

HISTORICAL JANUARY

January 12, 1737: John Hancock, most often remembered for the bold signature with which he signed the Declaration of Independence, is born.

President of the Second Continental Congress, Hancock was the first to sign the document. In 1775 Hancock commissioned George Washington commander-in-chief of the Army of the United States. Hancock died in 1793 while serving his ninth term as the governor of Massachusetts.



January 3, 1793: Lucretia Coffin Mott, social reformer and crusader for women's rights, is born in Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Mott organized the first women's rights convention in 1848, which led to demands for increased rights for women, including better educational and employment opportunities and the right to vote. Though women couldn't vote for another 40 years after Mott's 1880 death, she lived to see most states grant women the right to hold property and several state and private colleges admit women.

January 10, 1861: Delegates to the state convention in Tallahassee vote to have Florida secede from the United States.

One month later, Florida and six other states formed the Confederate States of America.

January 11, 1885: Alice Paul, a chief strategist for the women's suffrage movement, is born in Moorestown, New Jersey.

Paul spent much of her life pursuing a suffrage amendment to the U.S. Constitution. She earned her law degree in 1922 and wrote the first version of the Equal Rights Amendment, also known as the Lucretia Mott Amendment. The ERA passed both houses of Congress but failed to receive ratification of three quarters of the states by the 1982 deadline.

January 5, 1949: Harry Truman delivers his State of the Union address calling for measures he calls a "Fair Deal."



Considered an almost certain election loser just a few months before—and even wrongly deemed a loser in a famous newspaper headline—Truman recommended national health insurance, a higher minimum wage and guaranteed civil rights for all citizens.

January 23, 1964: The 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, prohibiting the collection of poll taxes in national elections.

Adopted by many Southern states in the 19th century, the tax essentially took the vote away from many African Americans and poor whites. Congressional efforts to abolish the tax began as early as the 1940s.

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Nothing is so valuable as liberty and nothing is so necessary to liberty as the freedom to vote without bans or barriers.

—President

Lyndon Johnson

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