

Delaware Women's Suffrage Timeline

Compiled by the Delaware Historical Society

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1868	Mary Ann Sorden Stuart of Greenwood begins to fight for women's rights.
Nov. 12, 1869	Wilmington's first women's rights convention. Abolitionist Thomas Garrett presides, Lucy Stone speaks. Delaware Suffrage Association, with Emma Worrell as Corresponding Secretary and Dr. John Cameron as Recording Secretary, founded. It affiliates with Lucy Stone's American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).
1870's	Married women in Delaware receive the right to make wills, own property, and control their earnings.
1870s	Delawareans Dr. John Cameron, Isabella Hendry Cameron, Dr. Mary Homer York Heald, Samuel D. Forbes and Mrs. Elizabeth Forbes regularly attend AWSA conventions as delegates.
1878	Mary Ann Sorden Stuart testifies before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in favor of women's suffrage. Stuart is the Delaware representative for the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.
1881	Mary Ann Sorden Stuart, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony address Delaware general assembly in an attempt to amend the state constitution to allow women's suffrage.
1884	Belva Lockwood, the "woman's rights candidate for president," speaks at Delaware College in Newark at the invitation of the college's women students. In 1885, the college's trustees end co-education, an "experiment" begun in 1872.
1888	Delaware Woman's Christian Temperance Union endorses women's suffrage.
1890	The AWSA and NWSA unite to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).
June 1895	Commencement exercises at Howard High School feature a debate on woman suffrage and an address by Mary Church Terrell, first president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).
1895	Wilmington Equal Suffrage Club (or Association) organized.
1895	Delaware Equal Suffrage Association (DESA) founded, affiliated with the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). By May, 1896, DESA has seventeen affiliated clubs.
December 1896	Delaware State Grange endorses woman suffrage
Jan. 13, 1897	Carrie Chapman Catt, Martha Churchman Cranston, Emalea Pusey Warner, Margaret White Houston, and Emma Worrell address hearing at Delaware constitutional convention in favor of suffrage. The Committee on Elections votes against women's suffrage.

1900	Eligible women paying a real estate tax in Delaware can vote for school commissioners.
1900	Wilmington's Emily Bissell testifies before U.S. House & Senate Committees opposing woman suffrage.
1909	DESA signs on to help NAWSA "great petition drive" for a federal suffrage amendment.
1911	Dr. Josephine White De Lacour, M.D., runs for election to the Wilmington school board, her second time; she is supported by the Wilmington Equal Suffrage Association.
1912	Led by Frank Stephens, the Arden single-tax colony forms a suffrage club, affiliated with DESA.
1912	Alice Paul becomes chair of Congressional Committee of NAWSA, bringing new life to the suffrage movement through a demand for an amendment to the United States Constitution alongside state-by-state efforts.
1913	Equal suffrage amendment to state constitution fails in Delaware General Assembly.
February 1913	"General" Rosalie Gardiner Jones and her group of "suffrage pilgrims" walk through Delaware on their way to the March 3 national suffrage parade in Washington, D.C.
March 3, 1913	Delaware suffragists participate in the big national suffrage parade in Washington, D.C. planned and carried out by NAWSA's Congressional Committee, led by Alice Paul. Spectators mob the suffragists.
1913	Alice Paul forms the Congressional Union (CU), affiliated with NAWSA but run separately, and focusing on a national amendment.
Summer 1913	Wilmington's Mabel Vernon hired as a CU organizer for Delaware; holds a series of suffrage meetings, including street corner speeches and rallies..
Sept. 1913	Florence Bayard Hilles hears Mabel Vernon speak at DESA's suffrage tent at the State Fair in Wilmington and is converted to the suffrage cause.
Sept. 1913	Joint CU-DESA headquarters open at Seventh and Shipley streets in Wilmington with Mabel Vernon in charge.
Nov. 23, 1913	Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, noted English suffragette, speaks in Wilmington.
December 1913	Emily Bissell speaks before the U.S. House Rules Committee as President of the Delaware Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage
March 19, 1914	Led by Alice Moore Dunbar (later Dunbar-Nelson) Emma Gibson Sykes, Blanche Williams Stubbs, Mary J. Woodlen, Alice Gertrude Baldwin, and others, African American suffragists organize the Equal Suffrage Study Club
March 1914	Florence Bayard Hilles becomes Delaware chairman of the CU; begins to plan suffrage parade in Wilmington, May 2.
Apr. 25, 1914	DESA plants suffrage tree, a pin oak, at north end of Van Buren Street Bridge in Wilmington.
May 2, 1914	Big suffrage parade in Wilmington.
May 9, 1914	Some Wilmington suffragists travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in national parade.
Summer 1914	Florence Bayard Hilles and Miss Elsie Hill speak in 7 towns on a two-day tour of Delaware.

October 1914	Wilmington Equal Suffrage Association holds school contest for best essays on woman suffrage.
Jan.-Feb. 1915	In support of equal suffrage amendment to state constitution, the “Votes for Women Flyer,” Florence Bayard Hilles’s gaily decorated car, tours the state, taking the suffrage message to many small towns.
February 1915	Alice Paul re-brands the federal suffrage amendment as the “Susan B. Anthony” amendment, to differentiate it from other proposals.
Feb-March 1915	Blanche Williams Stubbs and Mary J. Woodlen publish letters in Wilmington newspapers criticizing racist opposition to African American women’s quest for voting rights.
Mar. 1915	Equal suffrage amendment to state constitution fails in Delaware General Assembly.
June 1915	DESA and CU split, with DESA moving out of joint headquarters at 305 Delaware Avenue in Wilmington.
July-November, 1915	Alice Moore Dunbar (later Dunbar-Nelson) travels throughout Pennsylvania encouraging voters to support woman suffrage in the November referendum. The referendum fails.
September 1915	Mabel Vernon and Florence Bayard Hilles represent Delaware at the CU’s Women Voters Convention in California.
September 25, 1915	Florence Bayard Hilles and Emily Bissell debate woman suffrage at a local Methodist Church
November 1915	Martha Churchman Cranston retires as DESA President after 20 years of service. DESA has 270 dues-paying members.
April 1916	Florence Bayard Hilles joins CU-sponsored “Suffrage Special” train trip through full-suffrage states.
June 1916	DESA President Mary Clare Brassington attends both political party conventions to lobby for suffrage planks in party platforms.
June 1916	CU becomes National Woman’s Party, completing its split from NAWSA
July 4, 1916	Mabel Vernon heckles Woodrow Wilson from the platform at an event in Washington.
July 8, 1916	DESA Congressional Committee chair Mary Ospina polls all Delaware members of Congress regarding their suffrage views.
July 1916	Alice Dunbar-Nelson attends Delaware CU convention as a “fraternal delegate” from the Garrett Settlement House.
August 1916	Delaware Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs forms with Blanche Williams Stubbs as president.
October 23, 1916	DESA sponsors “Federal Amendment Day” in Wilmington.
November 1916	Jeannette Rankin (R-Montana), becomes the first woman elected to serve in the U.S. Congress. As an NAWSA organizer, Rankin had visited Delaware in 1913.
Dec. 1916	Delaware CU claims 36 branch organizations.
Dec. 1916	Mabel Vernon and Florence Bayard Hilles are in a group that unfurls a suffrage banner in Congress during a speech by Woodrow Wilson.
January 1917	John G. Townsend, Jr., inaugurated as Delaware’s governor; declares his support for suffrage.

Jan. 10, 1917	NWP "Silent Sentinels" begin to picket the White House.
February 3, 1917	Florence Bayard Hilles (pro) and Mary Wilson Thompson (anti) issue statements on the equal suffrage amendment being introduced into the Delaware General Assembly; the amendment fails in late February.
Feb. 18, 1917	15 "wage-earning women" from Delaware, including Annie Arniel, Mary E. Brown, and Agnes Yerger and her daughter Naomi Schopfer go to Washington to do NWP picket duty at the White House.
Feb 18, 1917	Delaware Association of Women Opposed to Woman's suffrage goes to Dover for a General Assembly hearing.
Mar. 1, 1917	Delaware Day: all White House pickets, led by Mabel Vernon, are from Delaware.
April 6, 1917	Woodrow Wilson officially declares war on Germany. NAWSA and NWP take different positions on pursuing suffrage during wartime.
June 22, 1917	First arrest of suffrage pickets at the White House.
June 25, 1917	12 women arrested, including Mabel Vernon and Annie Arniel of Delaware, on charge of "obstructing traffic." Sentenced to 3 days in the District of Columbia jail.
July 14, 1917	16 women, including Florence Bayard Hilles, arrested at White House Sentenced to 60 days in the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia. Pardoned by Woodrow Wilson after serving 3 days of their sentence.
November 5, 1917	Some jailed suffragists, including Alice Paul, begin hunger strikes in a bid to be considered political prisoners.
November 6, 1917	New York women win the right to vote through a referendum.
November 7, 1917	Josephine Anderson du Pont holds a reception for Annie Arniel, just released from the Occoquan Workhouse after serving 63 days.
November 23, 1917	DESA goes on record as opposing picketing.
January 10, 1918	The U.S. House passes the suffrage amendment; sends it to the Senate.
Mar. 1918	Washington Court of Appeals declares all suffrage arrests, trials, punishments illegal.
June 1918	A group of suffragist munitions workers from Delaware, led by Florence Bayard Hilles, who also works in the factory, wait at the White House for 2 weeks in a futile effort to see Woodrow Wilson.
Aug. 6, 1918	Arrests of White House pickets resume.
August, 1918	Alice Dunbar-Nelson begins serving as a field representative for the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense.
October 1, 1918	U.S. Senate (65 th Congress) defeats suffrage amendment; both Delaware senators vote against it.
Fall 1918	Eva Halpern Robin becomes DESA President
November, 1918	DESA collects over 11,000 signatures on a suffrage petition to Delaware's 2 senators; members hand out suffrage literature at the polls.
November 11, 1918	Armistice ends the Great War.

December 2, 1918	Woodrow Wilson urges the new 66 th Congress to pass the suffrage amendment when it convenes in December 1919.
Dec. 16, 1918	Suffragists begin to burn Woodrow Wilson's words in watch fires in front of the White House.
Jan 1-20, 1919	Perpetual watch fires lit at the White House. Delaware suffragists Catherine Boyle, Annie Arniel, Mary E. Brown, Annie McGee, Adelina Piunti, Naomi Schopfer Barrett and others participate. Several arrested.
January 3, 1919	18 th Amendment (Prohibition) ratified.
Feb 9, 1919	President Woodrow Wilson burned in effigy at the White House.
Feb 10, 1919	U.S. Senate (65 th Congress) defeats suffrage amendment. Both Delaware's U.S. Senators vote no.
May 19, 1919	Wilson calls new 66 th Congress into special session
May 21, 1919	U.S. House (66 th Congress) passes suffrage amendment.
June 4, 1919	U.S. Senate (66 th Congress) approves suffrage amendment. 36 states needed to ratify. .
June 26, 1919	DESA holds "victory luncheon" in Wilmington; makes plans for Delaware ratification.
Summer, 1919	DESA and NWP lobby Governor Townsend to call a special session of the General Assembly to consider ratification.
Aug. 3, 1919	NWP ratification rally in Wilmington. Alice Gertrude Baldwin speaks on "The Colored Teacher's Tale."
Aug. 9, 1919	Ratification rally in Dover.
November 1919	DESA votes to open a headquarters in Dover in anticipation of a special session being called; elects Dover's Mabel Lloyd Ridgely as president.
March 22- June 2, 1920	Special Session of Delaware General Assembly to consider suffrage amendment. Pro and Anti forces mobilize for a big fight. Great national interest because if successful, Delaware would be the final state needed to ratify. Senate ratifies; House does not.
April 5, 1920	Emma Gibson Sykes published letter in Sunday <i>Star</i> criticizing racist opposition to woman suffrage.
April 1920	Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Florence Bayard Hilles together address gatherings of Delaware African American suffragists.
April 20, 1920	Big suffrage rally in Dover.
June 2, 1920	Delaware General Assembly adjourns without ratifying the amendment.
August 18, 1920	Tennessee becomes the final state to ratify the 19 th Amendment.
Aug. 26, 1920	Woman's suffrage becomes part of the United States Constitution.
August – November 1920	Delaware women organize, register, and go to the polls. DESA regroups as League of Women Voters (LWV).
1923	Delaware General Assembly ratifies the 19 th Amendment.