

# Tennessee

## - passage of the 19th Amendment

COURTESY TENNESSEE STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Tennessee played a pivotal role in the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote in 1920. By that summer, 35 of the 36 states necessary had ratified the amendment. Eight states had rejected the amendment, and five had not voted. Suffragists saw Tennessee as their last, best hope for ratification before the 1920 presidential election. Governor Albert H. Roberts called a special session of the General Assembly on August 9 to consider the issue. Pro-suffrage and anti-suffrage activists from around the state and the country descended on Nashville,

intent on influencing the legislature. Tennessee women played a vital role in rallying support for the 19th Amendment. Ann Dallas Dudley of Nashville, Abby Crawford Milton of Chattanooga, and Sue Shelton White of Jackson were prominent among those who fought to gain popular and legislative support for women’s suffrage. Among the national suffrage leaders in Nashville that summer was Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The anti-suffrage movement also counted numerous Tennessee women among its leaders, including Josephine A. Pearson, a Monteagle educator who was president of the Tennessee State Association

Opposed to Woman Suffrage and the Southern Woman’s League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. Each of these women is represented within the collection. The summer of 1920 was one of intense pro- and anti-suffrage activity in Nashville. After the resolution passed easily in the Tennessee State Senate, both sides lobbied furiously to secure votes in the state House of Representatives where the vote was extremely close. When young Harry T. Burn of Niota changed his vote to support ratification, he broke a tie in the House of Representatives and made history. The Tennessee General Assembly voted to approve the 19th Amendment to the United

States Constitution on August 18, 1920. Opponents worked feverishly to rescind the ratification vote on constitutional technicalities. Some anti-suffrage legislators even fled the state in an attempt to prevent a quorum in the General Assembly. Their efforts failed, and on August 24, 1920, Governor Albert H. Roberts certified Tennessee’s ratification of the 19th Amendment. Two days later, U. S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby issued a proclamation that officially declared the ratification of the 19th Amendment and made it part of the United States Constitution. Tennessee provided the 36th and final state needed to ratify this landmark amendment to the U.S. Constitution.



*Women dressed in white during a suffrage march in Nashville, Tenn.*

**Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920.**

**We’re proud to recognize this historic event.**



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Women’s Suffrage  
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