

# New Zealand women



# 32,000

signatures delivered to Parliament

# 11 August 1893

# Be the first to vote this September

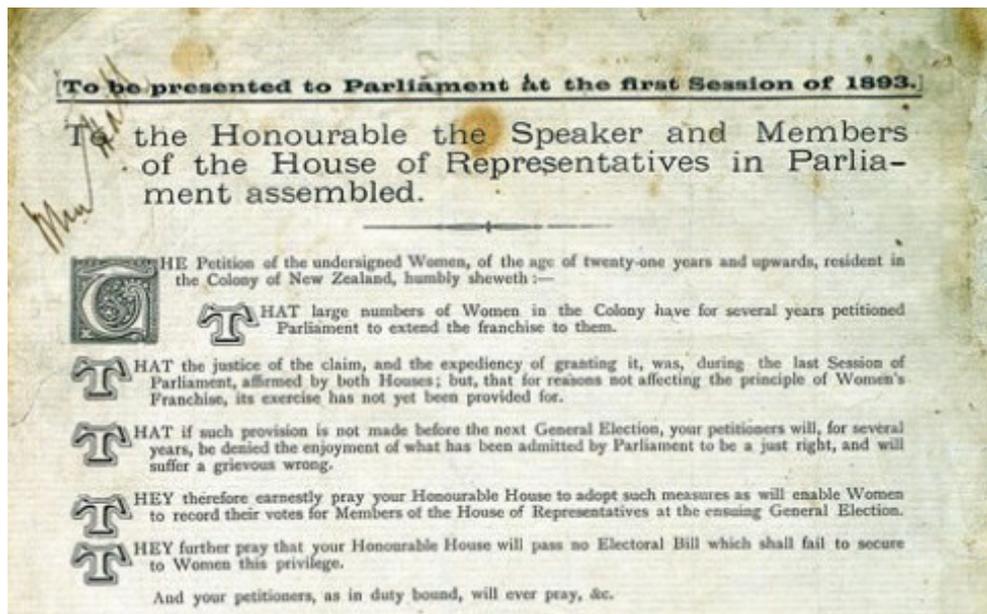
On 11 August 1893 a massive combined petition for women's suffrage was presented to the House of Representatives. Observers were to describe how it was, 'glued together to form a continuous sheet, the 270-m-long petition was rolled around a broomstick and brought into the House in a wheelbarrow. It was theatrically unrolled down the aisle of the chamber until it thumped against the far wall'. The combined petition contained the signatures of nearly 32,000 women, the largest containing 25,000 signatures. The 1893 petition represented almost a quarter of the entire adult European female population of New Zealand.

This was to be the last of a series of petitions, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and other organisations, organised around the right for women to vote. The first two petitions in 1891 (9,000 signatures) and 1892 (20,000 signatures) resulted in the House of Representatives passing electoral bills that would have enfranchised all adult women. On each occasion, opponents stopped the legislation in the more conservative upper house, the Legislative Council.

In 1893, following the presentation of the massive third petition, another bill was easily passed in the House. The bill went to the Legislative Council. The Council was lobbied by opponents to women's suffrage. Suffragists responded with mass rallies and a flurry of telegrams to members. On 8 September the bill was passed and on 19 September 1893 the new Electoral Act was signed into law. As a result, New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world to give women the right to vote in parliamentary elections.'

As we approach the 2014 General Election, it is appropriate that we demonstrate our respect to the suffragists, our most famous being Kate Shepard, and their campaign to gain women the right to vote, by being voters. Our democratic right to vote was not given but won through collective activity over a number of years. Make sure that your vote matters this year, and be a voter for democracy and encourage those you work and live with to be voters too.

Source: [www.nzhistory.net.nz/womens-suffrage-petition-presented-to-parliament](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/womens-suffrage-petition-presented-to-parliament)



Search for family members who may have signed the 1893 Suffrage Petition at [www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/womens-suffrage/petition](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/womens-suffrage/petition)

**Sir John Hall, politician and supporter of women's suffrage, presents the biggest of the petitions to Parliament in 1893**

[www.teara.govt.nz/en/cartoon/35083/petitions-womens-suffrage](http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/cartoon/35083/petitions-womens-suffrage)



**Women vote at their first election in Tahakopa, Clutha, in 1893**

Source: [natlib.govt.nz/records/22311886](http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22311886)



## Ten reasons why the women of New Zealand should vote (1888)

Women working to get the vote during the 1880s to 1890s knew that they needed to organise collectively to win their right to be voters. Their union was the Women's Christian Temperance Union and they used many resources and activities to achieve their aim of women's suffrage. This included petitions, the largest of which contained 25,000 signatures, and was presented with others to Parliament on 11 August 1893. To gain this many signature was a massive effort and many one to one conversations! There were many public meetings held and this leaflet, *Ten Reasons Why Women of New Zealand Should Vote (1888)*, was used to lobby every member of the House of Representatives.

1. Because a democratic government like that of New Zealand already admits the great principle that every adult person, not convicted of crime, nor suspected of lunacy, has an inherent right to a voice in the construction of laws which all must obey.
2. Because it has not yet been proved that the intelligence of women is only equal to that of children, nor that their social status is on a par with that of lunatics or convicts.
3. Because women are affected by the prosperity of the Colony, are concerned in the preservation of its liberty and free institutions, and suffer equally with men from all national errors and mistakes.
4. Because women are less accessible than men to most of the debasing influences now brought to bear upon elections, and by doubling the number of electors to be dealt with, women would make bribery and corruption less effective, as well as more difficult.
5. Because in the quietude of home women are less liable than men to be swayed by mere party feeling, and are inclined to attach great value to uprightness and rectitude of life in a candidate.
6. Because the presence of women at the polling-booth would have a refining and purifying effect.
7. Because the votes of women would add weight and power to the more settled and responsible communities.
8. Because women are endowed with a more constant solicitude for the welfare of the rising generations, thus giving them a more far-reaching concern for something beyond the present moment.
9. Because the admitted physical weakness of women disposes them to exercise more habitual caution, and to feel a deeper interest in the constant preservation of peace, law, and order, and especially in the supremacy of right over might.
10. Because women naturally view each question from a somewhat different standpoint to men, so that whilst their interests, aims, and objects would be very generally the same, they would often see what men had overlooked, and thus add a new security against any partial or one-sided legislation.

[www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/ten-reasons-for-vote](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/ten-reasons-for-vote)

Makes you think about what NZNO members have and can achieve if we work together around our Priorities for Health to provide quality care for our patients and residents in the health sector now and in the future. One way we can influence these values and direction is by being a voter this Election. Your right to be a voter was won collectively. With 46,000 NZNO members and 5 percent of women voters, our vote matters. Be a voter for health this September.

## So that women may receive the vote

Many women gave inspiring and passionate speeches during the campaign to achieve women's suffrage. In 1893, Meri Te Tai Mangakahia addressed the Māori Parliament to ask that Māori women be allowed to vote for and become members of that body.

*I exult the honourable members of this gathering. Greetings. The reason I move this motion before the principle member and all honourable members so that a law may emerge from this parliament allowing women to vote and women to be accepted as members of the parliament. Following are my reasons that present this motion so that women may receive the vote and that there be women members:*

- 1. There are many women who have been widowed and own much land.*
- 2. There are many women whose fathers have died and do not have brothers.*
- 3. There are many women who are knowledgeable of the management of land where their husbands are not.*
- 4. There are many women whose fathers are elderly, who are also knowledgeable of the management of land and own land.*
- 5. There have been many male leaders who have petitioned the Queen concerning the many issues that affect us all, however, we have not yet been adequately compensated according to those petitions.*

*Therefore I pray to this gathering that women members be appointed. Perhaps by this course of action we may be satisfied concerning the many issues affecting us and our land. Perhaps the Queen may listen to the petitions if they are presented by her Maori sisters, since she is a woman as well.*

Source: [www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/so-that-women-can-get-the-vote](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/so-that-women-can-get-the-vote)

