



## How Did your Club Celebrate?

On August 26, 1920, 72 years of suffragists' activism across the nation culminated into the adoption of the 19th Amendment. The Amendment granted voting rights to a larger population than any other act of legislation in American history, and people wondered what might come next.

The first presidential election after the Amendment's adoption quickly revealed that women were not a monolith and would not vote in a bloc. The election also resulted in a lower voter turnout than anticipated, which spurred women across the country into action. Beyond the ballot box, the 19th Amendment had opened new avenues of political power and influence for women. Twenty women's organizations, including GFWC, quickly joined forces to form the Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC). The WJCC helped to advocate for policy that would improve the lives of women and children. The coalition, which represented twenty million women, helped to pass legislation such as the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act.

Enfranchisement also meant that the women of America could have female representation in their state governments. GFWC clubwoman Nellie Tyloe Ross helped to ensure this when she became the first female Governor of Wyoming in 1925. As Governor, Ross championed government assistance for the poor, banking reform, and laws that protected female workers and prohibited child labor. Ross again made history in 1933 when she was sworn in as the first female Director of the United States Mint.

Following 1920, women also rose to power within the halls of Congress. Clubwoman Margaret Chase Smith became the first woman to serve in both houses of Congress as a member of the House of Representatives (1940–1949) and the Senate (1949–1973). Smith also became the first woman candidate to be put forth for nomination for the Presidency at a major party's convention in 1964.

Beyond electoral politics, women also continued to grow their grassroots activism after 1920, affecting policymaking from the ground up. Clubwomen such as Lilly Ledbetter continue to have a reverberating effect on the country and on legislation that pushes towards true equality for women.

Although the 19th Amendment did not enfranchise all women or close the gender gap in the United States, it helped women accomplish feats that would have otherwise been impossible. Women have voted at a higher rate than men in every presidential election since 1984. In 2019, women held nine governorships, 24 seats in the Senate, and 102 seats in the House of Representatives.

How did your club celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> Admendment? Email [PR@GFWC.org](mailto:PR@GFWC.org) a summary and action-packed photo of how your club celebrated the Suffrage Centennial (while following local social distancing guidelines).