

THE 19th CENTURY



In 1849 women consisted of only 2% of the immigrants to California. In an effort to attract more women, the delegates to the 1849 constitutional convention added a provision that allowed a married woman the right to own separate property.

Image Courtesy of California State Archives



Kate Kennedy, an Irish immigrant to San Francisco, lobbied the state legislature for equal pay for woman teachers. In 1874 the state legislature passed a law that stated: "Females employed as teachers in the public schools of this state shall in all cases receive the same compensation as is allowed male teachers for like services."

Photograph
Courtesy of California State Library



Clara Shortridge Foltz, a single mother with little income, played an important role in California history. In 1878, Clara decided to pursue a law career. California state law at the time limited the practice of law to "white males only." Clara drafted legislation to eliminate both gender and racial discrimination in the legal profession, and she fought successfully to get her bill passed.

Photograph
Courtesy of California State Library

Although the first attempt to give women the right to vote failed in 1896, women in 19th century California gained some rights in their struggle for equality in areas of property, equal pay and discrimination.



Laura De Force Gordon, journalist, lawyer and suffragist, was instrumental in changing state government to promote women's rights. Together with Clara Foltz, Gordon convinced the state legislature to pass a bill in 1878 that allowed women to enter the state bar. A year later Gordon wrote a small section in the 1879 constitution outlawing discrimination based on gender.

Photograph
Courtesy of California State Library

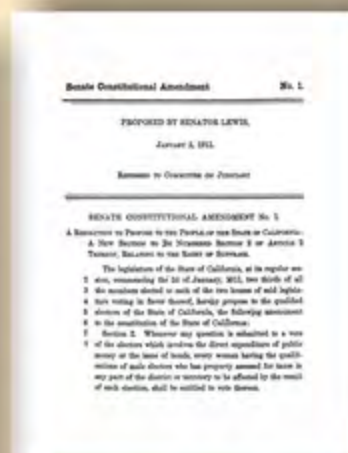
"No person shall, on account of sex, be disqualified from entering upon or pursuing any lawful business, vocation or profession."

THE RIGHT TO VOTE



Woman suffragettes marching down K Street,
Sacramento.
C. 1911

Photograph
Courtesy of California State Library



Originally introduced in 1896, the state constitutional amendment allowing women the right to vote was reintroduced and passed in 1911 as part of the Progressive Era reforms.

Copy courtesy of
California State Library



Unidentified women voting in the 1912 state election.
San Francisco
1912

Photograph
Courtesy of California State Library

In 1911 California became the 6th state to give women the right to vote. The California Equal Suffrage League, the statewide organization for women's suffrage, formed a coalition with the Progressive movement in California. This strategy was successful in grouping the women's right to vote issue with other Progressive reforms.

1912 - 1970



This cartoon provided editorial support for the minimum wage law and other legislation proposed by the progressives, 1911-1913. Note especially the startled reaction of "Plutocracy" in the lower left-hand corner. (Courtesy of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA)

Source : *California An Interpretive History*
James J. Rawls and Walton Bean



First Women in the Legislature

Left to Right:

Grace Doris, Esto Broughton, Anna Saylor and Elizabeth Hughes

Riding on the coattails of the Progressive Era, the first four women were elected in 1918 to the State Assembly. All four were re-elected but lost their seats to men by 1924. Over the next 50 years only 10 other women served in the Assembly.

Photographs

Courtesy of California State Library

In the first of half of the 20th century other major advances in women's rights occurred. A minimum wage state law was passed in 1913 and the first women entered the Legislature in 1918.

1971 - 2002



In 1976, Rose Ann Vuich became the first woman elected to the state Senate in California. Senator Vuich would ring a cowbell in the Chambers each time a male colleague addressed the "Gentlemen of the Senate," forgetting to recognize their female members. A copy room was quickly remodeled when she arrived at the Capitol, because there were no facilities nearby for women. This rest room, the "Rose Room," is named in her honor. Senator Vuich chaired the Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce, and International Trade, and was a member of the Agriculture and Water, Transportation, Local Government, Budget and Joint Rules Committees.



On June 5, 1995, Doris Allen became the first woman elected as Speaker of the Assembly. Allen only served 3 months as Speaker but also chaired the Committee on Rules and the Select Committee on the Insolvency of Orange County.



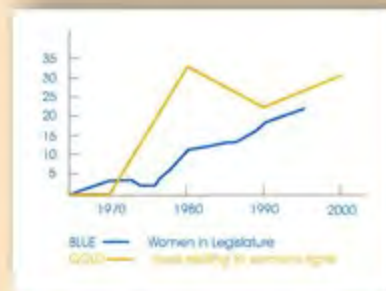
California Legislative Women's Caucus 2001

From left to right
1st row front - Sarah Reyes, Carol Liu, Gloria Negrete McLeod, Sheila Kuehl, Betty Kermetta, Writta Chan, Liz Figueroa.
2nd row back - Nell Soto, Carole Migden, Debra Bowen, Hannah-Beth Jackson, Martha Escutia, Gloria Romero.
3rd row back - Elaine Alquist, Rebecca Cohn, Charlene Zettel, Lynn Daucher, Fran Pavley, Jackie Goldberg.
4th row back - Helen Thomson, Dede Alpert, Virginia Strom-Martin, Christine Kehoe, Ellen M. Corbett, Jenny Oropeza.

The California Legislative Women's Caucus was formed as a bipartisan group of women legislators in 1985. The purpose of the Women's Caucus is to encourage collegiality, participation in and cooperation in California government and to promote the interests of women, children and families through legislation.



Martha M. Escutia was first elected to the California Legislature in November 1992 to represent the heavily Latino 50th Assembly District in southeast Los Angeles County. In 1998 she was elected to the California Senate and now represents the 30th Senate District. As a freshman Senator, Escutia was honored to receive the chairmanship of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, and in 2000, she was the first Latina appointed as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. In the Assembly, Escutia became the first woman to chair the Assembly Judiciary Committee. In January 2002, she became the new chair of the California Legislative Women's Caucus.



The women's rights movement reappeared in the second half of the 20th century. Women's struggle for equality was tied with the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The effects were felt by the 1970's in the legislature. The first woman was elected to the Senate in 1976 and the number of women in elected office and laws passed affecting women climbed dramatically from 1970 to the present.