

In this lesson, students will learn about the woman suffrage movement in North Dakota and use its tactics to create community change.

Supplies

- Access to the “Dakota Datebook” series on woman suffrage in North Dakota
 - [“Examples of Suffrage Efforts,”](#) Sept. 8, 2020
 - [“Suffrage at the Garrison Corn Show,”](#) Sept. 24, 2020
 - [“Suffragist Mrs. Antoinette Funk arrested in Minot,”](#) Oct. 13, 2020
 - [“Suffrage Exposition Rally,”](#) Oct. 22, 2020

Setup

- Before this lesson, students should understand what suffrage is and that women needed to advocate to get the right to vote. This lesson could also complement instruction on the national movement.
- Have the students choose groups of two to three students.
- Students will need to be able to access the “Dakota Datebook” series either in their individual groups or by listening to the episodes as a class.

Objectives

- Students will learn about woman suffrage in North Dakota and the methods women used to get the right to vote.
- Students will learn how to advocate for their own rights and interests.

Background

Woman suffrage in North Dakota refers to the historical movement advocating for the right of women to vote. Women worked at the state level to get a state constitutional amendment passed as well as at the national level for the passage of what would become the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. North Dakota actively participated in the suffrage movement through both local and national

organizations, such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the Congressional Union, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, and the National Woman’s Party.

While the state constitution was being written, there were efforts to include woman suffrage as a right, but this failed to be included in the final draft. Though women could vote on school issues and for county and state superintendents of public instruction, they were barred from voting on other issues or offices. Woman suffrage bills and amendments were proposed every year starting in 1889, the year North Dakota became a state. In North Dakota, the campaign for woman suffrage faced challenges similar to those encountered in other states. Suffragists organized rallies, lectures, and petitions to raise awareness and garner support. They argued for women’s right to participate in the democratic process and emphasized the principles of equality and justice. Elizabeth Preston Anderson, Clara Darrow, Elizabeth Darrow O’Neil, and Beulah Amidon were just a few of the women who led the way to get women the right to vote in North Dakota.

In the 1910s, the suffrage movement began to gain momentum at the state and national levels. North Dakota women formed the statewide suffrage association Votes for Women League. There were several leagues formed throughout the state, and they targeted their specific regions in agitating for suffrage. North Dakota finally granted women a partial right to vote in 1917, which allowed them to vote for the president of the United States and for municipal (city) issues. Full voting rights were not extended to women until the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. The contributions of women in North Dakota were crucial to the broader success of the suffrage movement in the United States.

Activity

1. Have students get into groups. It would be best to let students select their own groups, as they will need to find a common issue to “protest” in favor or against at the conclusion of the lesson.
2. Have the students listen to the four “Dakota Datebook” recordings. As they do, have them create a list of methods that women used to promote the right to vote (e.g., parades, pamphlets, speeches, lobbying Congress).
3. Have each group choose a current issue or topic they would like to advocate for or against. Some ideas might include getting a new pool built in their community, removing curfew laws, building a homeless shelter in town, immigration reform, abortion, access to health care, artificial intelligence, better prices for agricultural products, or any local issues that surround their own communities. Guide the students so they choose a topic that is viable to take action on.
4. Have the students use one of the methods talked about from the suffrage movement and tie it to the topic their group chose. You could have them do what they propose or just present on how they would do it and why they chose that method.

Extension

1. The class as a whole could choose one topic and use several of the proposed methods to advocate for the desired change.
2. The students could compare methods of advocating for suffrage with methods used for other causes in history such as the abolition of slavery, the American Indian Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, or Black Lives Matter.

Reflection questions

1. Do you think the suffragists’ actions accomplished the goal of gaining the right to vote for women, or did women gain this right because of something else?
2. Which method do you think would have been the most effective in helping women get the right to vote?