

As I was preparing my editorial for the Summer issue, I was focused on the 19th Amendment and looking forward to voting in the primaries. Then a few weeks later I was working from home and my university moved to online classes for the rest of the spring semester. I thought about writing on the coronavirus pandemic, but every day just gets crazier and it is all I can do to just deal with the crisis, let alone write about it. So I will go with my original editorial idea, and I wish everyone in government information land good health and safety.

19th Amendment

The 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote, and reads,

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

I admit I have taken for granted the right for women to vote. That is to say, of course I get to vote for officials in the governments that have jurisdiction over me, why wouldn't I? I learned about the role of the suffragists in history classes, (as well as the words to the Schoolhouse Rock song). But with the hundredth anniversary of the 19th Amendment I did a little exploratory research and found that the passage was not as clear cut as Schoolhouse Rock or what I learned in history class. Here are some facts that puzzled me.

Even though the 19th Amendment was certified on August 26, 1920, it took more than sixty years for the remaining twelve states to ratify the 19th Amendment. Mississippi was the last to do so, on March 22, 1984.¹

Not to pick on anyone's home state, these were just some interesting facts I found when uncovering the resistance to the 19th Amendment. Women in Georgia weren't able to vote until 1922, due a law requiring Georgians to be registered for sixth

months before an election. Most other states waived this rule, allowing women to vote in the 1920 presidential election. In fact, the Georgia state legislature didn't ratify the 19th Amendment until February 20, 1970. (S.R. 304) *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Georgia* Regular Session Volume II. Atlanta, Georgia. p. 2730—mentioned because the League of Women Voters of Georgia were celebrating their fiftieth anniversary the legislature decided to pass the amendment. It stated, "Whereas the State of Georgia is proud of the outstanding record compiled by the female citizens of this State in the effective and informed use of the right to vote." The tone to me sounds like they are saying since women did not vote "the wrong way" for fifty years, they will acknowledge this milestone with an empty gesture—it is a little insulting. As I was learning all about this, I also found this article published by the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*—"Caretakers of Southern Civilization: Georgia Women and the Anti-Suffrage Campaign, 1914–1920," by Elizabeth Gillespie McRae.² The article discussed women who did not want the amendment passed because they believed they had more political influence through their husbands and relatives, and that their power would be diluted if all women were allowed to vote.

For more info about Women's Suffrage, go to <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45805>.

References

1. "Women's History: 19th Amendment by State," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/womenshistory/19th-amendment-by-state.htm>.
2. Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, "Caretakers of Southern Civilization: Georgia Women and the Anti-Suffrage Campaign, 1914–1920," in *Georgia Women: Perspectives on Class, Race, and Ethnicity*, *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 801–28, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40583906>.