

## LESSON PLAN – EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

**Subject:** Civics and Government

**Grade Level:** 9–12

### Standards:

#### ***Indiana DOE***

##### *Academic Standards (5)*

###### *LH.5.1*

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

###### *LH.7.1*

Conduct short as well as more sustained research assignments and tasks to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

###### *USG.5.2*

Analyze the roles and responsibilities of citizens in Indiana and the United States.

###### *USG.5.6*

Explain and give examples of important citizen actions that can impact local, state, and federal government as individuals and members of interest groups.

###### *USG.5.8*

Describe opportunities available to individuals to contribute to the well-being of their communities and participate responsibly in the political process at local, state and national levels of government.

#### ***Nationwide***

##### *National Standards for Civics and Government (10)*

###### *III.A.2*

Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the distribution of powers and responsibilities within the federal system.

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### *III.A.2.5*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain ways in which federalism is designed to protect individual rights to life, liberty, and property and how it has at times made it possible for states to deny the rights of certain groups, e.g., states' rights and slavery, denial of suffrage to women and minority groups.

### *II.C.1*

Students should be able to explain the importance of shared political and civic beliefs and values to the maintenance of constitutional democracy in an increasingly diverse American society.

### *II.C.1.3*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to describe beliefs common to American political culture, such as the belief in equality of opportunity; mistrust of power, as well as high expectations of what elected officials and government should do; the need to admit to faults or shortcomings in their society; and the belief that they can individually and through collective effort alleviate social, economic, or political problems.

### *V.A.1*

Students should be able to explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.

### *V.A.1.1*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain the idea that citizenship

### *V.A.1.1.c*

confers equal rights under the law

### *V.D.4*

Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance to American constitutional democracy of dispositions that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs.

### *V.D.4.1*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to evaluate the usefulness of the following traits in facilitating thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs

### *V.D.4.1.b*

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respect for the rights of other individuals--having respect for others' right to an equal voice in government, to be equal in the eyes of the law, to hold and advocate diverse ideas, and to join in associations to advance their views.

*College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Standards (2)*

*D2.Civ.2.9-12*

Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

*D2.Civ.10.9-12*

Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

### Materials Needed:

Students will need access to:

A computer or laptop or a way to show video in class

Students may need headphones

Access to PBS Learning Media

Access to the internet

### Learning Objectives:

- Review historic milestones in the fight for women's equality.
- Discuss common objections to making women's equality a matter of Federal law.
- Consider how delaying legislation on women's equality also impairs the rights of men.

### Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

It's easy to assume that all American citizens have equal rights and privileges, but tradition has created disparities based on race, ethnicity, even gender. Legislators try to craft laws to assure equal treatment for men and women, but change comes slowly. Some proposed laws took decades to ratify and one (the Equal Rights Amendment) has languished for nearly a century. How can we move beyond this?

### Body of Lesson:

1. Show the video, "Equal Rights for Women."
2. Women campaigned for the right to vote in national elections for nearly eighty years before the 19th Amendment granted this right in 1920. Some objections to this law were:
  - a. Few women own property, so they should not participate in decisions about land use, taxation, etc.
  - b. Women are not as well educated as men, so they are not adequately informed about issues that confront the nation.
  - c. Women do not serve in the military, so they do not risk their lives to defend the country.
  - d. Learning Activity:
    - i. Have students write a three-page essay (about 750 words) about one of the foregoing three objections (2a–c), answering these questions:
      1. Do you think this was a valid objection to allowing women to vote in 1920?
      2. How has this situation changed since 1920?
      3. How would you answer this objection now?
    - ii. Can you think of some ways that women might be better qualified than men to vote in national elections?
3. Title IX was a provision of a Federal education law passed in 1972, which prohibits gender-based discrimination in access to any program funded with Federal taxes.
  - a. Learning Activity:
    - i. Ask your students to identify programs at your school that are open to both males and females, which might have barred females before Title IX. Most athletic programs are covered, but can your students think of any other school offers that may not be tax-

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- funded, thus not protected by Title IX (e.g., marching bands, art competitions, service clubs)?
- ii. Discuss steps that a female student might take to assert her Title IX rights if she is ever denied access to a school program that is funded with Federal taxes. Has a student ever done this?
4. Also in 1972, the U.S. Congress passed an amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing equal rights for women, which became commonly known as the Equal Rights Amendment. It stated: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”
- a. Congress set a deadline of 1979 for 38 states to ratify this amendment; however, this requirement was not met until 2020. The House of Representatives then voted to extend the deadline to that date so that the amendment could take effect. This measure is now pending before the Senate.
  - b. Learning Activity:
    - i. Discuss how this law could change corporate practices in which women are often treated differently than men—e.g., wage scales and eligibility for promotion.
    - ii. Discuss examples in which equal *rights* might not entail equal *obligations* for women—e.g., registration for the military draft and physical requirements for factory employment.

## Summary/Closure

For various reasons, the United States has been slower than many other Western nations to remove its barriers to women. Legislation has been a critical part of the process. American women have more legal protection of their rights than a century ago, but there is still a good deal of work to be done.

## Extension Activities

When a nation limits the rights of one class of citizens, the rights of others are impaired as well. Lead your students in a discussion of these questions:

- If the person best qualified to be President was a woman but no national party would nominate her, how would the nation’s men be affected?
- If talented girls were not allowed to compete in your high school’s varsity sports, how would boys who want to participate in those sports be affected?

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- If women were not allowed to serve in the military, how would that affect the nation's ability to respond to military threats?

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