

Women's Rights Newscast

Class Procedure: The class will be graded together on the flow of the newscast and the organization between groups along with the final segment the group creates. Each class will choose an anchor and a co-anchor who will set the order of the presentation and handle the lead ins to the subtopics, writes and reads off the lead story. In addition, an Executive Producer and editor will work with this group.

Preparation: Read your section interactively noting some statistics and ideas you'd like to include in the newscast. Consider these questions for your topic:

What were the chief frustrations of the women's movement on your topic?

What were the most prominent successes of the women's movement in your topic area?

What obstacles and failures did feminists experience in fighting for change?

In what significant ways did the reforms change American society?

Did the women achieve full equity in your area?

What remains to be done to earn equality?

Bring some costumes and props to class that you might use for your story.

Day of: Write the script of your story, find appropriate attire and for your presentation, rehearse it, film it (2-4 minutes) and edit it. Yes, in literally one period so get to work.

Politics: Key Concerns of the Women's Movement: Politically, women had almost no role in the infancy of the republic. The long struggle for equality in the political sphere is still a work in progress. Women were initially only allowed out of the household to discuss issues dealing with the home and hearth. Thus, women's first political influence dealt with slavery and their children in school board meetings. The journey west changed pioneering women. The hardships of the trail brought out strengths and abilities they did not know they possessed. "I felt a secret joy," declared one Oregon pioneer, "in being able to have the power that sets things going." And women did set things going. Wherever they settled, schools, churches, libraries, literary societies, and charitable groups soon blossomed. Thus, it's not an accident that women were permitted to vote first in Western states.

Social Struggles Lead to the Push for the Vote: In their push for abolition, women found struggles in participating being treated as second class citizens. Out of this movement came the campaign to vote with the Seneca Falls Conference in 1848. There, women voted to push for their own rights first to help with abolition in the end. Yet, by 1900, women had won their fight for suffrage in only four western states. Elsewhere, the drive for voting rights seemed stalled. Yet, the Progressive movement, breathed new life into movement for suffrage. Many Progressives believed that their reforms would be adopted more quickly by passing the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote. By 1918, women could vote in 12 states, but they had made little progress on the suffrage amendment. The Woman's Party began holding silent vigils outside the White House. The protesters held banners that read, "Mr. President, What Will You Do for Woman Suffrage?" and "How Long Must Women Wait for

Liberty?” Eventually in 1919, partially due to the contributions made in WW1 the amendment past and was ratified in 1920.

Second Women’s Movement: Despite earning suffrage, women in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, saw themselves as second class citizens. Millions of Americans joined in a new women’s movement. Much of the credit for sparking this movement went to Betty Friedan. Her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* challenged the notion that women should be content to be just wives and mothers. This idea, she argued, was used to keep women from competing on equal terms with men. In 1966 Friedan founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). Today, NOW is the nation’s largest feminist group.

Another key concern for the women’s movement was concern for a woman’s right to choose and access to contraception. Far-reaching court decisions affecting women was the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. This case established a women’s legal right to a medically safe abortion. Another key piece of feminist legislation was the Equal Rights Amendment. After being ignored by Congress for 50 years, it was finally debated and passed in 1972, and then sent to the states for ratification. Twenty states passed it within six months, but conservative opposition brought ratification to a standstill, and it did not become law. One of the movement’s greatest successes was helping push Title IX through Congress. Part of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Title IX outlawed sex discrimination in educational programs that received federal money.

Changes in Political Representation The women’s movement also prompted dramatic growth in women’s political prominence after 1970. The most immediate result of the NWPC’s work was a significant change in party politics: the Democratic convention’s percentage of women delegates skyrocketed from 13 percent in 1968 to 40 percent in 1972; the percentage of Republican women delegates grew from 17 percent in 1968 to 30 percent in 1972. This led to many more women running for public office. For example, the number of women candidates for state legislative positions increased 300 percent from 1972 to 1974. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, increasing numbers of women ran for elected office at the local, state, and national levels—some for positions never filled by women before. By 1996, 8 women senators and 47 female representatives meant that a record 10 percent of Congress was female. Fourteen were women of color. Despite the progress, however, few people expected the rate of change to be so slow; women still held less than one fourth of all elected offices in 1996.

Changes in Views About Women in Politics The increase in representation also created some positive changes in the public’s attitude about women in politics—but not without struggles. In the book *In the Company of Women*, prominent Minnesota politician Joan Anderson Grove recalls some of the challenges:

In 1974, when I ran for secretary of state [of Minnesota], I was treated differently from the other candidates. All people were interested in was... “What were my children doing without me?” “How did my husband feel about it. ”...But after being in office for a while, I found acceptance with the voters and in the party. They didn't view me as just a female anymore. But it all came back in '84 when I ran for the U.S. Senate. The sexism was pervasive there, the rules were different because a woman was ahead [in the race].... The questions the reporters asked

me...were unbelievable.... I'd go out and talk about arms control, and they'd say, "How old are your children ? "

Today: Three decades later, after a bruising presidential election between a woman who aimed to break the "ultimate glass ceiling" and a man whose rhetoric was reminiscent of a pre-feminist era, demonstrated that women still had not achieved equality. In protest, women marched and drew between 3,267,134 and 5,246,670 people in the U.S., (approximately 1.6 percent of the U.S. population).

Today's congressional representation shows that women still haven't achieved parity. In the history of the senate, only 57 women have ever served. The first woman wasn't elected to serve a full term until 1978. The trend of few women in the Senate began to change in the wake of the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination hearings. The supreme court justice was accused of sexual harassment and the all male committee running the hearings did not appear to give equal treatment to his accusers. The subsequent election in 1992, which was dubbed the "Year of the Woman" and four new women were elected to make a total of six. Even then, whole rooms in the senate were off limits to the female senators, bathroom facilities for women in the Senate on the Senate Chamber level were not provided until that year. Women were not allowed to wear pants on the Senate floor until 1993. Today, there is an all time high of twenty five women while 24% of the house of representatives is female.

The pre-eminent women's political organizations fighting for women in the country are the National Origin of Women and Emily's List. NOW describes it's role as an organization to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. Emily's List says it fights for women's health care, equal pay, and paid leave.