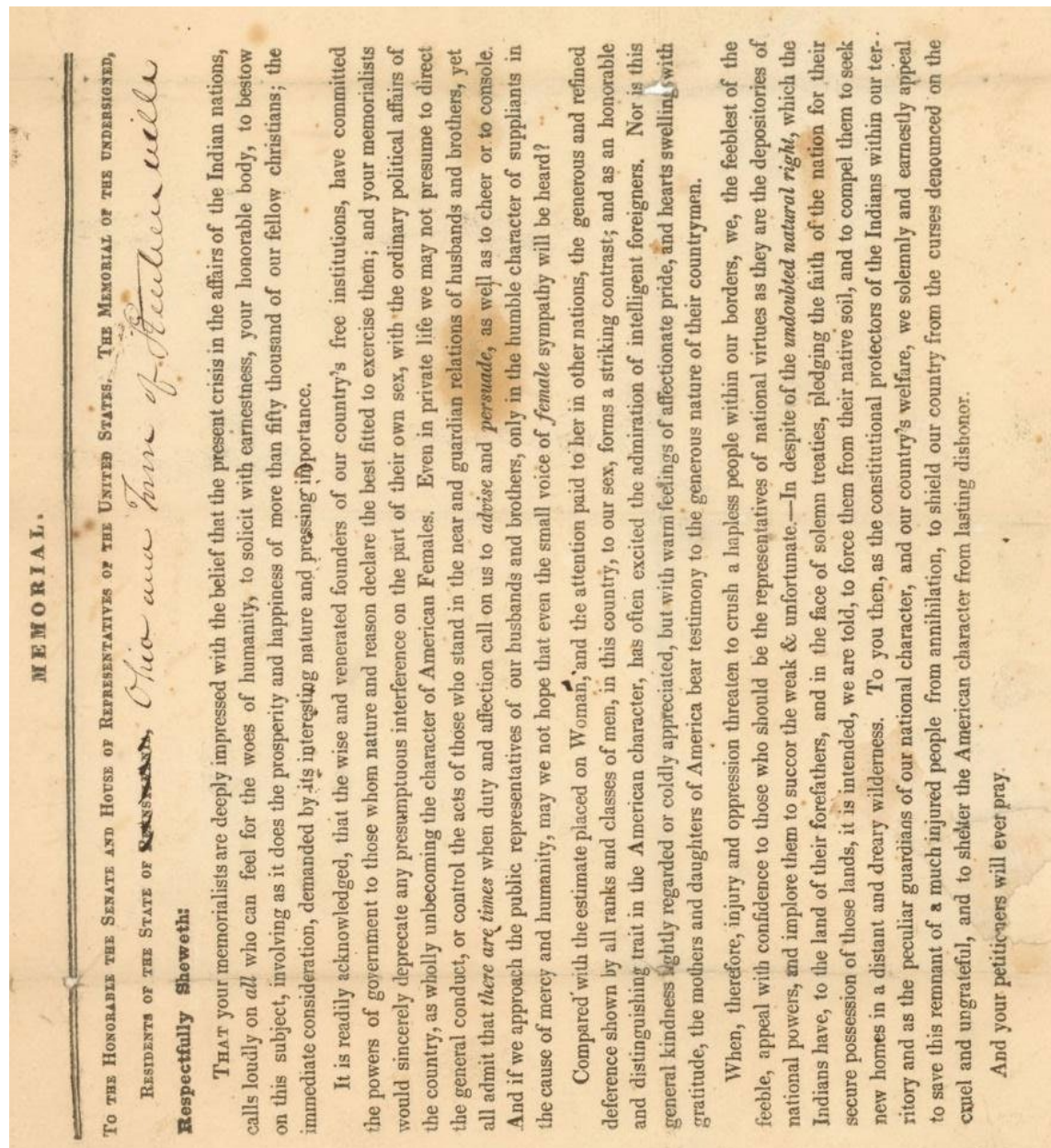


In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 1, Document 1



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 1. Document 1

Document Information:

Memorial from the Ladies of Steubenville, Ohio, Protesting Indian Removal, February 15, 1830.

National Archives Identifier: [306633](#)

Description:

By 1830, women were joining in the emerging grassroots democracy by organizing themselves, as groups of women, within communities and across regions of the country. This petition is an early example of a petition from women advocating for a political issue. In his 1829 Annual Message to Congress, President Andrew Jackson called for removing Native American tribes from the Southeastern United States, and this petition was sent to Congress just two months after his address. The women identify themselves as residents of Steubenville, Ohio. Note, from the crossed out word, that the petition was printed for the use of women living in Pennsylvania, and that it was passed to this group from Ohio. This suggests that the petition was not merely a local expression of opinion, but that it was created as part of a larger movement. The women appeal to Congress to consider Indian removal as a moral issue. They argue that, as a morally elevated, honorable body, Congress should show compassion for the suffering of the tribes and respond on that basis.



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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Station 1, Document 2

such concentrated hatred of his character and laws may no longer be so intrenched in men's business and bosoms, that they dare not condemn and renounce it.

As *wives and mothers*, as *sisters and daughters*, we are deeply responsible for the influence we have on the human race. We are bound to exert it; we are bound to urge men to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. We are bound to urge them to regain, defend, and preserve inviolate the rights of all, especially those whom they have most deeply wronged. We are bound to the constant exercise of the only right we ourselves enjoy—the right which our physical weakness renders peculiarly appropriate—the right of petition. We are bound to try how much it can accomplish in the District of Columbia, or we are as verily guilty touching slavery as our brethren and sisters in the slaveholding States: for Congress possesses power 'to exercise exclusive legislation over the District of Columbia in all cases whatsoever,' by a provision of the Constitution; and by an act of the *First Congress*, the right of petition was secured to us.

Let us petition—petitioning may be the only way to obtain the testimony of every woman, in every town, in every county of our Commonwealth, against the horrible Slave-traffic, which makes the District of Columbia a disgrace to the earth, and exhibits in the centre of a Christian country, an unrebuked wickedness, for which, no other spot on earth affords a parallel.



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 1, Document 2

Document Information:

Petition of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, 7/13/1836.

National Archives Identifier: [306639](#)

Description:

This 1836 petition shows women from Massachusetts organizing a state-wide grassroots campaign against slavery. This petition reflects the overlap of politics and religion in the decades after the Second Great Awakening. In an era when evangelical religion was prominent, the petitioners justified their engagement in the abolition movement on spiritual grounds. Slavery, they argued, must be opposed because it is sinful. The petition is one of many that called on Congress to ban the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Surrounded by slave states, the District was home to many enslaved people, and slave sales were routinely conducted within sight of the Capitol. As the Constitution granted Congress exclusive jurisdiction over the District, petitions such as this argued for Congress to exercise its jurisdiction to end slavery where it could. The women also declared their mission to their fellow women of Massachusetts. "We must petition," they argue, until they persuade every woman in the state to join their cause.

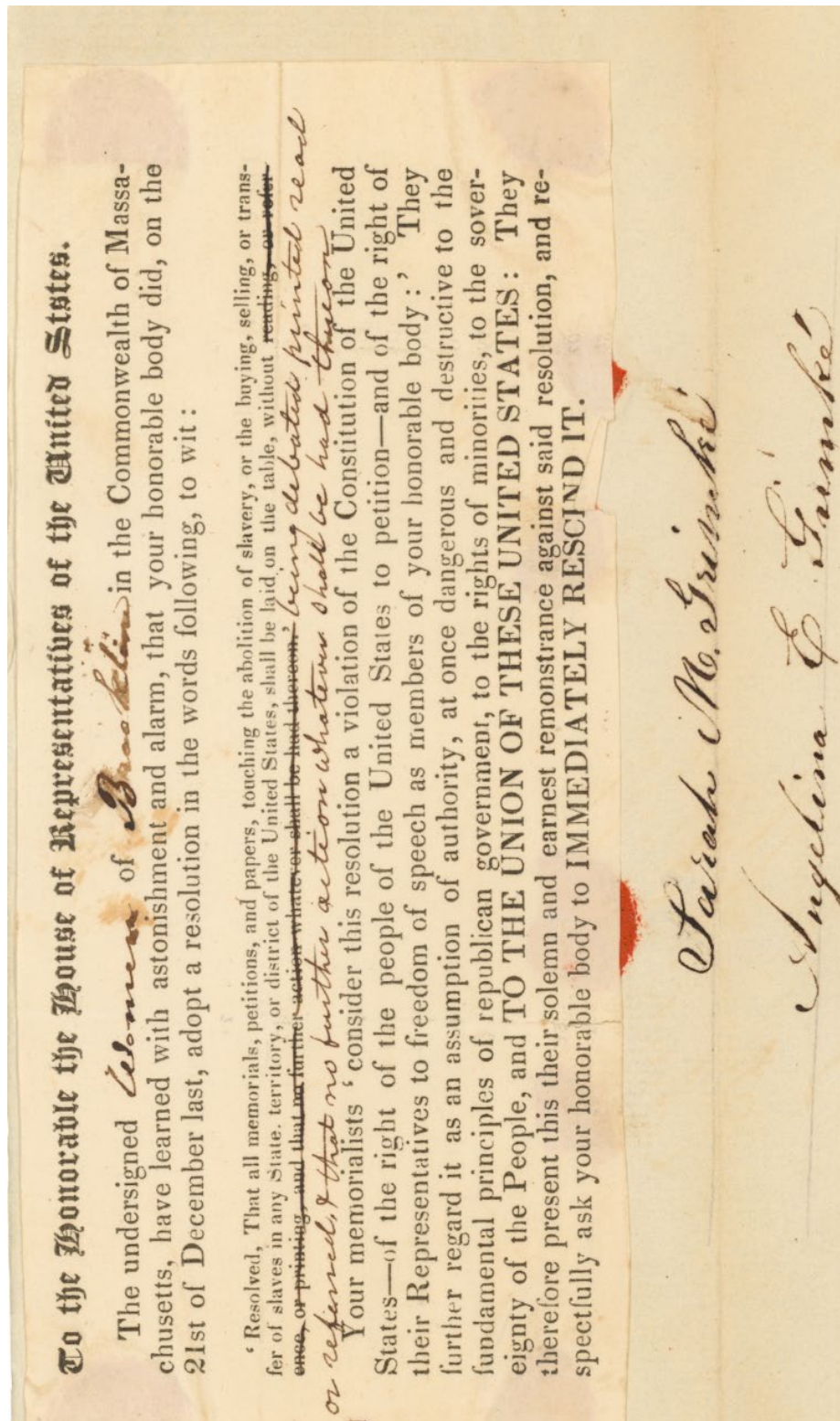


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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 1, Document 3



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 1, Document 3

Document Information:

Petition from Women of Brookline, Massachusetts, Praying that the Gag Rule be Rescinded, 2/14/1838.

National Archives Identifier: [306638](#)

Description:

This petition from a group of women in Brookline, Massachusetts (a town adjacent to Boston) bears the names of two sisters who were prominent advocates for women's rights, Sarah and Angelina Grimke. Angelina Grimke was the wife of Theodore Dwight Weld, a Boston minister who was one of the era's leaders in the abolitionist cause.

The petition shows how women spoke out against a violation of their constitutional rights, but it also reveals that they were participants in a larger movement. The pre-printed text of the petition left a blank space for each group of signers to identify its locale. The printed text is also attached to a sheet of lined paper by wax seals. This suggests that the printed text was perhaps cut out from an anti-slavery periodical. While there is no evidence of the particular source of the printed text, it was sent to Congress during a decade that saw the emergence of abolitionist publications such as William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator* which was printed in Boston and circulated widely.



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 2, Document 4

A PETITION FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The undersigned, Women of the United States, respectfully ask an amendment of the Constitution that shall prohibit the several States from disfranchising any of their citizens on the ground of sex.

In making our demand for Suffrage, we would call your attention to the fact that we represent fifteen million people—one half the entire population of the country—intelligent, virtuous, native-born American citizens; and yet stand outside the pale of political recognition.

The Constitution classes us as "free people," and counts us *whole* persons in the basis of representation; and yet are we governed without our consent, compelled to pay taxes without appeal, and punished for violations of law without choice of judge or juror.

The experience of all ages, the Declarations of the Fathers, the Statute Laws of our own day, and the fearful revolution through which we have just passed, all prove the uncertain tenure of life, liberty and property so long as the ballot—the only weapon of self-protection—is not in the hand of every citizen.

Therefore, as you are now amending the Constitution, and, in harmony with advancing civilization, placing new safeguards round the individual rights of four millions of emancipated slaves, we ask that you extend the right of Suffrage to Woman—the only remaining class of disfranchised citizens—and thus fulfil your Constitutional obligation "to Guarantee to every State in the Union a Republican form of Government."

As all partial application of Republican principles must ever breed a complicated legislation as well as a discontented people, we would pray your Honorable Body, in order to simplify the machinery of government and ensure domestic tranquillity, that you legislate hereafter for persons, citizens, tax-payers, and not for class or caste.

For justice and equality your petitioners will ever pray.

NAMES.

RESIDENCE.



In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 2, Document 4

Document Information:

Petition for Universal Suffrage which Asks for an Amendment to the Constitution that Shall Prohibit the Several States from Disenfranchising Any of Their Citizens on the Ground of Sex, 1865.

National Archives Identifier: [26081744](#)

Description:

This 1865 petition from a group of women organized by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton called for a constitutional amendment protecting women's right to vote. The signature page illustrates that the petitioners were women from Rochester, New York City, Philadelphia, Newark, and Boston. The geographic diversity of their hometowns suggests that women's organizations were becoming national in scale in this era. As the petitioners note, they represent half of all Americans, and that they are being deprived of political rights by the other half. At the hour of Emancipation, they argue, Congress should address this injustice. In a society whose political ideology was grounded in John Locke's principle that legitimate government is founded on the consent of the governed, the women point out they are captives, governed without their consent, compelled to pay taxes and punished for violating laws they have no hand in creating.

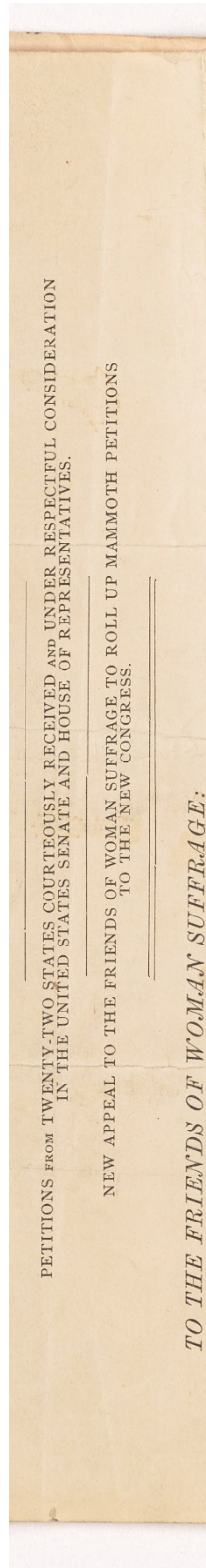


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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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Station 2, Document 5

Document Information:

Ten Thousand Petitioners Appeal for a Sixteenth Amendment 12/14/1877. National Archives Identifier: [117874758](#)

Description:

This petition is from a campaign led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton as president of the National Woman Suffrage Association. The existence of this group demonstrates how women acted through a national lobbying organization to generate a grassroots political movement. The petitioners call for women to gather "mammoth petitions," huge rolls comprised of individual signed sheets that, collectively, bear the names of tens of thousands of people supporting their cause. These oversized rolled petitions were created to demonstrate the public support for a constitutional amendment protecting women's right to vote. The petitions made the "weight of public opinion" visible. The petitioners pointed out that "...the women of the United States... are taxed without representation, governed without their own consent, classed with lunatics, paupers, criminals and idiots before the law, denied the custody of their own children and their own persons..."

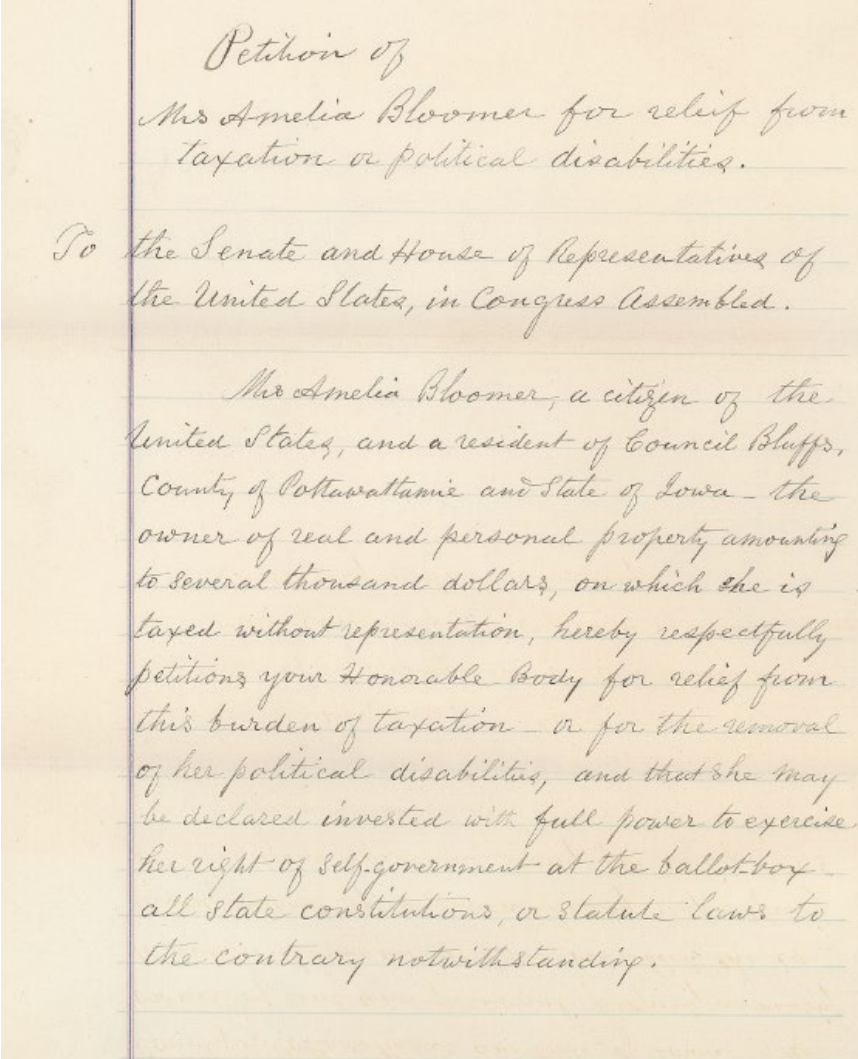
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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 2, Document 6



Petition of
Mrs Amelia Bloomer for relief from
taxation or political disabilities.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States, in Congress Assembled.

Mrs Amelia Bloomer, a citizen of the
United States, and a resident of Council Bluffs,
County of Pottawattamie and State of Iowa — the
owner of real and personal property amounting
to several thousand dollars, on which she is
taxed without representation, hereby respectfully
petitions your Honorable Body for relief from
this burden of taxation — or for the removal
of her political disabilities, and that she may
be declared invested with full power to exercise
her right of self-government at the ballot-box —
all state constitutions, or statute laws to
the contrary notwithstanding.

Transcript:

Petition of Mrs. Amelia Bloomer for relief from taxation or political disabilities.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress Assembled.

Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of Council Bluffs, County of Pottawattamie and State of Iowa — the owner of real and personal property amounting to several thousand dollars, on which she is taxed without representation, hereby respectfully petitions your Honorable Body for relief from this burden of taxation — or for the removal of her political disabilities, and that she may be declared invested with full power to exercise her right of self-government at the ballot box all state constitutions, or statute laws to the contrary notwithstanding.

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 2, Document 6

Document Information:

Petition of Mrs. Amelia Bloomer for Relief from Taxation or Political Disabilities, 1878.

National Archives Identifier: [5752699](#)

Description:

Women pursued three strategies in their work for suffrage in the decade after the Civil War. They petitioned for a constitutional amendment protecting their right to vote, they took direct action and voted in defiance of the law, and they petitioned Congress individually to have their political disabilities removed. Following advice published in advocacy literature of the time, Amelia Bloomer of Kansas, and many other women petitioned Congress to protect their voting rights. In her petition, Bloomer points out that she owns valuable real estate on which she is taxed without representation. Congress, she argues, should either remove the bars to voting placed upon her by the state of Iowa or relieve her of the burden of paying taxes. Along with the other women who participated in this organized petition drive, Bloomer pointed out the injustice of taxation without representation.

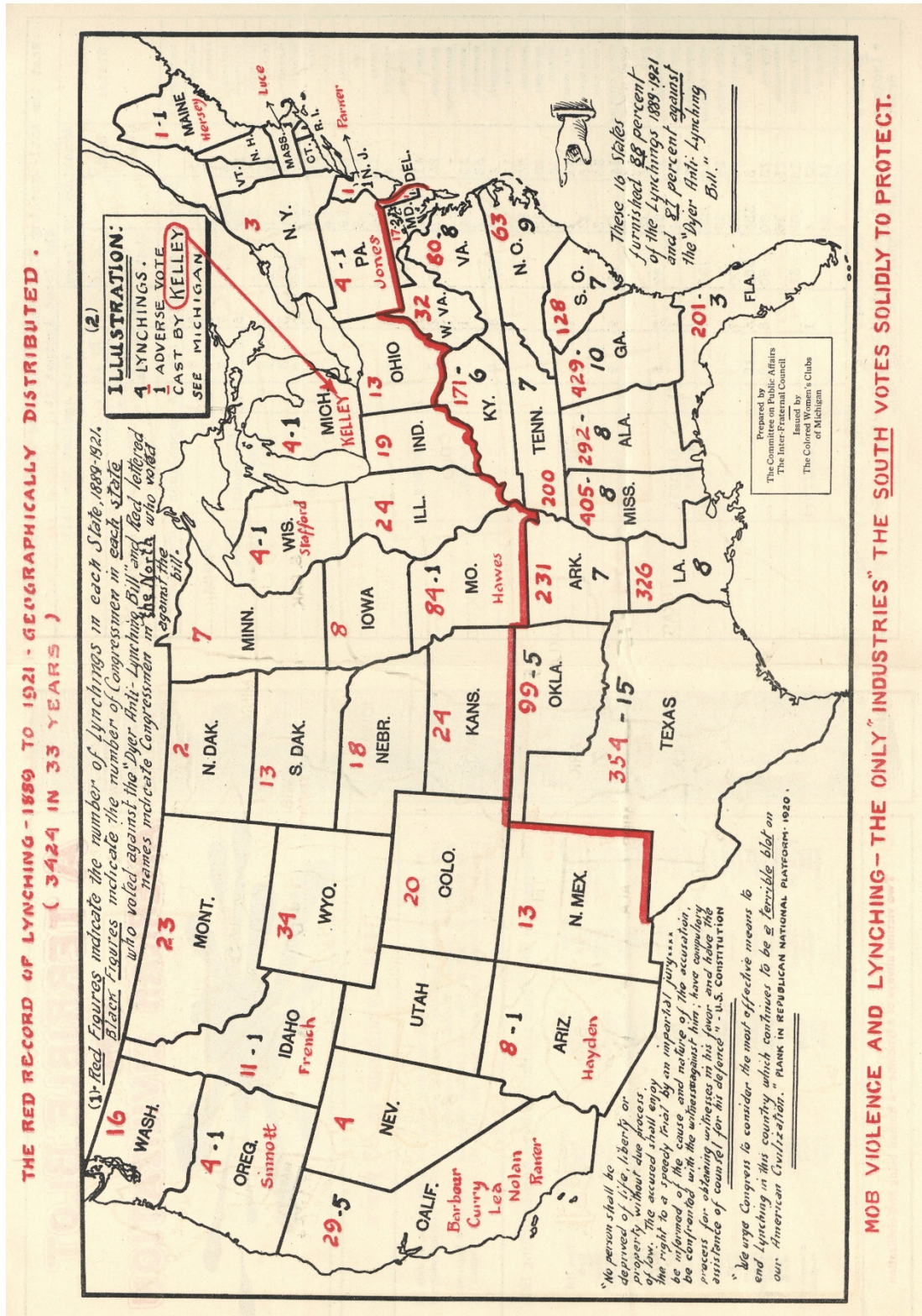
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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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Station 3, Document 7

Document Information:

The Red Record of Lynching Map, 1922 (Map submitted to Congress by the Colored Women's Clubs of Michigan to support an anti-lynching bill, H. R. 13, introduced by Representative Leonidas Dyer of Missouri).

National Archives Identifier: [149268727](#)

Description:

This petition exemplifies the work of an important Progressive Era group on behalf of a critical social issue. This map was created by the Colored Women's Clubs of Michigan and sent to Congress in support of legislation to make lynching a federal crime. Michigan was an important destination for African Americans migrating north in the World War I years, and this petition reflects the political organization and activity of African American women in the state. As the numbers on the map show, lynching was a frequent occurrence, and its injustice was heightened by the fact that local juries usually found the perpetrators not guilty. Making lynching a federal crime would move the trials to federal court where justice was a more likely outcome. While lynching was not confined to the South, the numbers clearly show the heightened frequency of lynching in the former Confederate states, demonstrating the violent suppression of the basic civil rights African Americans in the region during the Jim Crow Era.

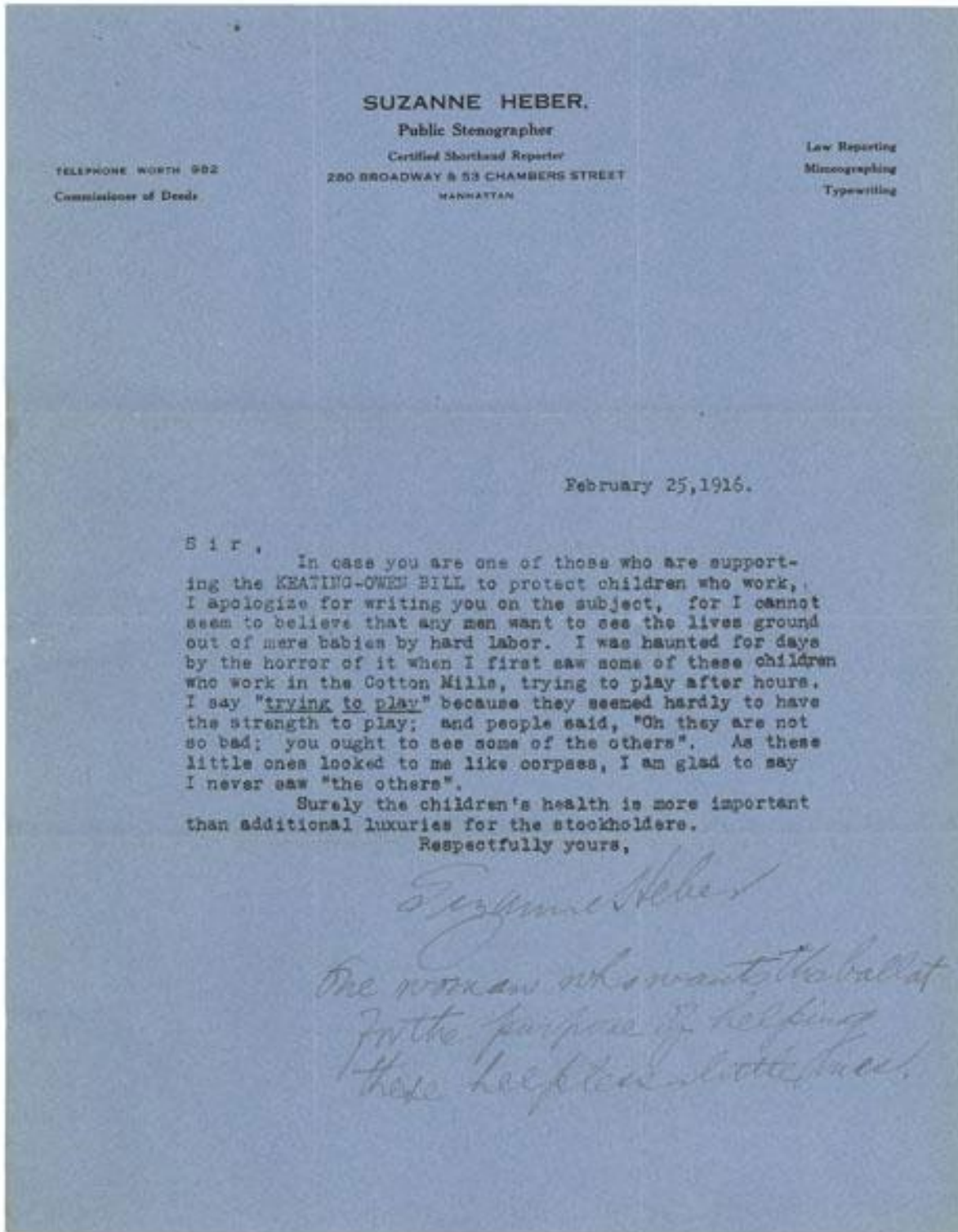
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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 3, Document 8



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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Station 3, Document 8

Document Information:

Letter from Suzanne Heber Supporting Keating-Owen Child Labor Bill, 2/25/1916.

National Archives Identifier: [5685996](#)

Description:

The post-Civil War growth of industry across the Northeastern states radically changed the ways of living and working for a rapidly growing, increasingly diverse population. Young children sent to work in factories became an important focus of Progressive Era reformers who argued that children should be in school instead of working in dangerous places and at dangerous types of work. The idea that childhood should be spent playing and learning was a sharp break with the traditional practices and economic needs of many families, especially among urban poor and rural Americans. This document illustrates three aspects of Progressive Era reform because it is from an independent woman who writes to Congress advocating for the rights of children. At the time Suzanne Heber wrote this petition, Congress was debating the Keating Owen Act to limit commerce in products made by Child Labor, and it was also receiving petitions calling for a Woman Suffrage amendment to the Constitution.


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--	--	--

The Hetch Hetchy Valley

Resolutions unanimously adopted
by the Massachusetts State Federation of Women's Clubs.

Whereas: The Hetch Hetchy Valley contains some of this country's most wonderful scenery and most stimulating resources for recreation; and

Whereas: This valley belongs to all the people and is used and enjoyed by the East as well as the West; and

Whereas: It is not, as has been asserted, "an inaccessible region of barren granite of no possible use to humanity except through the production of water and power", but it is on the contrary visited each summer by large parties of women as well as men who find health and inspiration as campers upon its fertile floor of matchless beauty; and

Whereas: Better transportation facilities with hotels and permanent camps which might readily be supplied by the Federal Government would give to far larger numbers the benefit of this sublime recreation ground; and

Whereas: The use of the Hetch Hetchy Valley as a municipal water supply for San Francisco would destroy its use and enjoyment by the whole people as a park and recreation ground; and

Whereas: With growing population the areas for public playgrounds are diminishing while the need for them is increasing; and

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 3, Document 9

Document Information:

Resolution by the Massachusetts State Federation of Women's Clubs against the Raker Bill, 11/25/1913. National Archives Identifier: [7268076](#)

Description:

This document is the first page of a petition from the Massachusetts State Federation of Women's Clubs protesting the Raker Bill, legislation that would authorize the city of San Francisco to build a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park. The proposed dam's location on federal land gave Congress authority to decide the issue, and it was debated from 1908 - 1913. National opinion divided between granting the city permission to dam the valley and preserving it from development. At the heart of the debate was the conflict between conservationists, who argued that the environment should be used in a conscientious manner to benefit society, and preservationists, who argued that nature should be protected from human interference. Although they lived 3000 miles from Yosemite, the Massachusetts women argued that building the dam would deprive all Americans of the unspoiled natural beauty of the wilderness valley. In the end, Congress passed legislation that enabled building the dam.

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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631

Return receipt

NEVADA WOMEN'S CIVIC LEAGUE

FOUNDED BY


NEVADA EQUAL FRANCHISE SOCIETY

NON-PARTISAN

STATE HEADQUARTERS
153 NORTH VIRGINIA STREET, RENO, NEVADA
WASHOE COUNTY BANK BUILDING

MEMBER NATIONAL AMERICAN WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION AND
INTERNATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE ALLIANCE

PRESIDENT, MISS ANNE H. MARTIN, 157 MILL STREET, RENO



ALASKA, 1913

WHITE STATES, FULL SUFFRAGE
SHADED STATES, PARTIAL SUFFRAGE
DARK STATES, NO SUFFRAGE

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY STATE CONVENTION OF NEVADA WOMEN'S CIVIC LEAGUE AT RENO, NEVADA April 27, 1916.

Whereas we women voters of Nevada and members of the Nevada Women's Civic League firmly believe in the principle of woman suffrage and are working for its establishment for the women of the nation by means of an amendment to the United States Constitution and

Whereas the women of the country have been unfairly dealt with by the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives in the treatment accorded the Susan B. Anthony amendment therefore be it

RESOLVED that we in convention assembled protest as enfranchised women against the action of the Judiciary Committee in indefinitely postponing a report of the suffrage measure and thus depriving the representatives of the people of the opportunity of voting upon this question of vital importance to the nation and be it further

RESOLVED that we call upon the committee for an immediate and favorable report that the House may pass the measure at the present session of Congress and that we earnestly urge the Senate to take immediate favorable action upon the Anthony Amendment which is now upon the Senate calendar. Be it also

RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to President Wilson, Majority leader Kern of the Senate, Minority leader Gallinger, Speaker Champ Clark, Majority leader Kitthin, Minority leader Mann of the House, all the members of the Judiciary Committee and the congressional delegation from Nevada.

(Signed) Anne H. Martin
President
Mrs. S. W. Belford
Recording Sec'y

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 4, Document 10

Document Information:

Petition of the State Convention of Nevada Women's Civic League, 1916.

National Archives Identifier: [169820371](#)

Description:

This 1916 petition from a state convention of women's clubs is significant because it shows the work of women from Nevada, a state that had already granted suffrage, advocating for national protection of the right to vote to benefit women nationwide. Significantly, the petition features a map that contrasts the states that protect women's voting rights with those that don't. The map illustrates the fact that Western states were the first to protect women's right to vote. The main point the Nevada women make is that the House Judiciary Committee has been acting as a roadblock to the aspirations of women, because, year-after-year, it has refused to report out legislation protecting women's right to vote. The petition calls upon the committee to end its obstruction. This petition shows that women were not just lobbying Congress in general, but strategically pressuring committees to act.



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 4, Document 11

Texas Woman Suffrage Association

Honorary President
Miss M. Eleanor Brackenridge
San Antonio

President
Mrs. Minnie Fisher Cunningham
Galveston

First Vice-President
Miss Kate Hunter
Palestine

Second Vice-President
Mrs. Lindley Miller Keasbey
"Inshallah," Austin

National Legislative Committeeman
Mrs. Elizabeth Hearndon Potter
Tyler

Recording Secretary
Mrs. John Davis
3301 Holmes St., Dallas

Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. G. Scott Shannon
2327 Ave. M., Galveston

Headquarters:
3128 AVENUE O 1/2
GALVESTON, TEXAS

Treasurer
Mrs. Anna E. Walker
3300 Ave. C., Austin

First Auditor
Mrs. Elizabeth Stribling Maury
San Antonio

Second Auditor
Mrs. M. P. Ostro
Houston

National Executive Committeeman
Miss Marion B. Fenwick
204 Pecan St., San Antonio

May 2nd, 1916.

Honorable Harry H. Dale, M.C.
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:-

You are urgently requested to do all in your power to have the Amendment to the Federal Constitution, known as the "Susan B. Anthony Suffrage Amendment", reported out of the Judiciary Committee, so that it may be voted on in the House of Representatives at an early date.

We respectfully call your attention to the fact that our National Government is supported by the taxes collected from women citizens as well as men citizens, tho that is going directly against that cry for political liberty which our fore fathers threw into the very teeth of their oppressors -- "Taxation without representation is TYRANNY"! And we feel that legislation which affects all of the women of this nation has the same right to consideration by Congress that other important legislation should receive.

We wish you to know that the Texas Woman Suffrage Association, which is composed of many thousands of men and women, has endorsed the Federal Amendment for Woman Suffrage in it's Constitution, so that you may not labor under the delusion that we place State's Rights above Human Rights. But as this is not a question in which the State's Rights boggy is involved, since we are merely asking for the removal of a sex discrimination and not for any radical revision of the voting qualifications in any State, perhaps the above information is superfluous.

Very truly yours,

Minnie Fisher Cunningham

President.



In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 4, Document 11

Document Information:

Petition from Minnie Fisher Cunningham of the Texas Woman Suffrage Association for passage of the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment, 5/2/1916.

National Archives Identifier: [306659](#)

Description:

The printed letterhead on the 1916 suffrage petition the Woman Suffrage Association of Texas sent to Congress reflects that they were a well-organized advocacy group. Echoing appeals for justice voiced in earlier women's petitions, they argue that women without suffrage live in a tyranny and suffer the injustice of taxation without representation. This document from a southern state adds an additional dimension to the history of woman suffrage by reflecting the racial division inherent in the movement. The petitioners are eager to secure the right of white women to vote, but they are not advocating for the removal of race-based barriers to voting. They convey this through their stipulation that they are "merely asking for the removal of a sex discrimination" and not a "radical revision" of voting qualifications. According to their logic, the obstacles preventing African American men from voting in the state would bar African American women from voting as well.

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 4, Document 12

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE

President, Mrs. JAS. W. WADSWORTH, Jr.
Washington, D. C.

Secretary, Mrs. ROBERT LANSING,
Washington, D. C.

Treasurer, Miss ANNE SQUIRE,
Washington, D. C.

PLATFORM—THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE—Stands for HOME and NATIONAL DEFENSE against Woman Suffrage, Femininism and Socialism. For MAN-POWER in Government, believing that Democracy must be STRONG to be SAFE. For the PRESERVATION of the established foundations of the American Republic as a Model for the World. For the ENFORCEMENT of the CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT of each State to settle the question of Woman Suffrage for itself. For EFFICIENCY and Progress, without Waste and Duplication in Government. For the CONSERVATION of the best Womanhood of all conditions and stations of life. For the ultimate UNION of Women of all classes and creeds along NON-PARTISAN lines, so that the interests of Womanhood, Childhood and Civilization may be advanced FREE from the strife and division of politics, factions and parties. For the retention of the best IDEALS of the past, adapted to the advantages and opportunities given to women under modern conditions, so that the FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES of Morality, of Patriotism and of World Progress may be more firmly established in the present and future generations.

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1621 K STREET, WASHINGTON, D. C.

MISS MINNIE BRONSON, General Secretary.

December 11, 1917.

Hon. Chas. E. Fuller, M.C.,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Your attention is invited to the following facts:

1. The proposed Federal suffrage amendment positively destroys the right of the people to vote on the question of woman suffrage, as provided for in their State Constitutions, and allows woman suffrage to be forced on unwilling States by the Legislatures of other States.

2. This proposal is a violation of the present Constitution of the United States, which provides that

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

3. The people, through their State Constitutions, ratified by popular vote, have reserved the right to adopt or withhold woman suffrage by popular vote.

4. This proposal asks you to rob the people of this right; to repudiate your party platform which recognizes the right of each State to settle this question for itself by popular vote.

Every principle of patriotism, every ideal of self-government, and your oath to defend the Constitution, urges you to vote against the attempt to obtain woman suffrage in spite of the expressed will of the people.



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 4, Document 12

Document Information:

Memorial of Alice Wadsworth of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 12/11/1917.

National Archives Identifier: [595295](#)

Description:

Alice Wadsworth, the daughter of former Secretary of State John Hay and the wife of New York Senator James Wadsworth, was one of the most prominent women in Washington society. In an expertly argued letter, she reminded a member of Congress that voting is a state matter. Federal protection of suffrage, she asserts, would rob the people of individual states of their sovereignty. On the second page of her letter (not shown here), she links the suffrage movement to radicals seeking their selfish benefit rather than the good of the nation. She argues "(suffrage) would give every radical woman the right to believe that she could get any law she wanted by 'pestering' her City Council, her Legislature, her Congressman or her President - no matter how the people voted, nor what national crisis existed. And if feminism can be put through by pestering, regardless of the will of the people, so can pacifism, socialism and other isms."

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 5, Document 13

STATE: MISSISSIPPI

COUNTY: BOLIVAR

This is to certify that I, Mary Hampton, of Route 1, Box 52, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, of the 2nd Judicial District of Bolivar County did on Wednesday September 17, 1958 at 1:10 p.m. enter the Circuit Clerk's Office for the purpose of registering.

I was given a form to fill out and was given Section 50, Article 4 of the Constitution of the State of Mississippi which simply says that any State Official is liable to impeachment if he can be bribed or if he is ^{or} guilty treason, crime in office. I do not see where this section requires a lot of explanation. This is my third visit to the Circuit Clerk's Office. She has given me sections 50, 73 & 156. I feel sure that I have given reasonable explanations to these sections of the Constitution of Mississippi. It is my sincere belief that race or color I have not been allowed to register. "Part of yours is right, but you don't have it all right," said the clerk.

This is to certify that the above statement is correct to the best of my ability.

Mary Hampton
Mary Hampton

Witnesses

Annie M. Fields

Millie B. Weadon



In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 5, Document 13

Document Information:

Affidavit of Mary Hampton, Bolivar County, 9/17/1958.

National Archives Identifier: [119652191](#)

Description:

Although this document was not created as a petition to Congress, it provided testimony to a congressional deliberation in the spirit of a petition. In this affidavit, Mary Hampton relates incidents in which she was denied the opportunity to register to vote. Her petition illustrates how she was repeatedly denied the right to register to vote by being forced to submit to literacy tests the voting official thought she would be unable to pass. The unfair tests imposed on her were typical of the injustices African American men and women faced in southern states before the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Weeks after a voting rights march was violently suppressed by state police when crossing the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma Alabama, Attorney General Nicholas de B. Katzenbach testified before the House Judiciary Committee in support of the proposed voting rights legislation. Describing voter discrimination in the 11 states of the former Confederacy, and sharing statistics demonstrating the low rate of voting by African Americans, the Attorney General described the systematic denial of rights in the region by saying, "In short, I could cite example after example, but let me pick just one... The story of Negro voting rights in... Selma... could be told in three words: intimidation, discouragement, and delay..."



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Station 5, Document 14

91st CONGRESS House of Representatives No. 5

Motion to Discharge a Committee from the Consideration of a Joint Resolution
(State whether bill, joint resolution, or resolution)

June 11, 1970
(Date)

To the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

Pursuant to Clause 4 of Rule XXVII (see rule on page 7), I,
Martha W. Griffiths
(Name of Member), move to discharge the
Committee on the Judiciary
(Committee)

from the consideration of the Joint Resolution
(Bill, joint resolution, or resolution)

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX H.J. Res. 264 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
(Number, if a bill) (Number, if a joint resolution) (Number, if a resolution)

entitled, a Joint Resolution Proposing an amendment to the
(Bill, joint resolution, or resolution) (Title)

Constitution of the United States relative to equal rights for
men and women.

which was referred to said committee January 16, 1969
(Date of reference)

in support of which motion the undersigned Members of the House of Repre-
sentatives affix their signatures, to wit:

1. Martha W. Griffiths	12. William L. Clay
2. James M. Jones	13. Daniel J. Brouder
3. Raul Chuy	14. Aaron S. Tanner
4. Henry B. Suzuki	15. Richard L. Ottinger
5. Rodger C. Young	16. Henry Helms
6. Edith Green	17. Shirley Chisholm
7. James P. Cannon	18. Augustus F. Harshbarger
8. George M. Brown	19. John E. Thorne
9. Richard T. Hanna	20. Frank Annunzio
10. Benjamin R. Hooks	21. Ed Edwards
11. Robert C. Byrd	22. Albert K. Smith



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 5, Document 14

Document Information:

Representative Martha Griffiths' Discharge Petition for the Equal Rights Amendment, 6/11/1970.

National Archives Identifier: [4397830](#)

Description:

Although the 19th Amendment was a step toward equality, women argued that there was more to equality than voting. After ratification of the 19th Amendment, advocates for women shifted their work to seeking enactment of a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal rights. Legislation proposing an equal rights amendment was proposed in 1923, and similar amendments were introduced in every subsequent Congress until 1970, but they all fell short of passage. Getting the House Judiciary Committee to pass a joint resolution for an Equal Rights Amendment was a longstanding obstacle. In 1970, however, Representative Martha Griffiths of Michigan led a successful drive for a discharge petition (a petition signed by a majority of House Members that orders a committee to release a bill). Her petition freed the bill from the committee so the whole House of Representatives could debate and vote on it. The proposed amendment was passed by the House, but not the Senate. The next year, Griffiths reintroduced the ERA, and finally, the proposed amendment passed both Houses of Congress and was sent to the states in 1972.

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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

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Station 5, Document 15

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY *The State University of New Jersey*

File

[Handwritten signature]

SCHOOL OF LAW • NEWARK
180 University Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Tel. 201-~~624-7000~~
648-5486

April 15, 1971

The Honorable Don Edwards
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Edwards:

I wish to urge your support and cooperation in expediting passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (H.J. Res. 208).

In this critical area of human rights it is regrettable that the United States has delayed assertion of a pace-setting role. Reporting on developments in his country, Sweden's Prime Minister stated during his stay in Washington last year:

"Public opinion is nowadays so well informed that if a politician today should declare that women ought to have a different role than men [in economic and social life] he would be regarded to be of the stone age."

He emphasized that equal rights entailed emancipation of the man as much as the woman. Address by Mr. Olof Palme, the Women's National Democratic Club, Washington, D. C., June 8, 1970.

Although the Women's Equality Act of 1971 is a desirable supplement, it is not a substitute for the statement of basic rights represented by the Equal Rights Amendment.

I very much hope that you will do all that you can to assure that in this nation every person will be given equal opportunity to develop his or her individual talents. Application of this fundamental principle to women is long overdue.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten signature: Ruth Bader Ginsburg]

Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Professor of Law

RBG/em



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In Their Own Words: Women's Petitions to Congress

Center for Legislative Archives

Station 5, Document 15

Document Information:

Letter from Law Professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Support of the Equal Rights Amendment, 4/15/1971.

National Archives Identifier: [26283960](#)

Description:

Law Professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote to Congress as the House of Representatives debated the Equal Rights Amendment. Professor Ginsburg wrote in support of the amendment as a fundamental statement of human rights. She alludes to a statement by the Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme who had advocated for women's equality as a matter of human rights during a recent visit to Washington. Since the end of World War II, in 1945, the United States had touted its leadership of human rights internationally, leadership exemplified in the American support for the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ginsburg argues that the nation should demonstrate the same principled leadership at home. Equality is more than voting or legal protection from discrimination, she suggests, it is the emancipation of men and women, a guarantee that "every person will be given equal opportunity to develop his or her individual talents."



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