A Chronology of American Suffrage 1776-2002

1776: Suffrage in the former colonies is mainly male and based mostly on property ownership, with some states imposing religious restrictions.

1787: The newly-adopted Constitution reserves for states the power to regulate their own suffrage laws. These favor white, male property owners.

1848: The plight of women is denounced by Elizabeth Cady Stanton at a gathering of 100 women's rights advocates in Seneca Falls, NY. Stanton reads a proclamation asserting “all men and women are created equal.”

1872: Susan B. Anthony is arrested two weeks after voting in the presidential election. She is found guilty but refuses to pay the assessed fine.

1892: Arkansas adopts its poll tax.

1931: Arkansan Hattie Caraway assumes her husband's U.S. Senate seat after his death, becoming the first female U.S. Senator. She was elected in her own right in 1932.

1947: Miguel Trujillo, a member of Isleta Pueblo and former Marine, successfully sues the state of New Mexico for the right to vote. Trujillo argues that since Native Americans in fact pay most forms of taxes, they are subject to taxation without representation if denied the franchise.

1964: The Twenty-fourth Amendment, banning the poll tax as an obstacle to voting, is ratified; The Civil Rights Act of 1964 guarantees the right to register to vote without reprisal.

1965: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. leads a march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol at Montgomery, protesting the denial of voting rights to African Americans; the Voting Rights Act, approved by Congress in August, applies nationwide prohibition against the denial or abridgment of the right to vote.

1971: The 26th Amendment to the Constitution lowers the voting age to 18.

1993: President Bill Clinton signs the National Voter Registration Act, popularly known as the "Motor Voter Act", which made it easier for all Americans to register to vote and to maintain their voter registration.