

Winner - High School
Chelsea Hyland, 10th, Sacred Heart

Imagine a world without a trusty cellphone, the internet, penicillin to tackle those pesky ear infections, or a women's right to vote, yet only 100 years ago none of these existed. While there could be a spirited debate over which development had the greatest impact on society, the passage of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote is perhaps the most significant. Women's ability to vote is one of the main identifying qualities of America and what makes our country so great. This is because voting is an essential right of citizenship, giving individuals a voice in determining policies around important matters. If women had never been granted the right to vote, they would have lacked the power to choose officials who championed laws and policies that paved the way for women's many contributions to society.

For almost 150 years, over half the citizens in America were prohibited from exercising the basic right to vote simply because they were female. Beginning in 1848, a brave group of women, led by Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, established an organized movement for women's suffrage that would change our political process in ways that forever altered our country. After a long and divisive struggle, women were granted the right to vote in 1920 through the passing of the 19th Amendment. As a result, today women play a critical role in our democracy, casting almost 10 million more votes in recent elections than men, creating a system where politicians are focused on issues that advance and protect women.

If the suffrage movement had not been successful, it is likely that many interests important to women would have been neglected as our country's leaders would have only been representing the males in our nation. Laws relating to women's employment, education, family planning, and economic freedom may not have been enacted. Furthermore, the Equal Pay Act, Civil Rights Act and Title IX, which prohibit discrimination based on gender, would likely not have been passed. Women who achieved influential positions including Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female Supreme Court Justice, Janet Reno, the first female attorney general, and Hillary Clinton, the first female presidential nominee may never have risen to such heights. No doubt, the right to vote and ensuing privileges have empowered women over the years. Several discoveries by women, including the use of chemotherapy, the whooping cough vaccine and the discovery of a new outer arm of the Milky Way may not have occurred if women were still suppressed.

Winner - Middle School
Leila Sherriff, 8th, Greenwich Academy

Even in 2020, women are still fighting to be seen as equal citizens alongside their male counterparts. However, the passing of the 19th Amendment in 1920 greatly advanced this cause, and without it, there would be no basis from which women could advocate for feminism. In a modern world where the United States government is solely influenced by male opinion, women would have no autonomy over their bodies and be subject to gender discrimination.

Before women were allowed to propose and vote on legislation regarding female health care, they had virtually no freedom to choose what happened to their bodies and had many of their medical issues overlooked by the male government. This reality would still be true if women weren't able to vote. In a study published by Michele Swers, a political scientist who focused on women in government, she discovered that in the mid-1990s, liberal female legislators co-sponsored an average of 10.6 bills related to women's health — an average of 5.3 more than their liberal male colleagues. *Roe v. Wade*, the *Shepard Toward Act*, and *Griswold vs. Connecticut* were all advancements of women's rights in abortion, maternity care and access to contraception, respectively. These events were proposed and largely supported by women. Without the ability to provide input in government, women wouldn't have the right to control what happened to their bodies.

While women are as important to the American workforce as men, without adequate legislation, they would suffer from gender discrimination and lower salaries. In 1944, New York Congresswoman Winifred Stanley introduced *H.R. 5056, Prohibiting Discrimination in Pay on Account of Sex*, a work bill that proposed closing the gender wage gap. It did not pass initially, but the issue lingered until the passing of the Equal Pay Act of 1963. If Winifred Stanley (or any other woman) didn't have the ability to be elected to Congress, it's likely that the issue wouldn't have been rectified. Another decisive moment for workplace gender discrimination was the passing of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While it had initially been focused on ending discrimination of race and religion, after extensive lobbying by The National Women's Party, "sex" was added. Without women having input, this easily could not have been the reality and a wage gap could not be contested in court.

Women make up roughly 50.6% percent of American citizens; by contrast, only 23.6% of members of Congress are female. However, despite this difference, that 23.6% is crucial to the legislation that allows women to exercise the same American rights as the men around them. Without them, the women of America would be reduced to the subordinates and property of men as we were before the passing of the 19th Amendment in 1920. While the United States still has a ways to go to achieve true

gender parity, giving women the right to vote largely upset the scales of power between men and women for the better.

Winner - Elementary School

Elizabeth Galgano, 4th, Sacred Heart (*)

Women were given the right to vote in 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment of the Constitution was passed. Before that time women suffered in many ways when they protested for their right to vote. Some of them were beaten by police and told to leave their homes and families. The world would be horrifying if women could not vote.

If women could not vote, they would not be able to elect Presidents, governors, mayors, and Congress people. If they could not vote in elections, then the people they would want to win would never be elected and never protect the women's views.

Without votes, women would not be able to make laws and protect things that were important to them. They could not change laws that stopped them from raising a child by themselves or change laws that did not allow them to spend their own money. Before being able to vote, women had to give their money to their husbands or brothers if they were not married. Without votes, women would not be able to change laws that did not allow them to own their own property or let them go to school. If women could not vote, they would not be able to change laws that stopped them from being doctors, lawyers, president, mayors, governors, or astronauts. Without voting, women would not be able to change laws that make them get paid less than men or receive fewer good things from their jobs even though they worked longer and HARDER. Before getting to vote, women could not go to some meetings which would be important to the women so they could talk about their ideas.

Without being able to vote and change laws, women could not own a business or get money from family members if they died, which is way different from today. Without voting to change laws, women could not wear what they wanted to wear, and they could not work at night. Without voting, women could not be in the military, and they were not allowed to be on juries. Without voting to change laws, women could not have their name written on credit cards and have their own name printed on passports. The worst thing is they could not take a quick bathroom break if they were working because there were no girls' bathrooms. Without voting and changing laws, women could not get divorced unless they were abused or left alone which is rude. Without voting to change

laws, women could not have their own bank account without their husband's name on the account. Unlike now where women can do many sports, women could not do that many sports because the laws stopped them from playing in the same games as men. Without women's votes, half of the votes of the population would be lost. I'm thankful for the women who fought for the right for women to vote because now I can do and be everything I want to be, including being an astronaut!