

CHAPTER 6

Section 5

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: REGION

The Movement Toward Woman Suffrage

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

In the late 1800s, new amendments to the U.S. Constitution that guaranteed voting rights still continued to exclude women. Therefore, suffragists concentrated on the regional level—seeking the passage of state constitutional amendments insuring women the right to vote. It was felt that this strategy could eventually force a federal amendment, and in a six-year period, four states granted women full voting rights.

However, the campaign then stalled. For 13 years, until 1910, no other state passed an amendment for woman suffrage. So a new tactic was tried: gaining partial voting rights. The U.S. Constitution allows state legislatures to set qualifications for voting for presidential electors, without sending the question to voters as an attempt for an amendment requires. Thus, women pressed states for the right to vote for president through legislative action.

In Illinois, where Progressives controlled the state legislature, the plan worked. This state, in 1913, became the first to grant women partial suffrage. Grace Wilbur Trout wrote of its impact:

Illinois was the first state east of the Mississippi and the first state even bordering the great father of waters, to break down the conservatism of the great Middle West and give suffrage to its women. . . . New York women never could have won their great suffrage victory in 1917 if Illinois had not first opened the door in 1913, and the winning of suffrage in New York so added to the political strength of the suffrage movement in Congress that it made possible the passage of the federal suffrage amendment in 1919.

Woman Suffrage Before Ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, 1920

