

Developing a “Winning Plan”

Recommended Grade Levels: 4th, 5th Grade

Estimated Activity Length: 20-30 minutes

Iowa Core Social Studies Standards

4th Grade: SS.4.4., SS.4.8., SS.4.9., SS.4.10., SS.4.20., SS.4.24.

5th Grade: SS.5.1., SS.5.2., SS.5.4., SS.5.21., SS.5.22., SS.5.24., SS.5.25., SS.5.26.

Activity Overview

This activity focuses on the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and Carrie Lane Chapman Catt’s “winning plan” that helped pass women’s suffrage in 1920. Students will work on two of the four parts of the “Winning Plan” and develop their own plans on how they would help get suffrage passed.

Instructions

Students will work independently to identify methods and tactics that could be used to persuade the public to support women’s suffrage.

- 1 Use the worksheet.** Students will use the [attached worksheet](#) to develop each step of their plan.
- 2 Share.** After they create their own plans, students can share their ideas with the class. Or students can work in small groups to compare and contrast their plans with the [“Questions for Further Thinking” worksheet](#).
- 3 Further research.** Students can research and learn more about Catt and her methods to achieve suffrage.

Carrie Lane Chapman Catt

Carrie Lane Chapman Catt was born in Ripon, Wisconsin, in 1859 and relocated with her family to Charles City, Iowa, when she was seven years old. Following graduation from Iowa State Agricultural College (now Iowa State University), she worked as a teacher and became superintendent of schools in Mason City, Iowa. During the late 1880s, Catt became involved with the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association and was elected president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1900. After leaving NAWSA for personal reasons, she returned as the organization’s president in 1915 to implement her “Winning Plan.” Following the passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women’s suffrage in the United States, she founded the League of Women Voters.

The Winning Plan

For many years, the fight for women’s suffrage faced many hurdles across the nation. Although some states had passed suffrage legislation over the years, suffrage for women was not the same in every state. At NAWSA’s September 1916 convention, the organization’s president, Carrie Lane Chapman Catt, debuted the “Winning Plan.” The plan would focus on different areas across the country and the ultimate goal of a federal suffrage amendment. The new plan had a four-pronged approach:

- In some states, NAWSA members would try to amend state constitutions to push for suffrage through a referendum.
- Those in states such as New York and Wyoming, which already granted women presidential suffrage, people in those states would focus on passing a federal suffrage amendment to change the U.S. Constitution.
- In 1916, some states such as Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota, only allowed women partial suffrage where voting was limited to things like school, bond and tax issues. For those states which did not have presidential suffrage, they would work toward presidential suffrage.
- Southern states, such as Arkansas, Texas and Florida, did not grant any type of suffrage for women. People in these states would fight for basic suffrage in their states.

Name _____

“Winning Plan” Worksheet

Plan #1 - Amend Iowa Constitution to Allow Presidential Suffrage

In 1894, Iowa women were granted partial suffrage to vote on bond issues and questions of tax increases for schools or municipalities. However, Iowa women could not vote for representatives and presidential candidates until 1919.

To amend the Iowa Constitution, either the Iowa Senate or the Iowa House of Representatives must propose the new amendment. The amendment must pass both the Senate and House during two General Assemblies in a row (one General Assembly is a two-year period during which the legislature convenes). The amendment is then voted on by eligible voters in Iowa. If the voters approve the new amendment, it will be added to the state constitution. For more information regarding Iowa’s Constitution, please visit the [state legislature’s website](#).

Carrie Lane Chapman Catt has put you in charge of adding an amendment to the Iowa Constitution to grant Iowa women the right to vote in all elections. Remember, women would not be able to vote and would need to convince male politicians and voters to support their cause. How would you go about accomplishing this task?

How would you amend the state constitution? Search online for the steps required to amend the Iowa Constitution.

Who will you need to contact?

What is your message and tasks for those you need to work with?

What would the amendment need to say?

Do you feel the plan of amending the state constitution would be easy or hard? Why or why not?

Plan #2 - Pass a Federal Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

During the "Winning Plan," Carrie Lane Chapman Catt worked with Washington, D.C., leaders to help create support for the suffrage movement. Considered a controversial decision at the time, Catt supported America's entry into World War I. This decision changed the public opinion of NAWSA and President Woodrow Wilson gave his support. Catt asked state suffrage organizations to contact and work with their state senators to win their support.

The process to change the U.S. Constitution is not an easy process. First, Congress proposes an amendment, and it must be approved by a two-thirds vote of both chambers (U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives). The amendment then must be ratified by three-fourths of the states as state legislatures vote to approve the amendment. For more information regarding the amendment process, check out the [National Archives' website](#).

Imagine Carrie Lane Chapman Catt has put you in charge of working with legislators to support a federal suffrage amendment. Considering Catt's actions above, what would you do to ensure a suffrage vote passes both the U.S. House and Senate?

What steps would be needed for you to amend the U.S. Constitution?

Who will you need to contact to accomplish this task?

What is your message and tasks for those you need to work with?

What would you say to sway opinions of male politicians and voters?

Do you feel that the plan to amend the U.S. Constitution would be easy or hard? Why or why not?

Questions for Further Thinking

Questions	Amend Iowa Constitution to Allow Presidential Suffrage	Pass a Federal Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
Briefly describe each plan.		
How would each plan help achieve Carrie Lane Chapman Catt's final goal?		
What are the main differences and similarities between the plans?		