

The Nineteenth Amendment

Gloria Erlandson

9th Grade

Good Shepherd School

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 changed the lives of Americans everywhere. For the first time, women had a voice in political affairs, which would have been unthinkable fifty years before. This amendment not only granted women a right to vote, but also became the seed of many other changes in our society.

The first large transition that the Nineteenth Amendment has prompted in our democracy is seen in the work force. Before the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, it was only socially acceptable for women to have a few jobs – teachers, seamstresses, factory workers, and maids – most of which were underpaid. After the Nineteenth Amendment's authorization, in 1937, women were admitted into federal juries in some states, and in 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed, invoking laws such as minimum wage and maximum hours. Now women in the United States share equal job opportunities and wages with men, and make up 47% of the work force.

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment also affected the lives of families. After women got the vote, more people started agreeing that women should have more rights, which included more job opportunities. Women started spending less time at home after marriage, which resulted in more bread-winners for the family, but less children, changing from an average of 7 people per family in 1850 to 3.5 people in 1950. The Nineteenth Amendment yielded all sorts of different outcomes for women.

The Nineteenth Amendment also spurred several changes in regard to women's positions and treatment. In 1848, the Declaration of Sentiments, written primarily by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, stated several injustices of the time which afflicted women. The people writing the Declaration spoke of the women's position as an "entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this nation, their social and religious degradation" and "a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her." According to the Declaration of Sentiments, women had no rights in property or earned money, they had a very hard time getting a decent education, and there was only a very small range of possible jobs for women. Also, in 1848, the Married Women's Property Act was passed in New York, and now women earn more higher education degrees than men and make up nearly half the work force.

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment improved the lives of women and their position in society, and eventually increased the labor force. It has been very beneficial in the United States and has led to countless opportunities for women. The Nineteenth Amendment truly has become a doorway into the world of equality.