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978-1-107-01366-7 - The Woman Suffrage Movement in America: A Reassessment

Corrine M. McConnaughy

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The Woman Suffrage Movement in America

This book departs from familiar accounts of high-profile woman suffrage activists whose main concern was a federal constitutional amendment. It tells the story of woman suffrage as one involving the diverse politics of women across the country as well as the incentives of the men with the primary political authority to grant new voting rights – those in state legislatures. Through a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence, the book explains the success and failures of efforts for woman suffrage provisions in the American states and in the U.S. Congress as the result of successful and failed coalitional politics between the suffrage movement and important constituencies of existing male voters, including farmers' organizations, labor unions, and the Populist and Progressive parties.

Corrine M. McConnaughy is Assistant Professor of Political Science at The Ohio State University. She was Assistant Professor of Government and was affiliated with the Center for Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Texas at Austin from 2004 to 2007; she received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Michigan in 2004. McConnaughy's dissertation won a University-wide Honorable Mention as a Distinguished Dissertation at Michigan, as well as the Carrie Chapman Catt Award for research on women and politics from the Catt Center at Iowa State University. At Ohio State University, her work has been awarded a Coca-Cola Critical Difference for Women Research Grant from the Department of Women's Studies. She is the recipient of the Lucius Barker Award from the Midwest Political Science Association (2011), and she was recognized with the Distinguished Alumni Award from Pi Sigma Alpha at DePaul University in 2010. McConnaughy is on the Executive Council of the Women and Politics Research section of the American Political Science Association. Her work has appeared in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Studies in American Political Development*, *Politics & Gender*, and *American Politics Research*.

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Rather than focusing on the activities and perspectives of women's rights activists, McConnaughy asks what strategic considerations might be involved in convincing legislators to expand the suffrage when such an expansion affects the probability of their own reelection. This book is an important contribution to the areas of gender and politics, race and politics, and social movements, and to our understanding of how policy is created.

– Lee Ann Banaszak, Pennsylvania State University

McConnaughy is to be commended for addressing an important question, for rightly focusing attention on the state-level campaigns where so much of the suffrage fight was won and lost, and for articulating a nuanced and original theory to explain variation in suffrage success. McConnaughy's explanation resolves puzzles left unanswered by previous research and is simultaneously theoretically sophisticated and based in a deep understanding of 'real' politics on the ground.

– Christina Wolbrecht, University of Notre Dame

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The Ohio State University, Columbus



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For Ismail, Khalil, and Meara

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List of Abbreviations

AFL – American Federation of Labor
AWSA – American Woman Suffrage Association
CBA – Clara B. Arthur
CIO – Congress of Industrial Organizations
CSESA – Colorado State Equal Suffrage Association
CU – Congressional Union or National Woman's Party
CWSA – Colorado Woman Suffrage Association
HWS – *The History of Woman Suffrage*
IESA – Illinois Equal Suffrage Association
IWSA – Illinois Woman Suffrage Association
LSSA – Louisiana State Suffrage Association
MESA – Michigan Equal Suffrage Association
MSWSA – Michigan State Woman Suffrage Association
NAWSA – National American Woman Suffrage Association
NWSA – National Woman Suffrage Association
SSWSC – Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference
WCTU – Woman's Christian Temperance Union
WSPL – Woman Suffrage Party of Louisiana
WTUL – Women's Trade Union League

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Acknowledgments

I first encountered the American woman suffrage movement as an undergraduate student in Beth Kelly's class on women and politics at DePaul University. Reading wonderful work by scholars like Eleanor Flexner, Nancy Cott, and Linda Kerber, I met a marvelous cast of protagonists in a daunting struggle. A movement that spanned more than seventy years, marked by personalities as large as those of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Alice Paul, and seemingly entangled in controversies of political corruption involving booze interests and machine bosses, was riveting course material. And yet I left that class still wondering if I understood the politics of it all. Why had the movement won and lost when and how it did? Why had politicians come to such different conclusions about the issue of women's voting rights at different moments and in different places throughout the country over those seventy-plus years? The puzzle was not just that women had been granted the right to vote in some states well before the Nineteenth Amendment, but that in some of those states the victory seemed quite surprising – that the issue had been turned down or ignored repeatedly, but somehow suddenly won.

That answers to the questions I had about the woman suffrage movement might be found by starting from the vantage point of the incentives of those who had primary control over and interest in the definition of the electorate – state legislators and their respective political parties – first occurred to me as I sat in a deeply engaging course on political parties taught by Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman while in the political science PhD program at the University of Michigan. Still, I put the idea and interest aside for some time, working instead in the realm of the contemporary politics of race, ethnicity, and gender, and on the historic nature of city-state relations. For help seeing not only that I could take on my long-held interest in the woman suffrage movement, but that my other work had given me even greater tools to do so, I am deeply indebted to my incredibly supportive dissertation committee: Nancy Burns, Richard Hall,

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Donald Kinder, and Terrence McDonald. To Nancy and Don, especially, I owe deep gratitude for the core of my training in doing the work of scholarship and for their patience and encouragement as I learned the essential lessons they each had to teach. Each gave me more time, constructive feedback, and opportunities for intellectual growth than a young scholar could ever expect. I thank both for their mentorship and continued support. To Rick, I am most thankful for encouraging me from my first day of graduate school to always be guided by – and never afraid of – interesting and important questions about the cultivation and deployment of social and political power. I am also thankful for his important insights into the incentives inside the legislative process, and the critiques he offered on my own, which helped refine my understanding of the treatment of woman suffrage legislation. Finally, I am grateful that Terry made time for me in his incredibly busy schedule as dean, to the great betterment of the historical method of the work.

I incurred many other intellectual and personal debts during the time I began working on this project while at Michigan. Hanes Walton, Jr., sought me out to share his own work on the history of blacks in the Republican Party, and his expertise on political parties in general, which informed my thinking about the intersection of race and partisan interests in my own argument. Jake Bowers, Vincent Hutchings, Arthur “Skip” Lupia, Rob Mickey, Nicholas Valentino, and all the participants in the National Election Studies workshop series asked constructive questions and made helpful suggestions at several stages of the project. Incredible, regular feedback and support came from my dissertation group: Matthew Beckmann, Sean Ehrlich, Laura Evans, Michael Hanmer, JungHwa Lee, Won-ho Park, Clint Peinhardt, and Ismail White. My work also benefited from a summer spent engaging it with the interdisciplinary group of Community of Scholars Fellows at Michigan’s Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Finally, Janet Box-Steffensmeier reached out to me to provide productive comments on my use of event history analysis, and even shared her then-unpublished work on techniques useful to my final analysis of the forty-eight states’ treatment of state suffrage issues.

While this project began as my dissertation, it grew in deeply important ways in the years that followed. For time and funds to collect and analyze more data as I began my career as an assistant professor, I am grateful to the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. My time at Texas also provided opportunities for feedback and support from a new set of colleagues. Andrew Karch, Gretchen Ritter, Bartholomew “Bat” Sparrow, and Sean Theriault all read and offered advice on parts of the new book manuscript. Additional thanks are due to the junior faculty group at Texas, including Jason Brownlee, Jason Casellas, George Gavrilis, Ken Greene, Eric McDaniel, Patrick McDonald, Tasha Philpot, John Sides, and Ismail White, not only for their advice on portions of the project presented to our working group, but also for the supportive and friendly environment they provided for a new assistant professor.

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As I grew a dissertation into a real book, I was incredibly fortunate to receive advice and support from scholars from other places whose work I greatly admired, and which has importantly shaped my own. Kira Sanbonmatsu was the first of these. She approached me with her first words of advice and support after my very first conference presentation of the project and has continued that support to the finish line of the book. Lee Ann Banazsak shared not only expertise on the suffrage movement, but her data as well. Frank Baumgartner gave me some of the most insightful critiques about the book's frame and contribution – and kindly did so over ice cream at the Berkey Creamery at Penn State. Holly McKammon also generously shared her coding of third-party presence in state legislatures and state constitution amendment procedures.

This book entailed a massive data collection effort, which included trips to archives scattered across the country. For the funding that made this possible, I thank the National Science Foundation (SES-0212419), the Carrie Chapman Catt Award for research on women and politics from Iowa State University, the Department of Government at the University of Texas, and a number of sources at the University of Michigan, including the Gerald R. Ford Fund, the political science department, Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, and the Innovation in Social Science Research Fellowship at the Institute for Social Research. The last fellowship was generously established by Dorwin “Doc” and Barbara Cartwright, who wrote me with kind words of confidence at an early stage in the research.

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I undertook the final stages of data analysis and writing of the book after moving to the department of political science at The Ohio State University. For generous support of this final effort in his role as department chair, I am deeply grateful to Herb Weisberg. For his help in navigating the book process as a first-time author, I thank Larry Baum. Now my colleague, Janet Box-Steffensmeier proved to be an enduring source of encouragement. For making the details of the last financial costs of the book none of my concern, I thank our talented fiscal officer, Diana Camella.

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Of course, the biggest debts incurred in the course of researching and writing a book are most often personal. Such is certainly the case with this one. In writing this book, a voice from deep within often reminded me that girls like me weren't supposed to grow up to write books. That is, where I started is so far away from the world of academia I have entered. So I begin with thanks to the early encouragers of my pursuit of academia. Richard Zawack, my high school teacher of Philosophy and Government, not only nurtured my interest in politics, but also made sure that I survived my high school years and found my way to college. DePaul University offered an incredibly supportive environment for a first-generation college student. The entire political science department invested in me while I was there, but I owe special thanks to Patrick Callahan, Elizabeth Kelly, Wayne Steger, and J. Harry Wray. And I owe one more note of thanks to Nancy Burns for recruiting me to join the graduate program in political science at Michigan after my time at DePaul.

My family has been ever supportive of my intellectual curiosity and the demands it has often made on my time and on them. My parents, Kathryn McConnaughy and James McConnaughy, made untold sacrifices over the years to ensure that I could reach my potential. This book, I know, is the most tangible evidence I can offer that those sacrifices were well spent. My biggest regret, therefore, is that my father did not live to see it in print. My biggest hope is that both are, somehow, proud. I thank my sister, Jen Walts, for being my very first “teacher” on our little home chalkboard. To my brother, Jesse McConnaughy, I owe gratitude for the deep personal sacrifices he made as I set off for college and graduate school. My extended family has offered a network of support and love over the years, especially my late grandmothers Anne McConnaughy and Antoinette Zeitz, and my role-model grandfather Edward Zeitz. I acquired more supportive family members – the White family of Plaisance, Louisiana – through marriage. My thanks to all of you for your faith and presence.

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Finally, there is the family that was created at the same time that this book was being written. Ismail White became my partner in everything at the moment this project was first beginning. He stood by me, supported me, cheered me on, and cajoled me when necessary through the ten years it took to see this project through. Not a page would have been possible without him. Our children, Khalil and Meara White, became my final and most joyful inspirations. For the love, devotion, sacrifice, and promise of this “new” family, I dedicate this book to all three of them.