

Primary Sources Eyewitness to History

For most of the history of the United States, women did not have the right to vote. A man served as the head of his household, and he voted as the representative of his family. As women became more involved outside the home, they started to demand a voice in their government. The battle became increasingly heated until women finally won the vote in 1920.

Source 1:

Abigail Scott Duniway became the sole supporter of her six children after her husband was disabled in an accident. She earned a living as a writer and led the fight for woman suffrage in Oregon. In 1899 she gave a speech promoting women's right to vote before the annual meeting of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Michigan.



▲ *Abigail Scott Duniway*

The first fact to be considered, when working to win the ballot, is that there is but one way by which we may hope to obtain it, and that is by and through the affirmative votes of men. We may theorize, organize, appeal, argue, coax, cajole¹ and threaten men till doomsday; we may secure their pettings, praises, flattery, and every appearance of acquiescence² in our demands; we may believe with all our hearts in the sincerity of their promises to vote as we dictate, but all of this will avail us nothing unless they deposit their affirmative votes in the ballot box.

Every man who stops to argue the case, as an opponent, tells us that he "loves women," and, while wondering much that he should consider such a declaration necessary, I have always admired the loyal spirit that prompts his utterance. But, gentlemen, . . . there is another side to this expression of loyalty. Not only is our movement not instigated in a spirit of warfare between the sexes, but it is engendered, altogether in the spirit of harmony, and interdependence between men and women. . . . In order

to gain the votes of men, so we can win the ballot, we must show them that we are inspired by the same patriotic motives that induce them to prize it. A home without a man in it, is only half a home. A government without women in it, is only half a government. . . .

. . . Your next step must be to impress upon all men the fact that we are not intending to interfere, in any way, with their rights; and all we ask is to be allowed to decide, for ourselves, also as to what our rights should be.

Source 2:

Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge, a widow and the mother of six sons, led the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. She believed that allowing women to vote would threaten the family. In 1913 she explained her views to a reporter for the New York Times.

That is a sad state of things, isn't it? Home has been the woman's business and her love and life for centuries. It is the foundation of society, the basis of all morals. Without the home we should become unmoral and without morals society, in turn, must perish. . . .

To offset the suspicion in the public mind that suffrage means destruction to the home, the leaders of the movement are now bending every effort to prove otherwise. Watch the newspapers and periodicals of recent days and those of days immediately to come and you will find a flood of pictures showing suffrage leaders with their progressive cheeks pressed tight against the velvet faces of their babies. They doubtless have decided that this variation of the plan of their

¹cajole: persuade

²acquiescence: passive acceptance

publicity is necessary as a means of proving to the public that a suffragist can be a mother. . . .

I don't want to seem discourteous toward my sisters in the suffrage movement. I believe the greater portion of them are not really aware of what they do. I am certain the majority of them do not desire to bring about destruction of the home, with all that must imply—of loose or no domestic life; . . .

I am no advocate of **retrogression**³ among women. I believe in education, culture, full development. In these days woman, to do the best which in her lies for her own home, must get much for it from outside. My point is that she must get these outside things for the benefit of her home and not neglect her home so that she may go adventuring for them for her benefit, amusement, and dissipation.

Source 3:

After women's contributions helped the United States gain victory in World War I, President Woodrow Wilson became a supporter of woman suffrage. On September 30, 1918, he presented his views to the U.S. Senate.

I regard the concurrence of the Senate in the constitutional amendment proposing the extension of the suffrage to women as vitally essential to the successful **prosecution**⁴ of the great war of humanity in which we are engaged. . . .

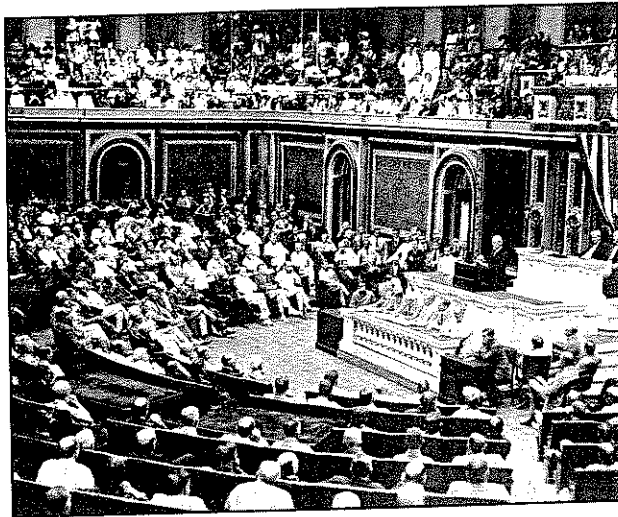
. . . If we be indeed democrats and wish to lead the world to democracy, we can ask other peoples to accept in proof of our sincerity and our ability to lead them whither they wish to be led, nothing less persuasive and convincing than our actions. . . .

If we reject measures like this, in ignorant defiance of what a new age has brought forth, of what they have seen but we have not, they will cease to believe in us; they will cease to follow or to trust us. They have seen their own governments . . . like that of Great Britain, which did not profess to be democratic, promise readily and as of course this justice to women, though they had before refused it; the strange revelations of this war having made many things new and plain to governments as well as to peoples.

Are we alone to refuse to learn the lesson? Are we alone to ask and take the utmost that our women can give—service and sacrifice of every kind—and still say we do not see what title that gives them to stand by our

³**retrogression:** regression, returning to a less complex level of development

⁴**prosecution:** pursuit



▲ *President Wilson addresses Congress*

side in the guidance of the affairs of their nation and ours? We have made partners of the women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right? This war could not have been fought, either by the other nations engaged or by America, if it had not been for the services of the women—services rendered in every sphere—not merely in the fields of effort in which we have been accustomed to see them work, but wherever men have worked and upon the very skirts and edges of the battle itself. . . .

. . . The tasks of the women lie at the very heart of the war and I know how much stronger that heart will beat if you do this just thing and show our women that you trust them as much as you in fact and of necessity depend upon them. . . .

DBQ Document-Based Questions

Historical Analysis

Source 1: Why does Duniway believe that women should be allowed to vote?

Source 2: What does Dodge believe will happen if women are allowed to vote?

Source 3: Why does Wilson believe that it is important for the United States to extend the right to vote to women?

Comparing and Contrasting Sources

How do Duniway, Dodge, and Wilson differ in their beliefs about the place of women in government?