
U.S. National Woman's Party campaigns for suffrage, 1914-1920

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) women](#) [1]
- [an example of paradox of repression](#) [2]

Timing

February

1914

to:

August 24,

1920

Location and Goals

Country:

United States

Location City/State/Province:

Primarily focused in Washington, D.C.

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

Primary: The passage of the 19th amendment, which would secure women citizens the right to vote

Long-term: Full equality regardless of sex under the law

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals>weekly suffragist newspaper
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors>purple, white, and gold flags
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals>weekly suffragist newspaper
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors>purple, white, and gold flags
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals›weekly suffragist newspaper
- 016. Picketing
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors›purple, white, and gold flags
- 023. Destruction of own property
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 4th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals›weekly suffragist newspaper
- 016. Picketing
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors›purple, white, and gold flags
- 023. Destruction of own property
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 102. Prisoners' strike
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals›weekly suffragist newspaper
- 016. Picketing
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors›purple, white, and gold flags
- 023. Destruction of own property
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 102. Prisoners' strike
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Methods in 6th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals›weekly suffragist newspaper
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors›purple, white, and gold flags
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 015. Group lobbying
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 042. Motorcades

- 177. Speak-in

Segment Length:

Approximately 1 year 1 month

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- Female citizens (primarily white)

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Primary: Alice Paul, Lucy Burns

Secondary: Inez Boissevain, Elsie Hill, Dora Lewis, Anita Pollitzer, Doris Stevens, Mabel Vernon, Rose Winslow

Partners:

NAWSA (National American Women's Suffrage Association)

External allies:

Labor unions

Socialist Party

Involvement of social elites:

Senators and senators' wives (financial and political support)

Many women of the upper classes and wives and daughters of men of prominent social status including generals and ambassadors.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

Joining order not known

Segment Length:

Approximately 1 year 1 month

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

U.S. Federal Government

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

Violence against demonstrators, marchers and picketers at the hands of onlookers. Beatings and force feedings inflicted upon suffragette prisoners

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Total points:

10 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

The National Woman's Party, along with other suffragettes, succeeded in securing their right to vote through the passage of the 19th amendment. They also drew closer to full equality under the law and in years ensuing many suffragettes began the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment.

The National Woman's Party grew from just local support to national membership and extensive media coverage.

When Alice Paul emerged into the somewhat stagnant scene of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association's (NAWSA) campaign for the right to vote in 1912, the energy and momentum of the movement surged. Having just come from Britain where women were fighting a similar battle in which they were imprisoned, partaking in hunger strikes and smashing windows, NAWSA's polite pleading over a cup of tea with political leaders and legislators was not only ineffective in the eyes of Paul and other emerging women leaders, it was a blow to the dignity of women to request basic human rights. And therefore, Paul began to demand them.

Heading the Congressional Union committee of NAWSA, Paul and Lucy Burns stepped up as leaders in a dramatic way. To begin, they organized a march in Washington, DC, in which 8,000 women partook, complete with costumes, banners, and a pageant. The idea was to portray women, such as Joan of Arc and Sappho, as strong, noble and beautiful. It was during this parade, in which opponents of the campaigners shouted insults and nearly broke into riots while police stood idly by, that the women began to realize the intensity of the opposition.

Shortly after the parade in 1913, the Congressional Union split from NAWSA over disagreements in tactics and their desire to administer federal as opposed to state pressure. The Congressional Union then took the name the National Women's Party and began their separate campaign for the passage of the 19th amendment. The women waged struggle, sending delegations to the U.S. capital to lobby for support, while leaders began to speak in the streets to rally more women to the cause. Through the use of forceful tactics such as large demonstrations, caravans riding across the U.S., mass petitions, and public burnings of Wilson's speeches, the NWP successfully put women's suffrage back to the forefront of political dialogue.

As national participation grew, Paul looked to ways of increasing pressure on President Wilson. In January of 1917 members of the National Women's Party began picketing the White House. Everyday for the next 16 months women were at the gates with banners demanding the right to vote. In the first couple months of picketing Wilson assumed they would tire quickly and simply tipped his hat as he drove away. When the United States entered into World War I in April of 1917, to the surprise of many, the picketing continued. Believing that democracy should begin at home, the banners took a sharp turn, quoting Wilson's words about protecting democracy to reveal his hypocrisy. Some boldly read "Kaiser Wilson." As wartime patriotism escalated, these banners instigated many instances of violent responses from onlookers and officials looked for ways to put an end to the demonstrations.

Picketers were arrested on the charge of "obstructing traffic," and prisons began to fill with suffragettes. Women continued to picket knowing their fate and were sentenced to increasingly longer prison terms. Most refused to work and many began a hunger strike initiated by Paul in protest of their imprisonment. The Occoquan workhouse was notorious for bad conditions but the suffragettes were subjected to particularly harsh treatment there, including instances of beatings, worm infested food, and inhumane force feedings. When the public became aware of the women's treatment, sympathy and support for the campaign swelled and many picketers were released. Under national pressure, Wilson began to publicly support women's suffrage as a war time measure and urged the passage of the 19th amendment. On June 4, 1920, the amendment passed through the House and Senate. On August 18, Tennessee became the needed 36th state for ratification. On November 2, 1920, women across the country voted for the first time. The NWP continued to fight for women's equality by proposing the Equal Rights Amendment for which Paul dedicated her life to until her death in 1977.

Research Notes

Influences:

This campaign was influenced by the more violent British women's campaign for suffrage (1).

This campaign also influenced the movement for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (2).

Sources:

The Library of Congress American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/suffrage/nwp/index.html>

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Lakey, George. *Powerful Peacemaking: A Strategy for a living Revolution*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987.

Lakey, George. "Technique and Ethos in Nonviolent Action: The Woman Suffrage Case." *Sociological Inquiry*. 38.1(1968): 37-42.

Additional Notes:

Throughout WW1 the Women's Party remained opposed to the war, displaying signs such as "democracy begins at home" strengthening their relationship with the Socialist Party, which also opposed the war.

Edited by Max Rennebohm (30/07/2011)

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Sarah Noble, 18/08/2008

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