

# HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE LEGISLATURE



In **1854** as Washington territory was being formed, the Territorial Convention nearly granted women the right to vote, but the women's suffrage proposal was defeated by a single vote. In 1881, the Territorial House passed legislation granting women the right to vote, but it failed in the Council on a 5 to 7 vote. The issue was debated every session thereafter. The constant protesting and pushing by the Washington Equal Suffrage Association, organized by Susan B. Anthony and Abigail Scott Duniway in 1871, led the Territorial Legislature to grant full voting rights to women in **1883**. But in 1887, the Territorial Supreme Court overturned that law. Another law was enacted in 1888, but that was also quickly overturned. The efforts of women voters opposing the sale of liquor led others to fight to remove their voting rights. The State Constitutional Convention of 1889 did not include women's suffrage in its constitutional proposal to Congress. The questions of voting rights for women, prohibition and siting the state capitol were submitted as separate ballot actions and the male voters disapproved of women's suffrage and prohibition.

In **1910**, voters in Washington approved Amendment 6 to the State Constitution granting women the right to vote. This broke a 14-year gridlock in the national women's suffrage crusade; the state became the fifth in the nation to enfranchise women – the first on the Pacific coast. In **1920**, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution won the necessary two-thirds ratification from state legislatures and women's suffrage became the law of the land on August 26.

Nationally, the number of female lawmakers in state legislatures steadily climbed in the 1920s and gained more with the women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, according to research by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. In 1998 and 2004, Washington State had the distinction of electing the highest percentage of women to its Statehouse, 38.78% in 1998 and 36.73% in 2004. The state consistently ranks within the top four of all states.

Year	Senate	House	Total	Members	Percent
2023	20	47	67	147	45.58%
2022	20	42	62	147	42.18%
2021	19	42	61	147	41.50%
2020	19	40	59	147	40.14%
2019	20	40	60	147	40.82%
2018	19	36	55	147	37.41%
2017	18	36	54	147	36.73%
2016	17	33	50	147	34.01%
2015	18	31	49	147	33.33%
2014	18	30	48	147	32.65%
2013	17	28	45	147	30.61%
2012	18	29	47	147	31.97%
2011	17	30	47	147	31.97%
2010	19	29	48	147	32.65%
2009	19	29	48	147	32.65%
2008	20	32	52	147	35.37%
2007	20	28	48	147	32.65%
2006	20	29	49	147	33.33%
2005	20	29	49	147	33.33%
2004	23	31	54	147	36.73%
2003	21	33	54	147	36.73%
2002	23	34	57	147	38.78%
2001	23	34	57	147	38.78%
2000	23	37	60	147	40.82%
1999	23	37	60	147	40.82%
1998	22	35	57	147	38.78%
1997	23	35	58	147	39.46%
1996	21	40	61	147	41.50%
1995*	20	38	58	147	39.46%
1993	18	40	58	147	39.46%
1991	12	35	47	147	31.97%
1989	10	32	42	147	28.57%
1987	7	30	37	147	25.17%
1985	7	28	35	147	23.81%
1983	8	20	28	147	19.05%

Year	Senate	House	Total	Members	Percent
1981	8	27	35	147	23.81%
1979	7	20	27	147	18.37%
1977	6	17	23	147	15.65%
1975	4	14	18	147	12.24%
1973	0	12	12	147	8.16%
1971	0	8	8	148	5.41%
1969	0	7	7	148	4.73%
1967	1	7	8	148	5.41%
1965	1	10	11	148	7.43%
1963	1	9	10	148	6.76%
1961	1	9	10	148	6.76%
1959	0	11	11	148	7.43%
1957	0	12	12	145	8.28%
1955	0	9	9	145	6.21%
1953	0	9	9	145	6.21%
1951	0	7	7	145	4.83%
1949	0	7	7	145	4.83%
1947	0	3	3	145	2.07%
1945	1	7	8	145	5.52%
1943	3	9	12	145	8.28%
1941	4	4	8	145	5.52%
1939	4	4	8	145	5.52%
1937	3	5	8	145	5.52%
1935	2	8	10	145	6.90%
1933	1	5	6	145	4.14%
1931	0	3	3	139	2.16%
1929	1	4	5	139	3.60%
1927	1	1	2	139	1.44%
1925	1	3	4	139	2.88%
1923	1	4	5	138	3.62%
1921	0	1	1	138	0.72%
1919	0	1	1	139	0.72%
1917	0	1	1	139	0.72%
1915	0	0	0	139	0.00%
1913	0	2	2	139	1.44%
<i>1889-1911 Not Tracked</i>					

\* 1995 begins tracking by year.