

Spreading the Word

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Historical Background

A major way that South Dakota suffragists sought public support was by making speeches at meetings and in front of crowds, talking to politicians, and holding their own in debates.

In early campaigns, local suffragists like Emma Smith DeVoe, Emma Cranmer, and Anna Simmons, as well as visiting speakers like Susan B. Anthony, gave lectures about suffrage in schoolhouses, churches, and opera houses. They asked men and women to support the campaign, and asked men to vote for suffrage. They also made speeches to gathered crowds at state and county fairs.

Some gave speeches on suffrage to people on streets. At the time, political speeches on the street weren't unusual, but it was rare for women to be the speaker. In 1890, Helen Barker spoke on suffrage from the veranda of the Minnekahta Hotel in Hot Springs, and one of the speeches given by Clara Colby of Nebraska was from the second-floor balcony of the Keystone Hotel in Deadwood. In 1916, Elsie Benedict of Denver held many suffrage rallies on street corners in Madison, Pierre, Lead, Watertown, and more.

In 1909, state suffrage president Lydia Johnson of Fort Pierre spent eight months in field work "speaking at conventions, political, fraternal, religious, at the state fair, in churches and Sunday schools, high schools, halls, lodge meetings, hotel lobbies, stores, sewing societies, club meetings, social functions, court houses and theaters."

In January 1919, after the state suffrage amendment passed the ballot in November 1918, the S.D. Universal Franchise League held a victory meeting at the Capitol building in Pierre. Alice Lorraine Daly, a professor of public speaking at the college in Madison, was invited to speak to the legislature from the rostrum at the front of the state Senate. Newspapers reported that she was the first woman to speak from that place of honor in that building.

In every territorial and state legislature from 1885 to 1919, suffragists lobbied legislators to support suffrage bills and provided testimony at committee hearings, which were required before a suffrage bill was put on the House or Senate agendas for a vote. In 1915, both suffragists and anti-suffragists attended the hearings: "The arguments were rather heated in several particulars and the rules of debate were not at all times complied with."

Quotes above from *Forty-second Annual Report of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, given at the Convention, held at Washington, D.C., April 14 to 19, inclusive* (New York, 1910), 143 and *Madison Daily Leader* (SD), February 4, 1915, respectively. Photos from: Willard and Livermore, *A Woman of the Century...* (Moulton, 1893), 214 and 239; Minard, *Allegany County & Its People* (1896), 202; "Miss Alice L. Daly, 5/3/22," National Photo Company Collection (Library of Congress), LC-F81- 19408 [P&P].



Emma Smith
DeVoe



Helen M.
Barker



Emma A.
Cranmer



Alice L. Daly

Your Turn!

1. Research best practices for making persuasive speeches.
2. Prepare and give a 5-minute speech for friends or family on voting and good citizenship, or another contemporary political issue of interest to you. Option: Have a campaign program, with multiple speakers on different angles of the issue.