

## The Ratification of the 19th Amendment - June 10, 1919

The gallery was filled with delegations of women ready to unfurl the suffrage banners. The Illinois House had just voted unanimously to ratify the 19th Amendment but later a roll call vote yielded three dissenting votes. The Amendment passed in the House 132-3. The resolution was sent to the Senate where the vote was unanimous to ratify. The vote was registered at 10:48 a.m. on June 10, 1919. Illinois was the first state to ratify the Amendment.

However, a peculiar sentence in the certified copy was called into question. "...which shall be valid for all events and purposes." The information from Washington stated the Congressional Resolution read "...all intents and purposes." Was the incorrect phrase sent to all of the states? Apparently not, only Illinois. Because of this error, the corrected Resolution of ratification was readopted on June 17, 1919. Illinois was allowed to remain the first state to ratify the Amendment.

Wisconsin was the second state to ratify the National Suffrage Amendment at 11:52 a.m., June 10, 1919. The delay was caused by a resolution to refer ratification by a vote of the people in 1920. This was defeated by a 49-8 vote. The Wisconsin House and Senate ratified the Resolution at 11:42 with an official registration of 11:52 a.m.

Michigan followed in the afternoon of June 10th with passage of the Amendment. Over the next year and a half the rest of the needed 36 states ratified the Resolution with Tennessee being the 36th and last state to ratify the resolution on August 18, 1920. The vote in Tennessee did not pass easily. Harry Burn, 24 years old, initially voted no on the resolution leaving a 48-48 tie. Harry's elderly mother intervened with a nine page letter ending with, "Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the 'rat' in ratification." Mr. Burn did change his vote and the resolution passed. The Amendment obtained the 36, two-thirds vote of the states for ratification. The United States Secretary of State, Bainbridge Colby certified the ratification on August 26, 1920. On November 2, 1920, 8 million women voted for the first time. It took sixty years for the remaining twelve states to ratify the Amendment. Mississippi was the last state to ratify the Amendment on March 22, 1984.

The 19th Amendment wasn't the first time a woman suffrage amendment was introduced to Congress. In 1878 the American Woman Suffrage Association lobbied Congress for a Constitutional Amendment. Congress did form committees to study and debate the issue. It was defeated in the Senate in 1886. Nine western states adopted

Woman Suffrage legislation by 1912. Illinois gave women the right to vote in 1913 (though only a partial ballot).

By 1916 most major suffrage organizations united behind a goal of a constitutional amendment. On May 21 1919, the United States House of Representatives voted to approve the Susan B. Anthony (19th) Amendment with a 304-90 vote. The Senate followed on June 4 with a 56-25 vote sending the 19th Amendment to the States for two-thirds ratification.

Marge Massarello, League of Women Voters Oak Park-River Forest

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The Chicago Daily Tribune - June 11, 1919.