



# Indiana's First Women's Rights Convention

## Sources:

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- Indiana Historical Bureau, Historical Markers (<https://www.in.gov/history/markers/26.htm>)



On October 14-15, 1851, three years after Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the very first woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, Indiana suffragists called a similar meeting in Dublin, Wayne County. Delegates to this first Indiana Women's Convention called for the resolutions for political, social, and financial rights for women. They also adopted a constitution that called for annual meetings with reports to be given on working conditions and pay, legal rights and education of women. A year later at the 1852 convention held in Richmond, Indiana, the Indiana Women's Rights Association was formed to promote united action for women's rights. The following year in 1853, the delegates demanded equality in all political rights and functions.

In 1859, more than 1,000 Hoosiers signed a petition urging the legislature to grant equal political rights to women and to eliminate laws that made distinctions on account of gender. However, the Indiana Women's Rights Association was inactive from 1859 to 1867 as the debate over slavery and the Civil War took precedence.

After the Civil War ended, state efforts to pass women's suffrage legislation was reignited after the territorial legislature of Wyoming granted women the right to vote in 1869 with Colorado, Utah, and Idaho following at the end of the 19th century. In Indiana, many efforts continued including Helen Gougar's attempt to vote in the 1894 election, which was turned away by the Tippecanoe County Election Board. She filed a lawsuit alleging her rights had been violated, which was eventually heard by the Indiana Supreme Court. During that court hearing, she argued the case herself; however, the Justices denied her arguments, ruling that voting was a privilege not a right, granted by the terms of the 1851 state constitution.

In August 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting women the right to vote in all elections was ratified. The Indiana Constitution was amended the following year to reflect women's new political standing.

