

According to Alexander Keyssar, the women's suffrage movement ultimately achieved success in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment due to a combination of several factors.

Keyssar places the beginnings of the women's suffrage movement in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, (Keyssar, 173). Despite immense optimism for swift change among early reformers, it would be 72 years before the movement would obtain the universal enfranchisement it sought. Throughout the struggle, there were many reasons for slow progress and continuing resistance. While many of reasons varied from decade to decade and region to region, Keyssar identifies three broad based factors that held back the suffrage movement.

First, the generally population was unsure of how the enfranchisement of women would affect society. No one could really be sure. As Keyssar points out this brought with it "many different types of anxieties- political, social, and psychological," (Keyssar, 220). Secondly, deeply ingrained traditional beliefs about the status and place of women in society proved very difficult to undermine. Through women voting, many believed family and home life was endangered. Finally, Keyssar argues that women's suffrage came to the forefront at a time when the country's faith in democracy was declining. Often it was not a resistance to enfranchising women, but enfranchising any new voters at all. In the 19th century this meant even attempting to scale back the voting rights of those already enfranchised, including blacks, immigrants, and the poor.

Despite this resistance, Keyssar argues that suffrage movement was ultimately successful due to key factors. First, was the "endgame dynamics of party competition," (Keyssar, 217). The "endgame dynamics" meant that it was increasingly evident to legislators that women would eventually gain the vote. Not wanting to alienate this immense pool of future voters, it was politically advantageous to support female enfranchisement.

However, the origins of this notion of an endgame were not present at the beginning of the movement in the 1840s. What set this into motion were small victories achieved throughout the 19th century by women's groups at the state and local level, particularly in the West. At the head of this state strategy was the American Woman Suffrage Association founded in 1869 by Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell, (Keyssar, 184). They hoped to gain amendments to state constitutions by pressuring and lobbying constitutional conventions and state legislatures. Additionally, the AWSA and other groups sought to achieve partial suffrage on specific issues, such as schools and temperance. The state focused strategy achieved success in Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and Colorado in the late 19th century, where women were wholly enfranchised. Additionally, Keyssar points out, women obtained partial suffrage in a "significant number of locales- states, counties, and municipalities...permitting women to vote in municipal elections, on liquor licensing matters, or for local school boards of issues affecting education," (Keyssar, 186).

These gains were critical in the success of the suffrage movement. In places where women could vote or at least partially, legislators would have a reason to pressure their national party to endorse women's suffrage so that they might receive constituent support at home. This was readily apparent in Congressional Union's mobilization against Democrats in the 1914 and 1916 election. Although not successful, it put the endgame factor into play on a national level. Additionally, the endgame scenario led many political machines, long-time staunch suffrage opponents, to support the movement in the 1910s. Furthermore, in locations where women voted long before the 19th Amendment, nothing catastrophic occurred. This confirmed women's suffrage arguments and eased the fears of the opposition.

Another key factor, Keyssar points out, was the ability of the women's movement to garner broad, multi-class support. Following the movement's failure to ride the enfranchisement of African

Americans to success, the movement shifted to a more conservative tone, in which many women resorted to elitist, “restrictionist and even racists claims” in an attempt to gain the vote, (Keyssar, 200). This failed miserably. However, it was the movement’s drastic organizational and ideological shift that followed in the first years of the 20th century that led to success. The movement expanded from its middle-class base to become more inclusive. Led by Florence Kelley and Jane Addams, female enfranchisement became increasingly associated with social reform. This was due to the fact that the labor force was increasingly made up of women, who often worked low-skilled and poor paying jobs. The argument was put forth that to the only way for women to protect themselves from exploitation was through the vote. Keyssar argues that this focus on social reform was also aimed at gaining the electoral support of working class-men. This shift caused a tight bond between the labor movement and the suffrage movement resulting in an increase in trade union and socialist support. The end result was that the “convergence of working-class interest in suffrage with the suffragists’ interest in the working class” led the “campaign for women’s suffrage [to] become a mass movement for the first time,” (Keyssar, 206).

The final key to success for the women’s movement was World War I. The war provided a tremendous opportunity to destroy the long held argument that women should be denied the vote because they do not fight in war. The National American Women’s Suffrage Association jumped all over this. They “provided Americanization classes, distributed food, cooperated with the Red Cross, sold bonds, knitted clothing, and gave gifts to soldiers and sailors,” (Keyssar, 216). In addition, the NAWSA threw its full support behind the Wilson Administration. These wartime contributions along with continued directly led to Wilson publicly supporting women’s suffrage in 1918 and would be a decisive factor in the Amendment’s passage in Congress and in the states.