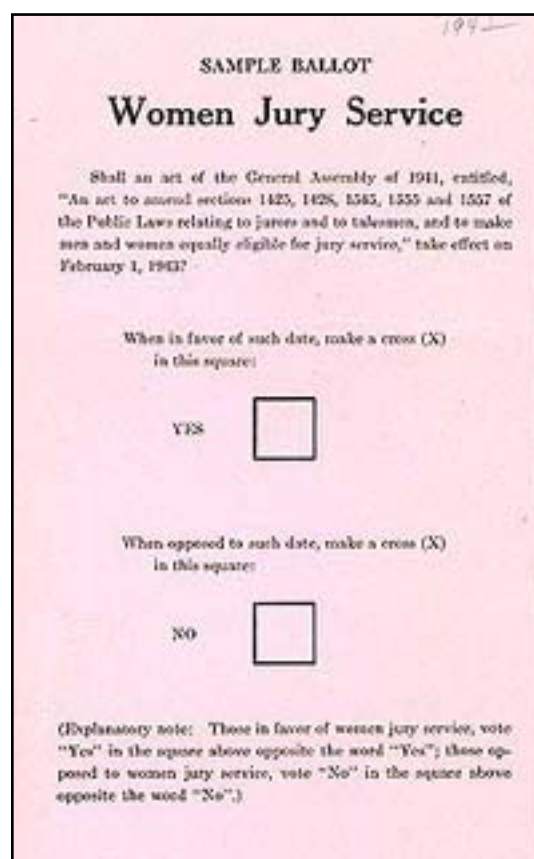


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Statewide Referendum 1942: Jury Service for Women

Background: While Vermont women could vote following passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, they did not acquire the full rights and obligations of citizenship. One obligation they did not receive was jury service.

Issue: Beginning in 1923 women fought for jury service, understanding that acquiring the obligations of citizenship bolstered demands for the rights. Opponents argued that the constitution did not contemplate women jurors and that jury service would harm women and their families. Some opponents argued that if jury service was allowed, then women should have an easy opt out if they chose not to serve.



Referendum: Whether to hold a referendum, and who should participate in it, was a crucial part of the debate over jury service. Opponents, believing a majority of women opposed jury service, sought to restrict the referendum to women voters. That effort was defeated and Act 31 of 1941, approved March 11th, established jury service for women, without the easy opt out provision. Act 31 called for a referendum on the day of the 1942 general election, with voters asked to choose whether the law would go into effect on February 1, 1943 or February 1, 1947.

On November 3, 1942 voters chose the early effective date by a 15,082 margin, 35,388 to 20,306. The measure carried every

county.

Result: The law went into effect on February 1, 1943. For more, see [From Ballot Box to Jury Box](#).