

## **The Beginnings of Women's Suffrage in the US - *continued***

The Constitution (signed in 1787, effective in 1789) did not explicitly exclude women from the voting or other political rights. The states were given the task of establishing the requirements for voting. The states could have fully enfranchised women but did not. Then, there was New Jersey.

In New Jersey, the state constitution of 1776 enfranchised “all free inhabitants” who met certain requirements. The 1790 election law used “he or she” in reference to voters. The 1797 law stated “every voter shall openly, and in full view, deliver his or her ballot”.

In 1797 the women’s vote made a real impact in a state legislative candidate affecting the outcome of the election. There was a concern about the women’s vote in the 1800 presidential vote. A campaign was launched arguing that voting women were “unfeminine, forgetful of their proper place.” These women were “easily manipulated” by the men in their families. It took ten years to finally pass a new election law. In 1807 the new law excluded all women from voting. No other state tried the New Jersey, 1776 experiment.

In the early 1800s women sought to influence public policy. They supported abolition of slavery, reform in marriage and divorce laws, birth control, and universal education. They sought to extend women’s rights to separate personal property, retention for earnings from their trade, and joint guardianship. There was not a strong movement for women enfranchisement until after the Civil War.

Thank you to Wikipedia, *Rethinking Women’s Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776-1807* by Jan Ellen Lewis, *One Woman, One Vote*, edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, “Ourselves and Our Daughters Forever” by Linda Kerber, *In the Public Interest* by Louse M. Young