

Dear Friend,

March is Women's History Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the many contributions of women. Refusing to be silenced, women have fought long and hard for equal rights. From the suffrage movement to today, women have challenged systemic oppression and have helped make America a better place for all.



New York has played a significant role in shaping the national agenda for women's rights. In fact, the first women's rights convention took place in Seneca Falls in 1848, and the nation's first family planning center was opened in Brooklyn. Our state has stayed committed to those ideals and is continuing the push for full women's equality. We've passed laws strengthening women's reproductive health rights and made paid family leave a reality, because no one should have to choose between their paycheck and caring for a loved one.

This pamphlet highlights the history of women's rights movements in the U.S., how they've evolved over time and the victories they secured. I hope you'll join me in continuing the fight for equality. Remember, my office is here to assist you. If you have questions about this or any community issue, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Nader J. Sayegh  
Member of Assembly

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## WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS THROUGHOUT U.S. HISTORY:

*A timeline of persevering,  
breaking down barriers  
and shattering glass  
ceilings*



Courtesy of  
**Assemblyman  
Nader J. Sayegh**

## ABOLITIONIST AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

The fight to end slavery and the fight for women's rights were heavily connected, grounded in the belief that all people are created equal. The first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women met in New York City in 1837. In 1840, after being turned away from the World Anti-Slavery Convention because they were women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton set out to organize the first women's rights convention, which was held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, setting the groundwork for the long battle for full women's equality that continues today.

The convention was attended by nearly 300 people, many of whom were also involved in the abolitionist movement, including Frederick Douglass. The Declaration of Sentiments was drafted at the convention, calling for women's equality in politics, jobs, family, education, religion and morals, and spawned similar conventions throughout the country. At the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, Sojourner Truth gave her famous "Ain't I A Woman" speech, interweaving women's suffrage and African-American rights. And although slavery was outlawed by the 13th Amendment in 1865, and the 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, granted all men, regardless of race and color, the right to vote, the fight for women's suffrage carried on.



## THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (1880s-1920)



As the battle for suffrage waged on, women also took on roles as social activists and political reformers to address poverty, government corruption and more. More women became community organizers, public speakers and persuasive writers, demanding equal access to education and employment and the right to own property, control their finances and have reproductive freedom. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Jane Addams and Margaret Sanger were some of the era's prominent figures. Addams spearheaded the creation of America's first settlement house in Chicago to assist poor immigrant families, and Wells-Barnett wrote numerous articles exposing post-slavery racism and lynching. Sanger broke New York State law by opening the nation's first birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916, which she went to prison for. After being released, she won a lawsuit allowing doctors to prescribe birth control.



The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, finally granting women the right to vote, but African-American women still faced significant barriers to voting, especially in the South. That same year, the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor was established to study workplace conditions for women, and, in 1923, Alice Paul drafted an Equal Rights Amendment for the U.S. Constitution, indicating that the fight for full women's equality was far from over.

## THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY CONTINUES (1990- )

During the early 1990s, women shifted their focus to combating workplace sexual misconduct and increasing the number of women in powerful positions. In 1991, Anita Hill's sexual harassment case against Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas sparked an increase of reported cases of sexual harassment and conversations about men disproportionately holding national leadership roles.

The following year was proclaimed as the "Year of the Woman," as Americans elected a record number of women to Congress. In 1993, Ruth Bader Ginsburg became the second female justice of the Supreme Court. And in 1997, Madeleine Albright became the first female secretary of state. During this time, the equality movement remained focused on overturning the traditional gender-role stereotypes that unfairly hold women back.



## SECOND WAVE OF FEMINISM (1963-1980s)

The next women's movement sought to challenge the systemic sexism that upheld that a woman's place was in the home. In 1963, Betty Friedan released "The Feminine Mystique," selling 3 million copies in three years and inspiring women to challenge the traditional roles society pushed on them. Women fought for financial liberation, winning the right to apply for credit cards in their own names as well mortgages. They fought to outlaw marital rape, increase awareness of domestic violence and support for its victims and legislate against workplace sexual harassment. The second wave not only fought to change the way society thought about women, but was also deeply entwined

with the civil rights movement, employing the same tactics of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 marked an important victory, prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin and sex. Other important victories of the era included Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, prohibiting sex discrimination in education programs that receive federal support, and the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, affirming a woman's constitutional right to an abortion. And in 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.



As the fight for full women's equality continues today, technological advancements have enabled more women to be heard across social platforms. Today's fight for equality recognizes that feminism must be as diverse as women are and that we must stand up to oppression at every intersection it appears. It recognizes that "we are all bound up together" as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper said back in 1866. Trending hashtags like #MeToo and #TimesUp have galvanized women worldwide to continue fighting systemic oppression. Most recently, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in January 2020.