Finding a Voice: the Woman's Suffrage Movement in the South

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A new wave of excitement swept over the woman's suffrage movement on March 3, 1913. Marching their way into history, eight thousand women maneuvered the delegation from the Capitol, across Pennsylvania Avenue, crossing the path of The White House and finally ending the journey in a mass meeting at the Hall of The Daughters of the American Revolution.[1] Utilizing the crowds gathered for Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in Washington, D.C, Alice Paul and the newly formed Congressional Union infiltrated the streets and created a political frenzy. A multitude of women aligned in marching brigades paraded alongside suffragist floats and carried banners. The processional was led by a woman draped completely in white and riding on horseback. [2] Never before had the suffrage movement made such a stir in the nation's capital. During the march women were verbally and physically attacked. This all occurred with police present but they did nothing to control the crowds or protect the women. This demonstration would ignite a fire within the movement and the nation, and lead to a division within the woman suffrage agenda.

Divisions the movement played out in the states ratification debate of the 19th amendment would come to rest finally in the hands of the Tennessee legislature. Tennessee, alongside many other southern states, would play a very important role in the ratification of the federal amendment. Southern states serve as the locus for the organizational of the movement and become an important battle ground where the suffragist and anti-suffragist collided.

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[1] Inez Hayes Irwin, *Up Hill with Banners Flying* (Maine: Traversity, 1964), 30.

[2] Doris Stevens, *Jailed For Freedom: American Women Win the Vote* (Oregon: NewSage, 1995), 35.

In 1913, the woman suffrage movement needed the innovation brought by Alice Paul. Due to her work with the British suffrage movement, Paul found her way into the folds of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Paul was appointed to the Congressional Committee that would work to encourage Congress to consider the idea of woman suffrage. The entire agenda of the Congressional Committee was placed under the watchful eye of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Paul, alongside Lucy Burns and their assembly of dedicated workers, pressed the Senate relentlessly and even presented their ideas on woman suffrage to President Woodrow Wilson. By June of 1913, the United States Senate Committee placed woman suffrage on the agenda for the first time in twenty-one years. The issues would then find its way into congressional debates after twenty-six years of no action.[3] Both of these historic events correlated with the direct and incessant pressure placed on Congress by Alice Paul and the Congressional Committee. Even though the idea of Congress discussing woman suffrage possessed a powerful initiative, passage of the 19th amendment still seemed like a distant dream.

The Congressional Committee described themselves as "a group of women in all parts of the country who have joined together in the effort to secure the passage of an amendment to the US Constitution enfranchising women."[4] With the promising effort made within Congress and the Senate, Alice Paul secured for the push for a federal amendment. Paul also received more financial contributions. Most expected a great deal of praise to exude from NAWSA in relation to the work occurring on the national level. However, NAWSA found itself floundering after an unsatisfactory push throughout some very prominent eastern states including Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and

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[3] Ibid., 38.

[4] Irwin, *Up Hill with Banners Flying,* 38.

Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania had the most favorable vote with forty-six percent of voting men supporting the vote for women.[5] NAWSA also found itself under an executive transition as Carrie Chapman Catt stepped into the Presidential role while Shaw stepped down after the catastrophic state agenda. These issues confounded the varied approach that would be taken in the future of the woman suffrage movement.

Alice Paul would eventually find herself outside of the realm of NAWSA and under intense scrutiny from the more conservative NAWSA leadership. Paul and Burn's radical approach found inspiration from the more outlandish actions of the British Suffragist movement. Their desire for a Federal Amendment would not be satisfied by Catt's quiet focus on state by state petitioning. While Catt worked to secure Wilson and the Democratic Party's endorsement for woman suffrage, Alice Paul created The National Women's Party in June of 1916. The National Women's party would not associate with any other political party, but work solely for a federal amendment to the constitution to incorporate women.[6] Both Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt would continue to work relentlessly for the cause and despite their varied tactics, both would eventually bring woman suffrage to the nation.

Not only was the suffrage movement an organized and determined force, but those who stood in opposition to suffrage would also emerge in full force. As early as 1872, women of social rank were organized to combat the idea of woman suffrage. An official organization headed by Mrs. Arthur Dodge was formed in 1911, the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. As a movement, the anti-suffragists featured

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[5] Doris Weatherford, *A History of the American Suffragist Movement* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1998), 203.

[6] Ibid., 205.

women of established wealth and focused their argument around women's place within the realm of domesticity. A persistent argument that arose was the delicacy of the female sex and the unbearable burden that political equality would place upon such a delicate frame. An additional argument against suffrage for women was the redundancy of the issue as a woman was well represented by the men in her life in political activities. A woman's vote would merely be an additional vote cast.[7] Often times, suffragists felt the anti-suffrage position did not provide the effectiveness necessary to counteract the energetic suffrage campaign. However, the written propaganda, as well as a strong anti-suffrage editorial campaign, allowed the anti-suffrage position to be heard clearly throughout the nation. In addition, the "every woman position" that was presented so often by the anti-suffrage campaign was the idea that women themselves did not want the vote. This notion was set to contrast the image of the suffragist and depict the woman suffrage movement as a radical group opposed to family and idea of suffrage as unfeminine.

The anti-suffrage campaign also found political strength from some of the biggest economic sponsors. Alongside the US Brewer's Association, a presence of railroad, oil, and manufacturing lobbyists could be found at most anti-suffrage rallies. These groups did not organize officially, but their interest seemed best served by keeping woman suffrage at bay for as long as possible.[8] All of these large industries feared the impact that the female voter would have on their economic gains and thus opposed the idea out of principle. Despite the significant impact these organizations held nationally,

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[7] Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 296.

[8] Ibid., 299.

impeding the ratification of the 19th amendment would not have lasted as long without the support of the southern democrats. With Southern Democrats, woman suffrage had to be viewed as a social, economic and political act that would ultimately have ramifications on the very volatile race relations in the South.[9] Anti-suffragist fought against the suffrage movement due to a variety of passions and agendas. Each political agent tried to further their political position or economic agenda through limiting the rights of women.

Due to the United Stats involvement in World War I, many hoped and some feared the end to the women's suffrage movement could be seen on the horizon. Naturally Carrie Chapman Cat felt the importance of showing women's patriotism and placed NAWSA in full support of President Wilson. [10] Tactically, NAWSA support would ultimately prove beneficial as the woman's agenda would face Congress, the Senate, and public opinion after the war. Not all Suffragists were as easily swayed as Catt and in typical militant fashion, Alice Paul stood firm behind her actions. Not only did Paul and her contemporaries support the more drastic forms of activism, they took their opinion directly to the front door of the White House. In 1917, Paul and her contemporaries began picketing the White House. The picketers held banners questioning President Wilson and his intentions for woman suffrage. Some banners also implied the lack of democracy for women in the United States. One banner in particular brought about volatile reactions from the public, when President Wilson was addressed as Kaiser Wilson. Such efforts brought violence and eventually the arrests of the picketers. Sentencing varied from a few days and extended to six months. These sentences were

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[9] Ibid., 303.

[10] Linda Kerber, ed., *Women's America: Refocusing the Past,* 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 341.

typically served in the Occoquan workhouse. Feelings of false imprisonment stirred and brought hunger strikes and the subsequent response of force feedings of the prisoners. This action made the women's voices heard as political prisoners. [11] Catt viewed the activities of Paul's militant as unseemly and chastised the antics with little regard to the injustices brought upon the women in prison. [12] The combined effort of both Carrie Chapman Catt as well as Alice Paul, though opposite in action, would prove complimentary in accomplishment. Paul and the Woman's Party brought a great deal of media attention but also and excess of negative public opinion. Catt and NAWSA supplied support for the war effort giving the woman suffrage movement a patriotic flare as well as validating the effort within the United States. [13] The two varied approaches of the suffrage movement provided the push needed to place woman suffrage on the national agenda as well as supplying validation for the movement in a political and social setting.

As the Great War drew to a close, the battle on woman suffrage intensified. In May of 1919, the Susan B. Anthony amendment reached the House and was subsequently passed onto the Senate floor. The Senate passed the amendment narrowly with the 2/3 majority needed. [14] The Suffrage Movement, though feeling a victory, also knew the state by state ratification campaign would pose an arduous task. The country lay divided into suffrage and anti-suffrage states. The majority of the west and northeast could be defined as pro-suffrage. In opposition, the anti-suffrage states of the 'Solid South" along

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[11] Flexner, *Century of Struggle,* 284-285.

[12] Ibid., 286.

[13] Ibid., 287-288.

[14] Weatherford, *A History of the America Suffrage Movement,* 229-230.

with Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Ohio could be depended up to work whole heartedly against the suffrage agenda. Of course not all states could be placed as neatly into distinct categories. Border states such as Kentucky, Tennessee, Florida, and Maryland broke ranks and kept the discussion of woman suffrage alive in the House. [15] These discussions would ultimately prove crucial in the state by state ratification process. A ¾ state approval, 36 of the 48 states in 1919, was necessary for the ratification of the 19th amendment. Catt at the time feared a conservative backlash due to the end of the war and urged a rapid ratification before the contributions made by women and NAWSA in support of the war effort were forgotten.[16]

State by state ratification pushed both the suffrage and anti-suffrage camps into a frenzy. The suffragists could see the looming task they had to conquer. The anti-suffragists planned to merely hold the states already strongly opposed to suffrage in order to capture the 13 states needed to defeat ratification. The anti-suffrage movement counted Massachusetts, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Delaware as their solid holdings and felt the 13th state necessary to inhibit ratification could be drawn from the pool of New Jersey, Connecticut, Vermont or New Hampshire.[17]

Catt and the Suffragists, however, held fast to a distinct hope of ratification as Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, New York, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Texas all ratified the 19th amendment by the end of June 1919.[18] A rash of

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[15] Flexner, *Century of Struggle,* 295.

[16] Weatherford, *A History of the American Suffrage Movement,* 230.
[17] Flexner, *Century of Struggle,* 317.

[18] Weatherford, *A History of the American Suffrage Movement,* 231.

ratifications would occur throughout July as Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Montana brought the total of ratified states to thirteen. August and September would usher in Nebraska, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Utah into the ratification column. During the late fall and winter months, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Oregon, and Nevada would also join ranks with the suffrage states totaling twenty-two states. Much of the late rush of ratifications could be attributed to a tremendous conference organized by Catt called "Wake Up America." Catt's ideology behind the conference was to awaken interest for woman suffrage within the western states. In addition to the western states added due to the campaign, California, Maine, Rhode Island, Indiana, and Wyoming also ratified the 19th amendment as 1919 came to a close. Kentucky would also find its way to ratification and one of the first considered as "solid southern" to ratify the amendment. Early 1920 would bring in Wyoming, New Jersey, Idaho, and Arizona totaling the ratified column of 32 states. [19] The last leg of the state ratification process would prove extremely difficult and controversial, especially within the much contested southern states. Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Washington were the final three states to nearly bring ratification to a close at 35 states.[20] Ratification was on the brink, but the fight would not be easy and the south would prove most distressing for the suffrage movement.

No section of the nation was more reticent to enter into the throws of the woman suffrage movement than the solid southern states. Not only did opposition stem from the traditional outlets, but a keen interest in the racial implications of the movement captured much of the south's attention. Throughout the south, some states broke rank and ratified the amendment with an unexpected ease and other states easily cast the amendment aside

[19] Ibid., 232-233.
[20] Ibid., 238

without a glimmer of hope for ratification. Looking to states such as Alabama, Texas, Virginia, and Tennessee a unique perspective can be seen in the activities and actions taken within each state and the ultimate outcome for the amendment within each state. The south would become the center of attention as Tennessee would be called to cast a crucial vote that would ultimately place Tennessee in the history books for woman's suffrage. The suffrage movement was full of passion and activities throughout the nation, but external issues such as race only served to intensify the issues within the southern state. The woman suffrage movement hoped to be able to ratify the 19th amendment without bringing much focus to the southern states. Thus the movement as a whole ultimately neglected to have a strong organizational presence in the south. The ratification process, however, found itself centered in the democratic southern states in 1920 and the culmination of the woman suffrage movement would find itself placed squarely on the shoulders of a southern State house.

The southern woman suffrage movement was not an entirely separate movement from the mainstream. However, the southern heritage did present unique opportunities and obstacles for those organizing and participating within the movement. Within the South, three major organizations were key players in developing a strategy to gain woman suffrage throughout southern states. NAWSA, being the largest national organization held members with a more moderate focus. Alongside them, The Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference also called for women, but unlike NAWSA and the more radical National Woman's Party, the SSWSC focused only on state by state action.[21] Women holding leadership positions within the South tended to be better

[21] Majorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xvi.

educated and more influenced by the northern movement, as well as British feminist than the middle-class white delegation that comprised the majority of southern suffragist.[22] All throughout the south women filled leadership roles within NAWSA, NWP, and other state-specific organizations. However, in contrast to their northern counterparts of higher class and education, southern women were still remaining within the typical structure of femininity encouraged by antebellum southern tradition.[23]

Anastasia Sims comments, "In the South, then several forces combined to oppose woman suffrage: the code of chivalry, that revered womanhood while restricted the activities of real women; a hierarchy of race, gender, and class relations that regarded any change for any group as potentially revolutionary."[24] The anti-suffragists of the south understood this political enigma and used the idea of losing "southern civilization" to combat the woman suffrage movement. The notion of "southern civilization" focused greatly on the idea of maintaining and perpetuating white supremacy. Southern anti-suffragists also viewed the movement as a Northern ploy to assert political and social change upon the south that neither wanted nor welcomed the change.

Socially, the image of a southern woman had a distinct role in caring for her family, her community, and her husband's needs. A southern woman was responsible for the preservation of morality and to pass along the southern heritage to future generations. With such a responsibility, anti-suffragists argued that a true southern woman relied upon

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[22] Ibid, xix.

[23] Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 6.

[24] Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed., *Votes For Women! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 111.

a man to speak for her in the realm of business and politics. [25] Anti-suffragists, as well as suffragists, had to deal with developing an argument emphasizing a woman's equal capabilities with a man as well as establishing the differences between the sexes.[26] For the anti-suffragists, the case was made women's delicate nature. Most explained that the current law and social customs were in place to protect women. It was feared that the idea of political equality would bring changes to alimony payments, jury service, and regulations on women's working hours, thus placing women in an equal status with men.[27]

The idea of women's economic and physical independence from men caused a commotion among the southern religious leaders. This provoked them to speak out against the idea of woman suffrage. Most of the arguments from the white male ministers focused on the moral and spiritual superiority of women over men. This notion of course played strategically into the idea of female domesticity. In addition, the ministers also declared that women needed a men for economic, as well as physical support. In summation, a woman's survival was dependent upon the men in her life and thus, equality political or otherwise was not an option.[28]

Anti-suffragists in the south also feared the loss of the separate spheres that were a fundamental element in southern society. The separate spheres were not merely between males and females, but also between African American women and white women. To the southern anti-suffragist, the world was seen as Greene comments as an

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[25] Wheeler, *New Women of the New South,* 6-7.

[26] Greene, *Southern Strategies,* 85.

[27] Wheeler, *Votes for Women!*, 107.

[28] Ibid., 109.

"integrated whole: class, gender and race relations were set in a permanent configuration, each mutually reinforcing the other.[29]" Anti-suffragists also utilized some of the Suffragists radical antics and seemingly Feminist ideologies to surround the movement with as much negativity as possible. Issues such as divorce, birth control, and female sexuality were all ammunition in the anti-suffrage arsenal. In addition, statements such as "behind this suffrage agitation stands Feminism. There shall be no such thing as love and marriage; as husband and wife; as home and a family " continued to discredit and cast doubt upon the potential ramifications of the woman suffrage movement. [30]

The tactic of men speaking out against suffrage gave prominent media attention to combat the movement. When women anti-suffragists spoke out, the impact on ideology was very significant. With a woman's voice claiming that women did not want the right to vote, the efforts of the suffrage movement meet a great deal of opposition. The anti-suffragists claimed that if women were fulfilling their "obligations to society, church, and family" they would have no desire to cast their own ballot. [31] Many clung to the idea that women wielded their political power at home by using their influence on the men who actually went to the polls.[32] Many women feared that without their domestic influence, they would lose the majority of their power. The Alabama Anti- Ratification league asserted, "We are the home keepers and the mothers of children, and we seek to discharge our duty to our country and to the cause of civilization and right living, not by

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[29] Greene, *Southern Strategies,* 90.

[30] Ibid., 91.

[31] Ibid., 86.

[32] Ibid., 84.

voting and holding office, but…by instilling into our children love of their country and devotion to high ideals."[33]

Racial prejudice in the south helped to secure the anti-suffragist platform. Those aligned with the anti-suffrage movement platform in the south were steeped in plantation mentality, both men and women alike. Most had ties to prominent agricultural families that utilized their wealth and prestige to foster political power. The class distinction afforded both sexes certain privileges that the men along with the women were hesitant to relinquish. To this upper class white population, the privileges were customary.[34]

Despite the severe opposition on numerous fronts, the suffrage movement found itself fighting within the southern states and in desperate need of some southern state support. However, certain states presented more challenges than others. By examining a few southern states and the impact the movement had on those communities, a general ideology of how the woman suffrage movement developed throughout the south can be obtained. States such as Texas, Alabama, Virginia and Tennessee all played an interesting role in the ratification process and were able to shape the future of the country.

Texas, being both a southern and western state, presents a unique viewpoint. The western states had been some of the first to enfranchise women in a political realm and the southern states were the most hesitant to welcome women into full citizenship. With this delicate relationship, Texas sat amidst a balancing act. The urbanization of Texas after the civil war provided a great deal of support for the formation on women's organizations and would ultimately bring about many suffrage organizations. In a city such as Galveston, belonging to a social, charitable or faith bases association was crucial

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[33] Ibid., 85.

[34] Ibid., 40.

to community life. This predisposition to join societal organizations would prove beneficial in inspiring reform organizations to blossom.[35] One organization in Galveston proved to be a catalyst in exciting interest for political power. The Women's Health Protective Association was formed after a devastating hurricane in 1900, but by 1915 a strong progressive reform association was in full swing. In this group open to all white women, 500 members convened from various organizations, both social and charitable, in order to function as a lobbyist group at the city level.[36] Within the realm of influence, the WHPA found itself lobbying for issues considered women's domestic ideals such as health care and children's issues. However, through this organization women were actively participating in government, and the officers of the organization could be considered the highest female elected official. Through this type of organization, women enjoyed the privilege of voting as well as acquiring thirst for political equality. [37]

Women having found a voice within various reform efforts began to speak up about suffrage. Prominent women such as Mrs. Sally Trueheart Williams claimed that a woman's vote was merely part of her good housekeeping. Others argued based on economic principal. Women of great wealth and property felt they should be able to protect their economic interest as well as the women who worked for a living. Working women felt they should receive equal pay for equal work.[38] Even though the social status of the women varied throughout the movement in Texas, each wanted a sense of equality and the designation of citizenship.

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[35] Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Theda Perdue, ed., *Southern Women: Histories and Identities* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 130-131.

[36] Ibid., 132.

[37] Ibid., 133.

[38] Ibid., 135.

Women throughout Texas organized for the suffrage movement, but the organization occurred on various levels. The variation could be seen on local, state, and federal levels. Texas established a state organization in 1913 that would work for suffrage on each level of government. The National level activities would remain close to and under the supervision of NAWSA. Statewide activities would focus on the Texas legislature and helped to encourage ratification of the 19th amendment. The goal would be to locally organize the leagues and open more opportunities to support suffrage within the community.[39]

The local organization provided the backbone and support structure for the entire movement throughout the state of Texas. The local organizations' responsibilities were primarily in educating about the cause, increasing membership, establishing new local associations, and raising funds for their own needs. Those working for suffrage at the state level came to be known as "career suffragists" due to the immense amount of commitment required when working to lobby the state legislature. Within the local organization, both "New Women" and the "white-gloved" society ladies could be found working. Often times, the society women were involved within the movement on a surface level and chose not to deviate from the social rounds of teas and society gatherings.[40] The new women of the movement were not as concerned with maintaining the status quo and hoped to challenge the traditional ideals. The new women would be looked to as the ones to inspire change and spark a new ideal. [41]

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[39] Ibid., 136.
[40] Ibid., 137.

[41] Ibid., 138.

The Texas movement, though seemingly segregated between the "new woman" and the "white gloved" women, actually formed a cohesive unit to create change. The "new women" were frequently the ones working constantly with the movement and dedicating their lives to the movement at personal cost. Other women, however, that could not or would not devote themselves entirely, were responsible for cultivating a "favorable sentiment" for the woman suffrage movement within their community, and thus, the "white gloved" ladies played an integral part in continuing the civic leadership within their own communities that brought favor to the idea of suffrage throughout Texas.[42]

The upper middle class of the majority of the suffragists gave them a political prominence that then afforded acceptance in the public arena. However, the working class women were not compelled to take up residence within the suffrage movement. Also excluded were African American women. Racism and social elitism limited the impact the working class and African Americans could contribute. This leads to the point that the suffrage movement within Texas was primarily comprised of educated upper class white women petitioning white men with progressive ideals for monetary and political support.[43]

Throughout the history of the movement, Texas relied upon women to foster relationships with each other, the community, and the state in order to advance the status of women. The women of Texas came together out of concern for community and family, and thus developing a strong activist society. The idea of activism that spread throughout the organizations found and helped to politicize the women's agenda. Often

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[42] Ibid., 139.
[43] Ibid., 144-145.

times, women in Texas did not find a great passion for the national suffrage campaign, but held a great deal of passion for their own communities. No matter the level of participation these women could be found working on the woman's agenda. Eventually their dedication paid off and Texas became the 9th state to ratify the 19th amendment.

Another southern state to play a role in the woman suffrage movement was Alabama. Joining the ranks of the suffrage movement nearly a generation behind the rest of the country, the reticence of the south to participate in the movement is apparent. Alabama, like many southern states, connected woman suffrage to the enfranchisement of the African American population, which succeeded in impeding the ratification process. The suffrage movement throughout Alabama was a delicate balance of give and take hinging on race relations and the idea of a women's sphere.

After nearly twenty years of inactivity, the Alabama Woman Suffrage Association sprang to life in 1910. Similar to Texas, the suffrage activity erupted from the women's involvement in other community projects, such as funding for women's education at the University of Alabama and facilitating the passage of child labor laws. [44] A variety of groups pooled their efforts to revitalize the movement as well as bring the organization to affiliate with NAWSA. The AWSA presented its platform as a reform organization and focused their goals on creating a better Alabama for their families. These women placed their argument for suffrage at the home front. By not shouting for equality and social justice, the women of Alabama expressed their concerns through the lens of wives and mothers and petitioned for suffrage on that basis.[45]

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[44] Ibid., 116.
[45] Ibid., 120.

The women of Alabama utilized a key element in trying to gain the right to vote. In order to circumvent the label of radical and anti-feminine, the suffragists in Alabama not only embraced their womanhood, but used it as a reason to gain the vote. In the southern idea of domesticity, flying in the face of social norms and branching outside of the woman's sphere would not prove very beneficial. A new tactic to exemplify a new role for women would be necessary. By not challenging the role of men or the social order, the women in the suffrage movement hoped to gain momentum. By taking a traditional role on women's place, the Alabama suffragists attained a respect not typically given to the woman suffrage movement.[46]

Another interesting faction in the Alabama suffrage movement could be seen through the organization of African American women in support of the movement. African American women typically relegated to behind the scenes work within the woman suffrage movement. This was intensified especially throughout the south. Within Alabama, educated African American women and wives of prominent men from the Tuskegee Institute began to organize for enfranchisement with the establishment of the influential Tuskeegee Woman's Club.[47] Facing towering obstacles and rampant racism, African American women joined together just as the white suffrage organizations. Devoting themselves to community service and activism, a passion for organization and participation began to stir.[48] As the African American community began to organize, the

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[46] Ibid., 123.
[47] Wheeler, *Votes for Women!*, 81.

[48] Ibid., 76.

women not only focused on service work and education, but also on community pride and the advancement of the African American community.[49]

Many national organizations tried to segregate and subjugate these women even though their ultimate goals were the same. Suffragists were not without their own racial bias and these attitudes severely limited the activities in which African American women were allowed to participate.[50] Many of the African American women involved in the movement hoped that through suffrage advancements such as education reform, freedom from exploitation, and a protection for their economic well being would occur.[51] The African American women organized for the good of women as well as for the good of their community, and through the vote, a new world of opportunity would be explored. Even with the massive potential for a combined effort, the African American and white women fighting for suffrage did not join together. Both fought their own battles separately, yet simultaneously.

Alabama suffragists also tried to focus on a state legislation rather than the federal action. Hoping to gain a state amendment in 1915, the suffragist organized a passionate campaign that was ultimately rejected by the Legislature in 1915. Focusing on a state amendment was an appeasement to many southerners that feared federal overshadowing of states rights with a federal amendment.[52] Alabama's suffrage work, like the rest of the nation, came to a halt with the US entry in World War I. With this lack of action, the state organization began to deteriorate. When the federal amendment would be eligible

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[49] Bernhard, *Southern Women,* 117.

[50] Wheeler, *Votes for Women!,* 78.

[51] Bernhard, *Southern Women,* 118.

[52] Ibid., 124.

for ratification in 1919, NAWSA felt Alabama had no potential to ratify the amendment. Despite the weakened organization, a ratification committee did convene as well as an anti-suffrage organization to combat the idea of ratification.[53]

The Alabama Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage sprang into action in 1919. The organization clung to the traditional notion of a woman's place and the stereotypical idea of southern male chivalry. Speaking from this ideology the organization provided that the "men of Alabama would always love, honor and protect their women as long as they remained within the sphere to which nature and God had assigned them" as stated in *The Woman's Protest.*[54] Another organization, the Woman's Anti-Ratification League of Alabama, focused their intents on the idea of states rights and white supremacy. Those in opposition to ratification challenged the issue on the basis that woman suffrage would undermine the ideal of white supremacy throughout the south. Those in favor of woman suffrage tried to illuminate the fact that the Jim Crow laws that applied to African American male voting, such as poll taxes and literacy test, would also apply to African American women. However, the Alabama legislature would not hear it and defeated the amendment in July of 1919.[55]

The Alabama suffrage movement did not end in victory for the woman hoping for enfranchisement. Many of the arguments centered on race relations and a threat to the idea of white supremacy. However, a closer look would lead one to believe that the idea of female domain and the ramifications that would exude from the woman's vote played

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[53] Ibid., 125.

[54] Ibid., 125.

[55] Ibid.,126.

a more significant role in bolstering the opposition. The public sphere of men's world and the private sphere of women's world were held at a division throughout the south and these separate spheres created disparity not only among the races but also between the sexes. By including women in the political process, women would become an individual with personal rights and freedoms. Unfortunately, for the women of Alabama, June of 1919 would not grant them that right and the suffrage movement would continue across the country.[56]

. A tradition of political awareness and social consequences laid a solid foundation for woman suffrage to take hold in Virginia. As early as the 1840's women were interested in politics, though subsequently excluded from active participation, their presence and interests were expected. [57] Just like the women from Texas and Alabama, women were involved in the work within the community, both white and African American women. These women chose work to serve the community and began to feel a need for the vote in order to better serve their community.

A resurgence of interest from the ideas of the late 1800's occurred in the fall of 1909 as the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia was established. This organization was home to white women of prestigious standing. [58] Even though the movement was a passionate group, the women behind the movement had to organize and to recruit other members. A strong force would be needed to sway the ideas of the conservative Virginia base. With that idea, the white women sought out to bring in women from their community.

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[56] Ibid., 127-128.

[57] Green, *Southern Strategies, 152.*
[58] Ibid., 157.

Even though a strong force was necessary, the women in the white suffrage organization never reached out to African American women in the community. A thriving middle class African American population could have easily been brought into the movement had rapid prejudice not been such a limitation. A history of social welfare work and strong women's organizations would have made the African American women likely partners, but due to the strict racial convention a joint effort would not be seen in Virginia, just as in Alabama.[59]

Additional obstacles beyond race played into a difficult suffrage campaign. Within the urban culture, a strong support and easy access to information about the cause could be obtained. Reaching the outside communities and conveying a positive message to those outlying regions would be the most daunting challenge. [60] A leader in the movement throughout Virginia, Lila Valentine, felt keeping the efforts moderate in action was the only way to succeed. Valentine shied away from any militant activist or extreme political standing due to fear they would hinder the suffrage cause.[61] Presenting the idea of the suffragist platform would also prove to be a test as the Virginian Suffrage movement pushed for women's legal equality with men. The organization also focused on labor reform through the issue of an eight hour work day, abolishment of child labor, and a desire for equal pay for women. Notable feminist ideas also came into play with issues such as guardianship rights and advancement of education for women. Finally, the

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[59] Ibid., 159-160.

[60] Ibid., 161.

[61] Ibid., 164.

ESL also supported the use of diplomatic means and placed women in the realm of international affairs. [62]

Despite the efforts of the suffrage associations, when the state amendment made it to the Virginia House it was met with overwhelming defeat. Around this time, the anti-suffrage associations began to organize. Anti-suffragists rallied around the same idea of the realm of domesticity and a woman's proper place. The activities of the anti-suffragists kept in step with most of the other organizations opposed to women suffrage, with the exception that in Richmond, some bookstores agreed to distribute anti-suffrage literature for free. Another notable difference was the choice to challenge the Equal Suffrage League to a debate, which brought the anti-suffragist into a political limelight they tried to avoid in order to maintain an acceptable station as women.[63]

Another challenge that would arise within the Virginia movement would be the need for a diversification away from the original Equal Suffrage League. Various groups would arise, most feeding in from neighboring states with similar policies. However, the Congressional Union or the National Women's Party as it came to be called, would prove to be a hindrance to the ESL. While both groups looked to woman's suffrage as a goal, the ESL focused mainly on state amendments and moderate tactics which stood in sharp contrast to the NWP's goal of a federal amendment and revolutionary actions. Though the two groups were at first adversaries on the same side of the cause, a common bond would be formed. ESL and NAWSA found themselves drawn to the efforts of the NWP. Their focus on a federal amendment seemed to be the best chance for enfranchisement

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[62] Ibid., 161.

[63] Ibid., 166.

and so the suffrage camps pushed aside their differences and set their sights on the same goal. [64]

Despite their combined efforts, Virginia would not ratify the 19th amendment. Many blamed the defeat of the amendment on a conservative state that held to traditional ideals about gender roles. Others felt that race had a more distinctive role. The idea that African American women would also have the right to vote conflicted with the southern ideal.[65] No matter the reason the outcome was significant. Virginia would not be added into the column with the suffragist states.

The southern suffrage movement could have been a movement with relatively little impact. History could have forgotten the southern states that stepped outside their predisposed lines had it not been for the fact that the 36th state to ratify the amendment was a southern state. Texas and Arkansas were the first two southern states to ratify the amendment, both of which occurred during the special sessions of the legislature. Kentucky followed suit during the regular session totaling 3 southern states in the ratified column. [66] Other southern states such as Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana stood in opposition to the suffrage amendment. Five states: Connecticut Vermont, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee had yet to make a formal stand on the issue. Florida chose not to take a position on the amendment and adjourned the legislature while refusing to call a special session. Connecticut and Vermont would also

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[64] Ibid., 170.

[65] Ibid., 172.

[66] Wheeler, *Votes for Women!*, 58.

refuse to call special sessions, leaving the fate of the 19th amendment with North Carolina and Tennessee[67]

Ultimately, Tennessee would be placed in the position to cast the deciding vote. However, the woman suffrage movement in Tennessee did not begin in 1919. Women in Tennessee had no legal status and were typically equated with children and criminals. Married women especially had limited political power and could not own property or claim their wages as their own. Tennessee, similar many other states, limited the rights of women and restrained their political influence through prohibiting women the right to vote, hold public office, or even limiting their opportunity for higher education.[68] Woman suffrage had been an issue since the first suffrage league was established in 1889 in Memphis. Suffrage leagues began to spread across the state during the next few years. These leagues had high ideals and intense passion for advancing the rights of women, but a great deal of criticism and stigma came with the label of suffragist. Women feared the scrutiny that accompanied the label and thus the early work of movement was limited.[69]

A resurgence in the movement occurred throughout Tennessee starting in 1906. During that time small groups of women began to organize in order to pursue greater efforts among themselves and with other southern states. Little attention was paid to these women as their efforts were seemingly small. 1908, however, would bring Dr. Anna Shaw of NAWSA to Memphis. As the main hub of suffrage activity, Memphis

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[67] Ibid., 59.

[68] Elizabeth Taylor, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), 11-12.

[69] Ibid., 17-18.

would continue the ideals of equality and justice for women.[70] The movement, though spurred from its inactivity, had not reached a stage of prominence. Only through local organization and state wide campaigns would Tennessee come to the forefront of the challenge of woman suffrage.

Local organization came together across the state in support of the suffrage movement, and large cities amassed a substantial following. The small towns were not to be overlooked and established suffrage organizations of their own. From Memphis to Kingsport, lectures were held and literature was distributed. Cities such as Memphis and Nashville also held May Day rallies and marches to increase publicity of woman suffrage.[71] Not only was an effort to increase awareness of the movement exerted, but an interest in the impact of the cause formed as well. Various groups took informal polls throughout the community and distributed petitions.[72]

Collectively the local organizations had a great deal of impact on their communities. At the state level, organizations were also forming. Tennessee had two associations that were NAWSA affiliates, Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association and Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association, INC. These two organizations would join in 1918 to form the Tennessee Woman Suffrage Association. These NAWSA affiliates felt it necessary to hold conventions. The conventions had a two fold purpose. The first purpose was to unify all of the local agencies and gain knowledge of all the activities

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[70] Ibid., 29.

[71] Ibid., 45.

[72] Ibid., 52.

occurring throughout the state. The second goal was to inform the public of the issue and to hopefully gain a few new members to the cause.[73]

A notable convention was held in Tennessee in 1914. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw spoke about the contributions women had made in developing the nation from its desolate state. Speaking on the patriotic actions and the great influence they had on sustaining the livelihood of the south, Shaw shed light on the impact women had already made upon the country. With this idea, granting women the right to vote was not such a novel idea, but seemed sensible. Shaw continued later in the day to expound on the fact of a woman's role as a citizen and individual.[74] Shaw chose the 1914 convention to expound on her ideas of women's rights and call for a formal change in the way women were viewed politically. Dr. Shaw was able to present her ideas with an eloquence and grace that brought those of differing opinions into her embrace.

Tennessee was also home to a state chapter of the Congressional Union. In Tennessee, a fairly moderate activist state, many women did not align with the more radical Congressional Union. Much of the stronghold of the Congressional Party could be found in the eastern section of Tennessee. Due to the lack of conventions and the work that had become viewed as standard suffrage work, the actual number of women involved in the group cannot be determine. Focusing on supporting the national campaign for a federal amendment, women involved in this group typically helped influence the congressmen of Tennessee.[75] This group would become the most active

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[73] Ibid., 58.

[74] Ibid., 63-64.

[75] Ibid., 69.

organization as the Susan B Anthony amendment gained strength in 1918. As the time for ratification of the 19th amendment would draw near, all of the suffrage organizations would unite together. Previous differences aside, the women and men of Tennessee would come together to form a steadfast front on the road to political equality.

The road would not be without opposition and confrontation however. As the suffragist organized throughout Tennessee, the anti-suffragist lobby moved into action as well. With the suffrage movement gaining momentum the anti-suffragist of Tennessee could no longer be content with a passive attitude. Unorganized press editorials and random sermons devaluing the idea of the woman vote would no longer suffice. Of course letters to he editor would still pour into newspapers across the country. One gentleman, R.H. Rowe, from Jacksonville, Florida, wrote an editorial proclaiming the work of the American Constitutional League, which was essential a group of men voters working in opposition to suffrage alongside the National Association Opposed to woman suffrage. Rowe asserted their primary initiative was to rally in opposition to the federal amendment in any state that was contemplating ratification. Claiming responsibility for the lack of ratification in Connecticut, Vermont, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Alabama, and Louisiana the issue of states rights was conveyed. Rowe also asserted that the movement was actively involved in opposing the amendment agenda in Tennessee and North Carolina and felt their effort would be successful.[76]

The anti-suffrage arguments that were utilized in Tennessee were no different from the arguments that had been used across the entire United States. Typically, the anti-suffragists characterized women as emotionally frail and mentally limited in relation to the challenges of political ideas. Other arguments offered in opposition to the

[76] "Letters to the Editor," *New York Times,* 1 August 1920.

woman's vote dealt with women's inexperience in business dealings and also a woman's lack of physical strength.[77] Individuals also voiced their opinions on the issue through various editorials. A letter to the *Tennessean* negated a woman's political aptitude claiming that it had never been determined that a queen was a better ruler than a king. Also, striking an emotional chord, Carroll challenged women in their effectiveness in the realm of the domestic world. Asserting that household duties and child rearing could and would be performed better by men, this editorial stripped women of any power that they had. Others such as Martha Williams expressed her opposition to woman suffrage based on the idea that a woman's work was motherhood and voting was a man's job. [78] One could also expect to hear opposition to the woman suffrage movement from the pulpit. Biblical ideas of a woman's subordinate position and the ultimate destruction of the family system that would occur if women gained the right to vote were often employed. [79] The anti-suffrage campaign in Tennessee would become an ardent and forceful task ultimately because of the strength and effectiveness of the suffrage organizations in Tennessee.

Placing Tennessee or any southern state at the pinnacle of this political war had never been a goal of the suffrage movement. However, as Delaware failed to ratify the amendment and Vermont and Connecticut were reticent to call a special session of the legislature, attention fell to the democratic south. Carrie Chapman Catt did not have her sights set on Tennessee but looked to Louisiana or North Carolina to bring woman suffrage to the nation. Catt also asserted that the movement did not know the word

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[77] Taylor, *Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee,* 76.

[78] Ibid., 77.

[79] Ibid., 78.

defeat, and that the worst case scenario in the struggle was delay.[80] Not only did NAWSA and Catt weigh in on the issue, but Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party felt hopeful that Tennessee would bring about ratification. Paul and the NWP worked with Governor Roberts to bring about the special session of the legislature that would be needed to discuss the amendment. [81]

Alice Paul placed much of her hopes for ratification in the hands of the Democratic Party despite the bipartisan campaign that had previously been waged by the suffrage movement. Paul commented that a victory in Tennessee would be easy if the Democratic leaders carried through with their promises.[82] Another promising occurrence came from President Wilson as he appealed to Tennessee governor to not only call the special sessions of the legislature, but to encourage ratification. Much of this came after a letter from the Attorney General William Frieson declaring that a special session of the legislature could indeed have the power to ratify the amendment. This legal issue came after the Supreme Court asserted that limitation on ratification of a federal amendment could not be limited by a state constitution as in the case of Ohio as well as in Tennessee. Both states' constitutions held that the legislature of the state could not act on an amendment presented after they had been elected to office. The Supreme Court found this unacceptable and gave the current Tennessee Legislature the power to act upon the Susan B. Anthony Amendment.[83]

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[80] "Suffragist Turn to South to Win," *New York Times*, 3 April 1920.

[81] "Woman's Party Turns to Tennessee to Ratify Suffrage Amendment Under Court Ruling,"*New York Times, 21 June 1920.*

[82] " Militants Counting on Democrats Now," *New York Times*, 25 July 1920.

[83] "Holds Tennessee Can Act at Once," *New York Times,* 25 June 1920.

With the legislature free to act upon the amendment, suffragists had to organize quickly in order to make an impact within Tennessee. Having spent over $115,000 during the previous 35 state campaigns, the National Woman's party was desperate for funds. Paul called upon the 50,000 member organization to regroup in order to produce a victory. Paul commented that "Tennessee offers the only opportunity, according the present outlook, to win the last needed State before the elections." Paul feared a failed session in Tennessee would mean millions of women would be excluded from the upcoming presidential elections in November. Alongside Alice Paul, Ms. Sue White also commented "The More I look into the Tennessee situation the more I realize that we face a terrific fight." White commented on the anti-suffragist methods of prejudice and the influx of daily criticism flowed through the major and minor news papers across the state. White also realized the geography of Tennessee would make a suffrage campaign difficult due to the expansive size as well as the lack of access afforded to the more mountainous areas.[84] Writings between Paul and White a month before the legislature would be called were able to show the challenge that lay ahead and the battle that would occur over Tennessee.

The first a battle would occur around Tennessee Governor Roberts. Roberts would face criticism from the anti-suffragists and threats over his upcoming re-election campaign if he was to call special sessions. Roberts's also faced criticism from his political opponent, Col. W. F. Crabtree, warning that if a special sessions was not called a Republican legislature would surely ratify the Susan B. Anthony Amendment and "rob Tennessee of its chance for glory." With no legal restriction surrounding the amendment

[84] "Suffragist Seek Fund for Tennessee, *New York Times,* 5 July 1920.

and criticism abounding, Roberts announced on June 28th of 1919 that a special sessions of the Tennessee legislature would be called on August 9th. [85]

The mere calling of the legislature did not produce jubilation throughout the suffragist camp. With this occurrence, the suffragists had not only to not only outline a plan, but also to determine the stance Tennessee would take on woman suffrage. Catt and NAWSA felt it important to impart the years of wisdom that had accrued throughout the movement. Focusing on combating the anti-suffrage literature influx that would surely occur, utilizing the press, as well as poling the legislature to determine allies and enemies would be crucial to winning ratification. Catt also called into light the fact that men would ultimately make the decision and a Men's Ratification Committee of significant number and public prominence needed to be formed and publicized immediately.[86]

Suffragists found that the ratification battle would not be suffragist versus anti-suffragist, but would employ many more divisions that occurred throughout the state. Geographically, a threefold division occurred. Historical implications also remained from the Civil War as East Tennessee was more reticent to succeed from the Union. Urban and rural populations also sat in opposition to one another just as prohibitionist and anti-prohibitionist created another division.[87] With each division, the suffragists had yet another demographic to reach on a variety of levels.

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[85] Carol Lynn Yellin and Jannn Sherman, *Perfect 36: Tennessee Delivers Woman Suffrage,* ed. Ilene Jones-Cornwell (Oak Ridge: Iris Press, 1998), 82.

[86] Ibid., 85.
[87] Ibid., 86.

Suffragists knew the battle was paramount and thus converged on Tennessee and Nashville. Anti-suffragists found their way to also stake a claim on the state. Ms. Josephine Anderson Pearson, president of the Tennessee Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, stationed the anti-suffrage camp in Nashville. Both groups were poised to combat each others' ideals. Waiting for the legislature to conclude the issue of the political primary, suffragists and anti-suffragists alike were waiting for the time when ratification would be the issue.[88] As they waited for suffrage to become the issue, both sides launched into a seemingly choreographed dance of action and counter action.

Anti-suffragists launched the expected literature blitzing as well as calling in many women from other Southern states where ratification had recently been defeated or was in the process of being rejected. Suffragists countered with the suggested Men's Ratification Committee totaling 207 names, including former democratic Governor Tom Rye and former Republican Governor Ben Hooper. A notable addition was also Governor Roberts and two of his political supporters. One supporter was Major E. B Stalhman, owner of the *Nashville Banner*. This alliance gave suffragists support in both of Nashville's newspapers and aligned middle Tennessee for the suffragist cause. Anti-suffragists organized the Tennessee Constitutional league for men as well as orchestrating a particularly damaging article in *The Chattanooga Times,* claiming that those voting for ratification "would be violating his oath of office to uphold his state constitution and all its existing provisions." Carrie Chapman Catt was taking this opportunity to traverse the state speaking to these allegations and making NAWSA presence known.[89]

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[88] Ibid., 88-89.
[89] Ibid., 90-91.

As expected, on August 7th Governor Roberts called the 61st Tennessee General Assembly into special sessions the following Monday. Both sides of the suffrage campaign took this opportunity to try any last efforts to sway anyone to their cause. Suffragists were diligently counting and recounting those listed as suffragist. The list of Senators seemed to satisfy the suffrage camp, but the House was a turbulence of vote changes. [90] No strong conclusions could ultimately be made about how the ratification vote would go. Suffragists as well as anti-suffragists had amassed a strong battle, but ultimately the votes were out of their hands. Anything was likely to occur in the special session legislature.

The ratification vote would not come swiftly. An eight day deliberation would take hold as the woman suffrage amendment made its way to Capitol Hill in Nashville, Tennessee. The legislature opened to a letter from the Governor advocating the ratification of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. The adjournment for the day would bring various groups to special meetings such as the Republican caucus held by former Governor Hooper that also urged ratification. Day two of deliberation would bring a motion for a joint public hearing on August 12th. Day three brought a resolution from the Anti-suffragists to delay even the consideration of ratification which was defeated 50-37. This was a victory for the suffragists, but just barely. With no vote to spare, the suffrage camp was determined to inundate the Tennessee legislators with as much attention as necessary to keep the suffrage movement alive.[91]

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[90] Ibid., 97.
[91] Ibid, 98.

August 12th 1920, day four of the deliberation, brought about another resolution from the anti-suffrage camp dealing with the issue of the state constitution which was again defeated 50-37. The suffrage hearing would continue that night before a record crowd. Both suffragists and anti-suffragists had their key note speakers prepared to give their stand on the issue. Anti-suffragists pulled a strong reaction as former member of the Men's Ratification Committee, Major E.B Stalhman, took a stand in strong opposition of ratification. [92]

The next day the State Senate would pass the resolution of ratification with 25 ayes, 4 nays, and 2 abstentions. With this, the resolution would continue onto the House on Monday. Suffragists knew that in order to win ratification they would have to maintain all of the ratification minded legislatures in Nashville. Many suffragists occupied the Representative's evenings with outings and entertainment. This strategy brought anti-suffragist scrutiny upon the suffragist methods. Anti-suffragists would circulate photos of anti-suffrage leaders posed with Civil War veterans in order to reestablish the old notions of southern pride and racism. The anti-suffragists would also criticize *The Woman's Bible* written by famous suffragist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Carrie Chapman Catt was also listed in the revising committee. This information was publicized in an effort to present the suffrage movement as anti-Christian and thus devalue their status and position. Suffragists, however, had the like of President Woodrow Wilson, Ohio's Governor Cox and Senator Harding all proclaiming their support for ratification.[93]

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[92] Ibid., 99.
[93] Ibid., 100-101.

Monday August 16th, 1920 would only bring more postponements in order to wait on the Committee on Constitution Amendments. The vote was a mystery to both the suffragists and anti-suffragists. No firm count could be depended upon. Those like Representative Jacob Simpson who was typically counted as an anti-suffragist, but voted for the Suffragist cause. Speaker Seth Walker had also swapped sides and was now using his power to try and gain votes against ratification. The House Committee meeting did nothing to help the situation abate as the issue resulted in a tie. Two absent members believed to be in the suffragist camp were collected and taken to the meeting. Their votes weighed the scale 10-8 to present the amendment favorably to the House the next day. This small victory brought in the last stage of the amendment ratification process, but was also a loss as the two men would ultimately come out in support of the anti-suffragist campaign.[94]

A motion would be presented the next day, August 17th, that the House agreed with the Senate's adoption to ratify the 19th amendment by Representative Riddick from Memphis. The discussion ensued and is ultimately brought to a close by the Speaker's motion to adjourn until the next day. This motion carries 52-44 leaving suffragists questioning the votes in the House and concerned with the possibility of more delays. Another problem came when North Carolina, on this same day, with a vote of 25-23, voted to postpone action on the amendment until 1921. [95] The suffragists knew the anti-suffrage camps were also employing tactic of trickery trying to lure Representatives standing for suffrage away from the post with messages of family emergencies as well as

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[94] Ibid., 102-103.

[95] "Tennessee Delays Vote on Suffrage; Beaten in Carolina," *New York Times,* 18 August 1920.

threats. Carrie Chapman Catt seeing the end being near said, "There is one more thing we can do – only one, we can pray."[96]

The Capitol was full of interested spectators on the morning of August 18, 1920. The massive crowd could not be accommodated by the gallery and many took up a post on the lawn. The House chamber had been decorated in yellow for the suffragist cause, but the number of red roses on the lapels of the Representatives was ominous. The roll call long anticipated would only occur after a long and arduous debate cycle that would retell the last 72 years of the suffrage movement from both perspectives. Speaker Walker, however, tired of the antics and hoping to make a strong anti-suffrage showing, moved to kill the amendment by tabling the issue. As roll call commenced, votes poured in according to the expectation of both parties. The first surprise of the day would come when Banks Turner choose to abstain from voting. The vote stood 48-47 unofficially in favor of tabling the issue. Turner, who had spent the majority of the morning listening to the pleas of both governors from Tennessee and Ohio took a stand and changed his vote from abstention to voting against tabling the issue. Speaker Walker called for a recount and tried to use the time to convince Turner to return to the side against the suffrage amendment. However, as Turner's name was called he removed himself from Walker's grasp and voted against tabling the issue again. The motion to table would not pass and the suffrage movement was still alive.[97]

Walker, hoping the original motion would result in a tie and thus defeat the ratification of the 19th amendment, called for a vote on the original motion. The third roll call of the day began and no one was certain how this would conclude. Those favoring

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[96] Yellin, *Perfect 36,* 103.
[97] Ibid., 105-106.

ratification, still unsure of Turner's support, knew they needed at least one more vote in order to claim a majority. The roll proceeded as in the past two occasions except for when the vote of Harry Burns was called. Burns, cast his vote quickly and with little fanfare of aye in favor of ratification. The suffragists were astounded due to the red rose on his lapel. Little did they know that Burns had just that morning received a telegram from his mother, urging him to "be a good boy" and vote for the ratification of the 19th amendment.[98] Banks Turner also held fast to the suffrage cause and voted aye. The motion carried for ratification 49-47.[99]

In an attempt at a parliamentary maneuver, Seth Walker changed his vote from nay to aye in a motion to reconsider. Hoping to be able to convince some of those in support of suffrage to change their opinions, Walker hoped to use the next 72 hours to change the decision. However, his change of vote placed the official count on ratification 50-46 giving the ratification of the 19th amendment a solid majority in the House and ultimately limiting the legal course of action already underway within the anti-suffragist campaign. Those 49 representatives who voted for ratification held true to their word and stayed until the next vote that would occur on Saturday. However, many of those in opposition of the ratification had left Nashville in an attempt to cause quorum not to be meet. Their antics did not produce the desired affect and Walker's motion to reconsider was denied. The anti-suffrage camp did not give up easily though, and preceded to file so many injunctions that the US supreme court would not dismiss the final appeal until 1922. Despite the legal issues of the anti-suffragists, Governor Roberts signed the certificate of Tennessee's ratification on August 24, 1920 to the secretary of state

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[98] Ibid., 104.

[99] Ibid., 106.

Bainbridge Colby. Upon receipt of the certificate, Colby immediately announced that with this ratification women had gained the right to vote.[100]

After the ratification of the 19th amendment Alice Paul stated "The victory of women today completes the political democracy of America and enfranchise half the people of a great nation. It is a victory which has been won not by an individual or group, but by all those women who since the time of the revolution have suffered and protested against the humiliation of disenfranchisement and proclaimed the equality of men and women."[101] From the first utterance at the Seneca Fall convention in 1848, until the ultimate ratification in 1920, a battle of equality and individuality was waged. The suffrage movement spanned 72 years and affected numerous men and women in the process. The people supporting the movement endured much ridicule and numerous trials due to their views and challenge to the status quo. When the woman suffrage movement culminated in a federal amendment, some championed the initiative and some were full of disdain. As the ratification of the amendment found its way to the south, the obstacles only increased as states rights and race issues came to the forefront of most arguments. The suffrage movement intentions were not to reshape the political system. The idea that women deserve to be citizens and to have their own opinions heard in the political arena was merely a quest for equality. The woman suffrage movement was a radical initiative aimed at advancing the lives of women. Ultimately, the movement found itself in the inhospitable south. The south was not the battleground on which the suffrage movement had wanted to fight. Yet, the south returned the final vote in securing political equality for women across the nation. August 26th, 1920, was a day of political

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[100] Ibid., 108.

[101] " Colby to Proclaim Suffrage Promptly," *New York Times,* 19 Aug 1920.

equality for women as well as a day of victory for the women and men advocating for woman suffrage.

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