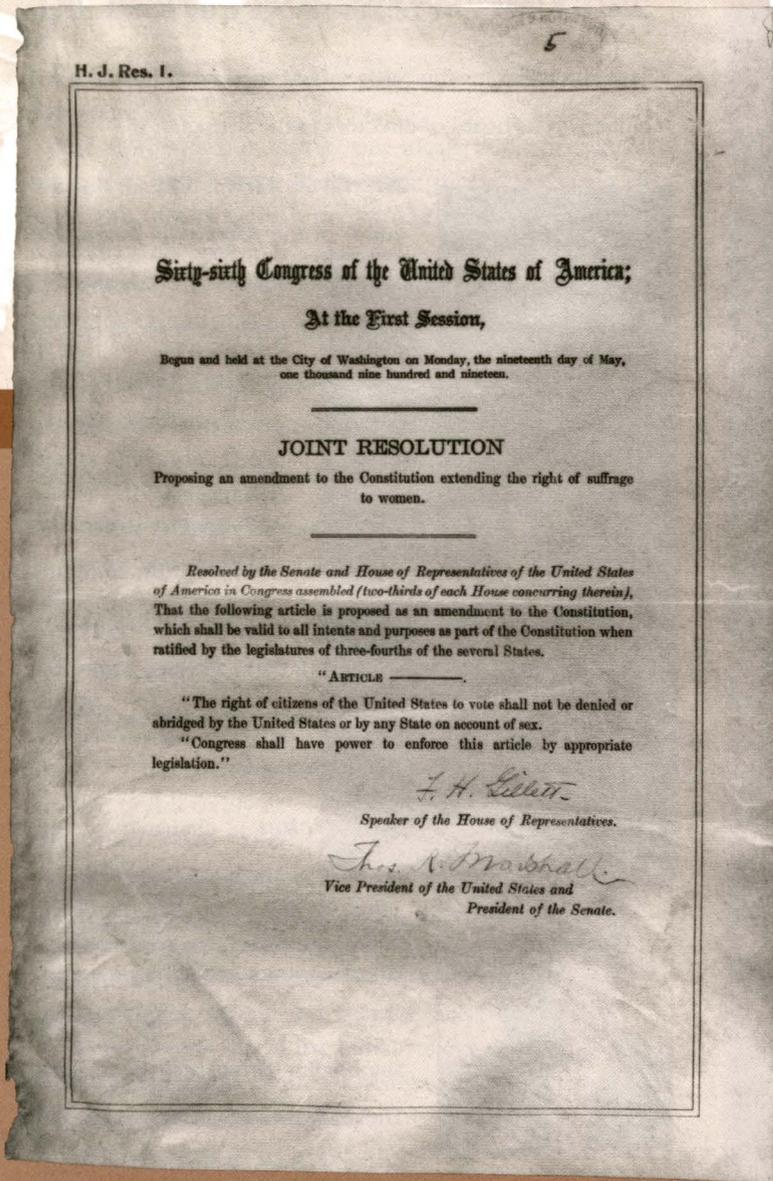


THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

*Gives Women the Vote*



The movement had begun in 1848 at a women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, but it took thirty years to get the amendment introduced in Congress. Action on Capitol Hill was very slow. Until 1914, the Senate voted only once, turning it down, and the House did not vote at all.

Meanwhile, the suffragists took their fights to the states.

Through legislative action or state referendum, the movement had some success. In the 1916 election, women could vote for presidential electors in eleven states. By 1920, even without the amendment, women would have been able to vote for presidential electors in thirty states.

Finally, in the spring of 1919, Congress passed the amendment and sent it to the states for ratification. States acted quickly, and by August 1920, thirty-five had approved it. In all but one of the remaining states, the amendment had

either been rejected or had no hope of being approved.

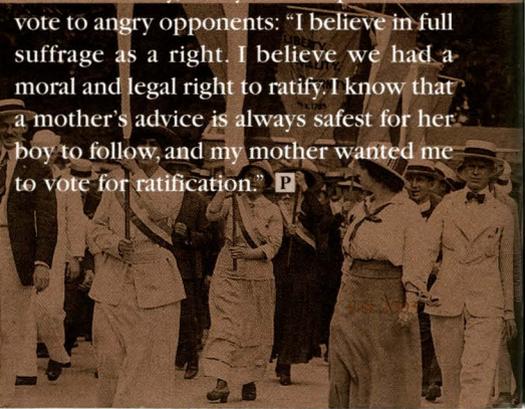
With one additional state needed, the push for ratification focused on Tennessee. Supporters and opponents of the amendment, the press, and thousands of spectators flocked to Nashville to witness the proceedings. Carrie Chapman Catt, the latest in the long line of woman suffrage leaders that had included Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, was also there.

Tennessee's Senate had already approved it, but after several votes in the House, the issue was deadlocked, forty-eight to forty-eight. As the debate continued, Burn opened a letter from his mother.

"Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the 'rat' in ratification," mother Burn wrote. Harry had been counted among the opponents, but when the next vote was taken, Harry voted in favor of the amendment, and ratification was approved.

Thus, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, giving women the right to vote, was ratified on August 18, 1920, in time for women in all states to vote for President later that year.

The next day, Harry Burn explained his vote to angry opponents: "I believe in full suffrage as a right. I believe we had a moral and legal right to ratify. I know that a mother's advice is always safest for her boy to follow, and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification." P



On a hot August day in 1920, Representative Harry Burn listened as the Tennessee House of Representatives debated an issue that had been simmering since well before the Civil War—woman suffrage.

For generations, long before twenty-four-year-old Burn was born, the woman suffrage movement had as its goal an amendment to the U.S. Constitution allowing women the right to vote.

ABOVE: A congressional joint resolution in 1919 sent the Nineteenth Amendment to the states for ratification. Record Group 11, General Records of the United States Government.