



Creating a More Perfect Democracy

This is the first in a series of monthly articles covering some of the history of the League of Women Voters, as well as the women's suffrage movement that led to the enactment of the 19th Amendment (August 26, 1920) and the creation of the League in Chicago on February 14, 1920. Start counting up to 100!

In February 1920 at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, the National American Woman Suffrage Association led by Carrie Chapman Catt and the National Council of Women Voters founded by Emma Smith Devoe in 1910 were meeting to discuss how to move forward. The 19th Amendment has been passed by both Houses of Congress and was in the process of being ratified by the states. It was expected that the Amendment would receive the necessary state ratifications to become part of the Constitution later that year.

*Thursday February 12, 1920
Chicago, Illinois*

The first evening of the 51st Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) began with a heated discussion drawn along Party lines. Do we owe the passage of the Federal Suffrage Amendment to the Republicans or the Democrats? This debate followed a paid advertisement by the Republican Party stating "To the Republican Party you owe the passage of the federal suffrage amendment and it will be responsible for the ratification soon to come." The Chair of the Democratic Party responded that the Democratic Party had done more to advance women's suffrage than any other party.

Another issue was drawn along organization lines. Should the education of the soon to be enfranchised women be carried out by the NAWSA or should this suffrage group disband and unite with the National Council of Women Voters to create a new group? The recommendation was to vote to merge and create a new group which was to be called the League of Women Voters. This new group decided to urge women to vote irrespective of party lines and to foster an atmosphere of non-partisanship at the Convention which became a guiding principle of the League.

Although the halls of the Congress Hotel in downtown Chicago buzzed with politics on topics ranging from labor problems to issues of women's rights, no partisan political discussions were allowed in the conference rooms.

This is a small peek into the first League of Women Voters Convention in 1920 with a thank you to the Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Historical Society.

BE INFORMED AND VOTE

Celebrate the League of Women Voters and the 19th Amendment

1920 - 2020