

RATIFICATION OF NATIONAL WOMAN
SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT

BY THE

WYOMING STATE LEGISLATURE, FIRST SPECIAL
SESSION, JANUARY 26, 27 AND 28, 1920

Governor Carey's Message

To the Members of the Fifteenth State Legislature:

"It gives me great pleasure to again welcome you to the Capital of the State. In doing so I am not forgetful of the work accomplished by the members of your Honorable Body in the previous session of this Legislature. I do not believe that at any other time as much legislation was passed which was of benefit to the State; neither do I think that there ever existed such hearty co-operation between the Legislature and the Executive Branch of the State Government. Practically all the legislation that the Executive requested was enacted into law, and on account of the spirit of co-operation which you showed in the former session, I am glad to have this opportunity to assure you again of how much I appreciate not only the work that you did but also your willingness to consult and advise with me during that session.

Today you are meeting for the first time in the history of the State in Special Session, and as Governor I have hesitated to call such a session. It is establishing a precedent which may prove a bad one, as in some states special sessions are called unnecessarily, at great expense, and often on account of what appears urgent need, hastily considered and ill-advised legislation is enacted into law.

The present session has been called for the purpose of ratifying the Amendment to the Federal Constitution providing for equal suffrage for women. While all of us have been very anxious to see a sufficient number of states ratify this Amendment to make it a part of the Federal Constitution, it has been my hope that a sufficient number of states could be obtained without the necessity of convening our Legislature. Recently it has become apparent that in order to obtain the requisite number of states, action on the part of this State may be absolutely necessary. Further, the opponents of suffrage have been using as an argument against granting equal rights to women that Wyoming had not ratified for the reason that suffrage had proved a failure in this State. Considering the fact that women in Wyoming were granted the franchise in territorial days in 1869, that we were the first State to be admitted into the Union with the rights of women guaranteed in our Constitution, we could not allow such a charge to be unchallenged. After considering the matter from all angles, it seemed to me that our duty was plain and that was to ratify the Amendment and to do so at the earliest possible date. I have reason to believe and also hope that the Resolution ratifying this should be our answer to the charge that suffrage is a failure in Wyoming

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In closing, I desire to thank you for coming here. From the letters that I have received from you, I know that you

have come cheerfully and that you desire to give to the women of the nation the same privileges that the women of Wyoming not only have had but have demonstrated they were worthy of exercising.

Robert D. Carey,
Governor.

January 26, 1920.

January 26, 1920, the Senate of the First Special Session of the Wyoming State Legislature unanimously ratified the Federal Amendment granting suffrage to the women of the United States. Doctor Grace Raymond Hebard of the University of Wyoming, in appreciation of this act, presented the members of this Body with roses, and a vote of thanks was extended to Miss Hebard by the Senate on the following day.

January 27, 1920, the House of Representatives of the Special Session unanimously ratified the Federal Amendment granting suffrage to women, remarks favoring the action having been made by members of both the Republican and Democratic parties. Dr. Hebard presented each member with a red carnation, and Mrs. Theresa Jenkins of Cheyenne took the floor and thanked the Body for their goodness.

Historical Gavel Used in House

Speaker E. J. Sullivan used throughout the session the gavel made of solid gold and ivory which had been presented to him by the members of the House at the close of the 1919 session. For the first time in the history of the State a gavel given to a speaker was used by that speaker during his

term of office.

Snapshot of Mr. Edward
Ivinson

The above is a snapshot of Mr. Edward Ivinson, "Oldest Mayor in the United States", on the steps of his home in Laramie. The following address was given by Mayor Ivinson, in his 90th year, to the members of the League of Women Voters upon the occasion of their organization in the State of Wyoming at Laramie, November 10, 1919:

Madam President and Representatives of the League of Women

Voters:

It gives me pleasure, unusual pleasure, to greet you, and in my capacity as Mayor of Laramie to bid you welcome to our city and wish you success in the noble and selfsacrificing work you have undertaken for the enfranchisement, freedom and enlightenment of woman. You are engaged in a glorious work and in wishing you success in your laudable undertaking I feel sure I am expressing not my own sentiments alone, but the sentiments of the citizens of this, the Gem City of the Rockies.

Under your fostering care and guidance may the torch of Liberty burn with increasing brilliancy till all the world shall receive light and be not only willing but anxious to grant to woman all the rights and privileges she so justly deserves.

As one who has lived here for over fifty years and who has seen Wyoming grow from a mere handful of people to a populous and prosperous State, I feel justified in saying that the success and adoption of the high principles for which you stand will tend towards the moral uplift of any community.

Seventy or eighty years ago it was considered an impropriety, in fact, a disgrace for a woman to make an address in public or openly advocate any measure of reform.

At that time she was looked upon as a chattel, a sort of semi-slave, absolutely and entirely the property of her husband, who was recognized as having the right to administer chastisement whenever he considered it necessary for her good, just as a child might be punished for misconduct or a slave for disobedience or fancied neglect of duty. She had no property rights and if she earned money her husband could claim it as his. The simplest rudiments of education were considered all that woman needed and many of the doors that swung freely on their hinges for the entrance of man to the vast storehouses of knowledge were barred to her.

It is not possible on this occasion to give more than a faint outline of the many ways in which woman was bound down and made to feel that her position in life was one of inferiority; suffice it to say that she was looked upon as a being made of a poorer quality of clay than man and that man, therefore, had the right, which was unfortunately too often exercised, of considering her a thing infinitely beneath him.

Under these circumstances we can readily understand that it required no little courage on the part of those women who arranged for and took part in the first Woman's Rights Convention, which was held in the year 1848. The storm of ridicule and condemnation indulged in by the "press" of that time because women had the presumption to make an effort to improve their condition does not speak well for the chivalry of that day, but the work begun in a public manner at that time, the seed planted on that occasion, has borne an abundant harvest. Not, however, till after the close of the Civil War was the work for the emancipation of woman begun in real earnest and every year since that time has witnessed a growing strength in the cause of suffrage.

The Civil War, as in the war just ended, when men went forth by hundreds of thousands from every station and walk in life to fill the ranks of the army, made it necessary for women to step in and take men's places in the field, the factory and shop in order that the wheels of progress should not be impeded or the industries of the country decline. The women, filled with the spirit of noble patriotism, arose enthusiastically to the occasion and did their work faithfully and well and by their skill and efficiency proved conclusively that they were not the weak inferior beings men supposed them to be, but that, on the contrary, they were capable and able to perform a man's work. This fact thus clearly demonstrated convinced many of the unprejudiced ones that women who were not only willing but well able to fill the positions vacated

by men were entitled to consideration and should receive recognition as the social and political equals of man.

As a proof of the tendency towards the emancipation of woman, and as showing that the labors of the faithful few were beginning to bear fruit, we point with pride to the memorable fact that this State--the State of Wyoming (then a territory)--at its first Legislative Assembly passed a bill granting equal rights to woman.

This bill was signed by Governor Campbell on the 10th day of December, 1869.

We are proud of our vast prairies and fertile valleys which support hundreds of thousands of sheep and cattle. We are proud of our majestic rivers, our lofty, snow-capped mountains, our blue skies and our bright sunshine; we are proud of our invigorating atmosphere and our healthful climate; of our sturdy men and our charming women; but we are proud, thrice proud, of the fact that the State of Wyoming was the first state in the Union to recognize woman's true place in the social economy by granting to her the right of suffrage.

Although the population of Wyoming was small at that time, we had men who possessed a keen sense of justice; men who were broad-minded and who loved fair play; men of vision, who to their honor be it said were unselfish and liberal enough to grant to women the same civil rights and privileges that they themselves enjoyed.

These rights and privileges were not, however, obtained

without a struggle, for all reforms meet with opposition, even though they be meritorious and worthy of undivided support. Well do I remember going to Cheyenne, accompanied by Mrs. Ivinson, who was always an ardent, loyal and enthusiastic supporter of the cause of suffrage, where we worked unitedly and untiringly in conjunction with many others for the passage of the bill that meant so much to the women of this and other lands. In addition to going to the capital in behalf of that bill we had the pleasure of entertaining the members of the Legislature at different times in Laramie and naturally lost no opportunity of doing what we could to impress upon them the justness of the measure and stating our reasons why it should become a law. The intelligent men of this country, the men who have made good in their various businesses and other vocations in life, are, as a rule, only too glad to acknowledge that they owe, in large measure, their success to the advice and good judgment of their wives.

Many of our great politicians are inspired more or less by the advice, counsel and encouragement given them by their wives.

Women are just as full of ambition as the men and are often as alert, wide-awake and quick to read the signs of the times as are their husbands. Open wide the door and give the women an opportunity to reach out and aid in the development of our country. They will prove to be a guiding star in directing not only the affairs of this country but in all

countries where they are allowed to exercise their keen, bright minds.

There are many now-a-days, as there were in those days, who profess to believe that giving to woman the right of franchise must of necessity take from her those peculiar charms and graces that make her so attractive and endear her to the hearts of all, but after a residence of over half a century in this State where she has exercised the right of suffrage I have yet to discover that the women of Wyoming are one whit behind in the possession of those charming qualities that distinguish her sisters in other states.

In view of my years and the experience they have brought me, I am sure you will pardon me for presuming to offer a few words of serious thought and friendly counsel. Never in the history of the world has there been a time when people were in greater danger of moral death and decay, for the tendency of the age is ever more and more towards a life of frivolity, self-gratification and unrestrained pleasure. This, I believe to be particularly true of many of the young men and young women of our day. It is therefore incumbent upon you and upon all who love "the right" to both preach and teach by precept and example the beauty of the life that is founded upon the principles of all that is implied in the words RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUE HOLINESS.

Never shall we lose sight of the fundamental truth that modesty constitutes woman's greatest charm and it should

characterize her every action, and that man's crowning glory should be rectitude and purity of life and conduct.

In conclusion, allow me once again to wish you success beyond your most sanguine expectations, and to express the hope that you may receive unlimited support and encouragement in the noble and glorious work in which you are engaged.

Permit me also to assure you that you are truly welcome to our city and that we feel honored by your presence here.

I thank you.

Edward Ivinson,
Mayor of Laramie, Wyoming.

November 10, 1919.

Copied from: FIRST BIENNIAL REPORT OF THE STATE HISTORIAN OF THE STATE OF WYOMING, For the Period Ending September 30, 1920., p 146-152.