

What do political rights have to do with geography?

11 States gave women the right to vote before 1920

1890 – Wyoming
1893 – Colorado
1896 – Utah, Idaho
1910 – Washington
1911 – California
1912 – Arizona, Kansas, Oregon
1914 – Montana, Nevada
1917 – New York
1918 – Michigan, Oklahoma, South Dakota



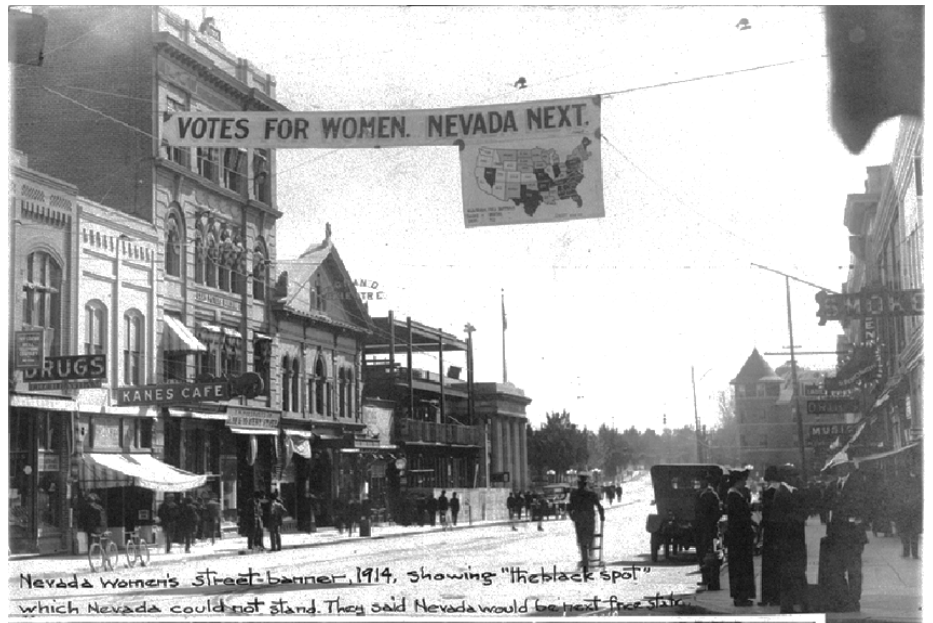
Suffrage—the right to vote.

Suffragist—person working to give women the right to vote.

Think about what it would be like to be a woman living in Maine in 1917. You would have followed the news as women successfully won the right to vote in one state after another. Most of the states where women could vote were way out in the western United States, a long way from Maine!

Suffragists believed that the more states where women could vote, the better.

Suffragists were one step closer to victory every time a new state passed women's suffrage. They needed to show people change was a good thing. They wanted to prove that women's suffrage was inevitable (meaning it was going to happen eventually whether people liked it or not).



Nevada street with suffrage banner, 1914.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Nevada-street-scene-with-suffrage-banner-1914-from-Carrie-Chapman-Catt-Photograph-Album_fig8_220144083

Geography was important to the suffrage movement. **They used maps as a tool to show the change moving across the United States.** Maps could tell an important story without using many words.

Suffrage maps marked the states where women could vote. They were all shapes and sizes. They were in magazines and flyers. Huge maps were even posted on buildings and

Suffrage Map History Handout

Women's Long Road
Teacher Materials, Lesson 1
Maine State Museum 2019

billboards. Suffragists handed them out at events. They put maps on large banners and carried them in parades and protests.

The maps were used from 1908 to the end of the suffrage movement in 1920. They usually looked about the same. States with women's voting rights were shown in one color, usually white. States without suffrage were usually black. The white symbolized light and goodness. The black showed that women in those states were kept in the dark.

The maps also showed a political threat to eastern states. A state like California had twice as many voters because both men and women had suffrage. If western states had more voters, they would have more political power. This was especially important in presidential elections. Suffragists said that eastern states should give women voting rights to protect their power.



Suffragists in a Portland Parade, 1914. Do you see the map on the side of the car?

Personal collection on Loan to the Maine State Museum.