

Why Washington?

by Gwen Perkins, edited by Abby Rhinehart

Washington was the fifth state to give women the right to vote. The first four states to give women the right to vote were: Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. What do you notice about the location of all these states? They are all in the West!

Why did women in Washington and the West get the right to vote before women in Eastern states?

Five reasons:

- Women often already did tough work on farms and homesteads in the West. This work had typically been considered “masculine,” or traditionally associated with men.
- Several Native tribes in the West already had women in positions of power.
- European-American women who came to the West often founded churches, schools, and other key cornerstones of new communities. This gave them leadership roles in small towns.
- Some early Western states may have given women the right to vote as a way to attract new settlers.
- Many people were worried that African American men had the right to vote. They did not want African American people to have this power. Some of these African Americans were moving to the West, where there weren't many people, so their votes were a bigger percent of the total. In some cases, people supported giving white women the right to vote in the West because it would decrease the percent of the votes cast by African Americans.



Washington State History Museum Suffrage Curriculum
7th grade
Created 2019

Footer images, left to right: "Woman forever march," Washington State Historical Society Catalog ID Number: 2010.151.4; "Woman's suffrage pin," Washington State Historical Society Catalog ID Number: C2008.0.132; "Votes for women: official organ of Washington Equal Suffrage Association," Washington State Historical Society Catalog ID Number 2000.104.38.14