

Protests Escalate

January 1917

Women known as “*Silent Sentinels*” (named because they did not speak) picketed the White House; in contrast to women in parades, the Silent Sentinels wore black.

Alice Paul, leader of the National Women’s Party, organized over 1,000 women to join the protest. She pushed for a Constitutional Amendment to achieve suffrage rather than working at the state level and lobbying Congress as Carrie Chapman Catt and her organization did.

The suffragists started quoting President Wilson’s own statements to emphasize the hypocrisy of an administration that was more concerned with democracy overseas than in its own nation:

**Mr. President you say, “liberty is the fundamental demand of the human spirit.”
Mr. President you say, “we are interested in the United States politically speaking, in nothing but human liberty.”**



June 1917



Picketers at the White House started being arrested for obstructing sidewalk traffic.

Picketers were sentenced for up to six months, among those women was Virginia Arnold, of North Carolina. Alice Paul demanded these women be treated as political prisoners which resulted in harsher treatment for prisoners. She organized hunger strikes and when the women refused to eat they were force fed and beaten. As a result, Paul was put into solitary confinement to break her will. On top of the mistreatment, prisoners were denied legal counsel.



November 1917

The picketers were released in response to a public outcry.



Early 1918

The DC Court of Appeals ruled the women had been illegally arrested, convicted, and imprisoned. However, the arrests continued with many more being imprisoned and treated harshly.

October 1918

President Wilson, in a speech to the US Senate, said, “I regard the extension of suffrage to women as vitally essential to the successful prosecution of the great war of humanity in which we are engaged.”

President Wilson had changed his position on women’s suffrage through the influence of Carrie Chapman Catt.

February 1919

Twenty six members of the National Woman’s Party embarked on the Prison Special Tour

- A three week cross country train tour to tell the country about their experiences in prison
- They often wore their prison uniforms and addressed crowds of people
- They demanded immediate passage of a National Suffrage Amendment

