

This Day in History... January 11, 1885

Birth of Alice Paul

Alice Paul was born on January 11, 1885, in Mount Laurel, New Jersey. Paul was a leader in the women's suffrage movement, staging protests and parades to gain support for the right to vote.

The oldest of four children, she was a descendant of William Penn (the founder of Pennsylvania). Paul first became acquainted with the suffrage movement through her mother, a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and would attend their meetings as a child.

Paul graduated at the top of her class before entering Swarthmore College. While there, she was part of the Executive Board of Student Government. Paul also studied at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Birmingham. She spent time in England at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Center and the London School of Economics.

While in England, Paul worked with women's suffrage groups, participating in several marches and demonstrations. She was arrested multiple times for her protests, even just for speaking out about women's rights. Paul, who had worked as a social worker at times, realized that social work wouldn't be the most effective way to make change. Her work with British suffragists led her to believe that the best route was public protest, including civil disobedience and hunger strikes.

Paul brought these ideas back to America when she joined the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1912. For a time she served as head of the Washington, DC, chapter. The group sought to achieve the right for women to vote through state-by-state campaigns, while Paul believed the best course of action was to lobby Congress for an amendment. This led her and several others to form the National Woman's Party.

Paul organized parades and protests to gain public support for women's suffrage. The largest of these was held in Washington, DC, on March 3, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. About 8,000 women marched down Pennsylvania Avenue as about 500,000 people watched, some in support and some not. Paul and other suffragists met with President Wilson later that month and he told them he didn't think it was time for such an amendment. That April, Paul formed the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage with the specific goal of lobbying Congress for an amendment.

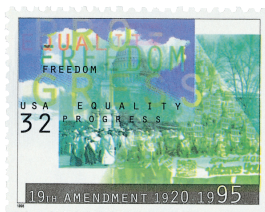
In 1917, Paul launched a vigorous 18-month campaign in which she and over 1,000 "Silent Sentinels" picketed the White House. They stood outside the gates carrying signs with messages such as "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" However, they were often subjected to verbal and physical abuse and were arrested for obstructing traffic. At one point, Paul was sent to jail for seven months, during which she held a hunger strike, but they force-fed her. Tales of Paul's treatment were recounted in the newspaper, which helped her gain public support.

Finally, in 1918, President Wilson announced his support for women's suffrage, though it would be another two years before the Senate, House, and 36 states approved it. The 19th Amendment was officially adopted on August 26, 1920. Following that victory, Paul worked on the Equal Rights Amendment, which would guarantee women constitutional protection from discrimination. It was submitted to Congress in 1923 and passed both houses years later, but was never ratified by enough states to become law.

Paul also contributed to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensuring it also prohibited discrimination based on sex. Paul continued to campaign for women's rights, particularly the Equal Rights Amendment, until her death on July 9, 1977.



This was the first 78¢ US stamp.



This stamp was issued for the 75th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.



Celebrate the Century stamp honoring the 19th Amendment

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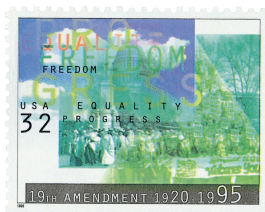
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