Chapter 17: The Progressive Era (1890-1920)

Section 2: Women Make Progress
Objectives

- Analyze the impact of changes in women’s education on women’s roles in society.
- Explain what women did to win workers’ rights and to improve family life.
- Evaluate the tactics women used to win passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.
How did women of the Progressive Era make progress and win the right to vote?
By the early 1900s, a growing number of middle-class women wanted to do more than stay at home as wives and mothers.

Colleges like Pennsylvania’s Bryn Mawr and New York’s School of Social Work armed middle-class women with education and modern ideas.

However, most poor women continued to labor long hours, often under dangerous or dirty conditions.
Women Make Progress

Progressive reforms addressed working women’s conditions:

• They worked long hours in factories and sweatshops, or as maids, laundresses or servants.
• They were paid less and often didn’t get to keep their wages.
• They were intimidated and bullied by employers.
Reformers saw limiting the length of a woman’s work day as an important goal and succeeded in several states.

In *Muller v. Oregon*, the Supreme Court ruled that states could legally limit a women’s work day.

This ruling recognized the unique role of women as mothers.
In 1899, **Florence Kelley** founded the Women’s Trade Union League which **worked for a federal minimum wage and a national eight-hour workday.**

The WTUL also created the first workers’ strike fund, which helped support families who refused to work in unsafe or unfair conditions.
Progressives supported the temperance movement.

They felt that alcohol often led men to spend their earnings on liquor, neglect their families, and abuse their wives.

The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union grew steadily until the passage of the 18th Amendment which banned the sale and production of alcohol in 1919.
In 1916, **Margaret Sanger** opened the first birth control clinic. She believed that **having fewer children would lead to healthier women.**

She was jailed. The courts eventually ruled that doctors could give out family planning information.

In 1921, Sanger founded the **American Birth Control League** to make information available to women.
African Americans also worked for women’s rights.

- **Ida B. Wells** founded the National Association of Colored Women or NACW in 1896.

- The NACW supported day care centers for the children of working parents.

- Wells also worked for suffrage, to end lynchings, and to stop segregation in the Chicago schools.
Ultimately **suffrage** was seen as the only way to ensure that government protected children, fostered education, and supported family life.

Since the 1860s, **Susan B. Anthony** and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** worked relentlessly for women’s suffrage.

Still, by the 1890s, only Wyoming and Colorado allowed women to vote.
In 1917, social activists led by Alice Paul formed the National Woman’s Party. Their radical actions made the suffrage movement’s goals seem less dramatic by comparison.

The NWP picketed the White House.

Hundreds of suffragettes were arrested and jailed.
President of the **National American Suffrage Association**, **Carrie Chapman Catt**, promoted a two-part strategy to gain the vote for women.

1. **NAWSA** lobbied Congress for a constitutional amendment.

2. Supporters, called **suffragettes**, used the referendum process to pass state laws.
Not all women supported suffrage.

The National Association Opposed to Woman’s Suffrage feared voting would distract women from their family roles.

Many men and women were offended by Paul’s protests in front of the White House. A mob shredded her signs and pickets.
States gradually granted suffrage to women, starting in the western states.
In June 1919, the **Nineteenth Amendment** was passed by Congress. The amendment stated that the vote “shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex.”

In November 1920, women nationwide voted in a presidential election for the first time.
How did women of the Progressive Era make progress and win the right to vote?

In the early 1900s, many women were no longer content playing a limited role in society. Activists helped bring about Progressive reforms including women’s suffrage.

Women would continue the struggle to expand their roles and rights in the future.