

# The eyes have it ... celebrating 100 years of women's right to vote

**TOPICS:** [19th Amendment](#) [Bowling Green League Of Women Voters](#) [Voting Rights](#)



League of Women Voters leadership Lee Hakel and Lee McLaird talk with Morning Show's Clint Corpe about the 19th amendment.

**POSTED BY:** [JAN LARSON MCLAUGHLIN](#) DECEMBER 21, 2019

By **JAN LARSON MCLAUGHLIN**

## **BG Independent News**

It took women nearly a century to gain the right to vote.

As the 100-year mark nears for the 19th amendment, the League of Women Voters in Bowling Green wants to make sure women use that hard-fought right.

Current president Lee Hakel and past president Lee McLaird met with the Wood County Commissioners on Thursday to share their plans for recognizing the anniversary – including holding a “tea” at the historic home in Bowling Green where the first suffragists meeting was held locally.

The first convention for women's rights in the U.S. was held in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. But it wouldn't be until 1920 that women gained the right to vote.

The convention drew a larger than expected crowd.

“Women were supposed to be subservient, they weren’t supposed to be on the streets,” Hakel said.

During America’s early history, women were denied some basic rights endowed on men. Married women couldn’t own property, had no legal claim to money they earned, and no female had the right to vote. Women were expected to focus on housework and motherhood – not politics.

The suffragist movement stalled during the Civil War, as many of the women involved shifted their focus to support abolitionists.



Lee Hakel and Lee McLaird talk with county commissioners.

But suffragists picked up the cause again, and became the first group to hold a protest in front of the White House.

“Women protested outside the White House to appeal to President Wilson,” Hakel said.

They were not treated kindly, she added.

“There are films of men coming up and socking the women, and kicking them,” Hakel said. Many suffragists were jailed, and reportedly abused while behind bars.

“There was monumental pushback,” she said.

One of the stumbling blocks was the inclusion of black women in the 19th amendment – which again pitted the south against the north.

But then the suffragists movement got powerful support from Frederick Douglass.

“At one point, it was going down the tubes and he gave one of his elegant speeches,” Hake said.

And on Aug. 18, 1920 women won the right to vote.

“It was a long and difficult passage to get there,” Hake said. “It took almost 100 years to get the vote. You really have to appreciate we all have a right to vote.”

In preparation for the newly-earned voting rights, the League of Women Voters organization was created six months prior to the amendment passing.

“They didn’t want them to vote just as their husbands did,” Hake said.

The league wanted women to use their own minds. So the organization became a non-partisan group focused on education, McLaird explained.

The league continues its education efforts today, studying issues such as health care, education, birth control, gerrymandering and the census – then taking stands on them.

“Ohio is one of the founding places for the League of Women Voters,” McLaird said. “It was a hotbed of political activism.”

“The league plays the same role it has for 100 years,” she said.



League of Women Voters in BG Holiday Parade

The Bowling Green league took a stand during the annual holiday parade, by putting on sashes” for voting rights and marching down Main Street.

“It was a first for us to be visible. We’re used to being hidden behind the scenes,” Hakel said.

It was the beginning of many public moments for the league – which will hold several events in 2020 to celebrate the century mark of the 19th amendment.

In Bowling Green, the first suffragists meeting was reportedly held in the home of George and Susan Winters on West Wooster Street. In recognition of that monumental moment, a tea is planned in the rose-colored historic home next year.

Hakel and McLaird asked the county commissioners if a traveling exhibit from Ohio History Connection about the 19th amendment could be displayed in the courthouse atrium Sept. 20 to 25, 2020.

“It’s an honor,” Commissioner Ted Bowlus said.

“It’s kind of sad that 100 years later there are still countries where women can’t vote,” Commissioner Craig LaHote said.

Commissioner Doris Herringshaw suggested that perhaps public events could be planned, combining the 19th amendment display and the celebration of the county's bicentennial.

The League of Women Voters is hoping the celebration of the right to vote will cause more people to use that right.

"I would hope that would inspire people to say, "This is my right, and I'm going to exercise it," Hakel said.

Hakel and McLaird mentioned the 30 percent turnout in the last election in Wood County.

"The important thing is for people to come out and vote," McLaird said.



Posted by: [Jan Larson McLaughlin](#) on December 21, 2019.

SHARETWEETPI