

Why Women Should Vote

In a publication of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Alice Stone Blackwell, one-time editor of the *Woman's Journal*, outlines 16 reasons why women should be given the right to vote. The date of the article is unclear although it was written sometime after 1896.

- Which of the 16 arguments do you think are most compelling?
 - Which of the 16 reasons do you think those opposed to women's suffrage in the early 1900's might attack or find most objectionable?
1. Because it is fair and right that those who must obey the laws should have a voice in making them, and that those who must pay taxes should have a vote as to the size of the tax and the way it shall be spent.
 2. Because the moral, educational, and humane legislation desired by women would be got more easily if women had votes. New York women have worked in vain for years to secure a legislative appropriation to found a state industrial School for Girls. Colorado women worked in vain for one till they got the ballot; then the Legislature promptly granted it.
 3. Because laws unjust to women would be amended more quickly. It cost Massachusetts women 55 years of effort to secure the law making mothers equal guardians of their children with the fathers. In Colorado, after women were enfranchised, the very next Legislature granted it. After more than half a century of agitation by women for this reform only 13 out of 46 States now give equal guardianship to mothers.
 4. Because disfranchisement helps to keep wages down. Hon. Carroll D. Wright, National Commissioner of Labor said in an address delivered at Smith College on February 22, 1902 "The lack of direct political influence constitutes a powerful reason why women's wages have been kept at a minimum."
 5. Because equal suffrage would increase the proportion of educated voters. The high schools of every state in the Union are graduating more girls than boys-often twice or three times as many. (Report of Commissioner of Education.)
 6. Because it would increase the proportion of native-born voters. In three years from June 30, 1900, to June 30, 1903, there landed in the United States 1,344,622 foreign men, and only 576,746 foreign women. (Report of Commissioner General of Immigration.)

7. Because it would increase the moral and law-abiding vote very much, while increasing the vicious and criminal vote very little. The U. S. Census of 1890 gives the statistics of men and women in the state prisons of the different States. Omitting fractions, they are as follows: In the District of Columbia, women constitute 17 per cent. of the prisoners; in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, 14 per cent.; in New York, 13; in Louisiana, 12; in Virginia, 11; in New Jersey, 10; in Pennsylvania and Maryland, 9; in Connecticut, 8; in Alabama, New Hampshire, Ohio and South Carolina, 7; in Florida, Maine, Mississippi, New Mexico and Tennessee, 6; in Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina and West Virginia, 5; in Arkansas and Delaware, 4; in California, Minnesota, North Dakota, Texas and Vermont, 3; in Colorado, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska and Utah, 2; in Arizona, Kansas, Nevada and South Dakota, 1; in Washington, four-fifths of 1 per cent.; in Oregon and Wisconsin, two-fifths of 1 percent; in Wyoming and Idaho, none.
8. Because it leads to fair treatment of women in the public service. In Massachusetts the average pay of a female teacher is about one-third that of a male teacher, and in almost all the States it is unequal. In Wyoming and Utah, the law provides that they shall receive equal pay for usual work. (Revised Statutes of Wyoming, Section 014; Revised Statutes of Utah, Section 1853.)
9. Because legislation for the protection of children would be secured more easily Judge Lindsey, of the Denver Juvenile Court, writes in Progress for July, 1904: "We have in Colorado the most advanced laws of any state in the Union for the care and protection of the home and the children. These laws in my opinion, would not exist at this time if it were not for the powerful influence of woman suffrage."
10. Because it is the quietest, easiest, most dignified and least conspicuous way of influencing public affairs. It takes much less expenditure of time, labor and personal presence to go up to the ballot box, drop in a slip of paper, and then come away, than to persuade a multitude of miscellaneous voters to vote right.
11. Because it would make women more broadminded. Professor Edward H. Griggs says: "The ballot is an educator, and women will become more practical and more wise in using it."
12. Because woman's ballot will make it hard for the notoriously bad candidates to be nominated or elected. In the equal suffrage states, both parties have to put men of respectable character or lose the women's vote.

13. Because it would increase women's influence Mrs. Mary C. C. Bradford, president of the Colorado State Federation of Women's clubs, said at the National Suffrage Convention in Washington in February: "Instead of woman's influence being lessened by the ballot, it is greatly increased. Last year there were so many members of the legislature with bills which they wanted the club women to indorse that the Social Science department of the State Federation had to sit one day each week to confer with these legislators who were seeking our endorsement. Club women outside the suffrage states do not have this experience.
14. Because it would help those women who need help the most. Theodore Roosevelt recommended woman suffrage in his message to the New York Legislature. On being asked why, he reported to have answered that many women have a very hard time, working women especially, and if the ballot would help them, even a little, he was a willing to see it tried. Mrs. Maud Nathan, President of the National Consumers League, said in an address at the National Suffrage Convention in Washington, in February, 1904: "My experience in investigating the condition of women wage-earners warrants the assertion that some of the evils from which they suffer would not exist if women had the ballot * * *. In the States where women vote, there is far better enforcement of the laws which protect working girls."
15. Because it is a maxim in war. "Always do the thing to which your adversary particularly objects." Every vicious interest in the country would rather continue to contend with woman's indirect influence than try to cope with woman's vote.
16. Because experience has proved it to be good. Women have for years been voting literally by hundreds of thousands, in England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Utah, and Idaho, in all these places put together, the opponents have not yet found a dozen respectable men who assert over their own names and addresses that the results have been bad, while scores of prominent men and women testify that it has done good. An ounce of fret is worth a ton of theory.