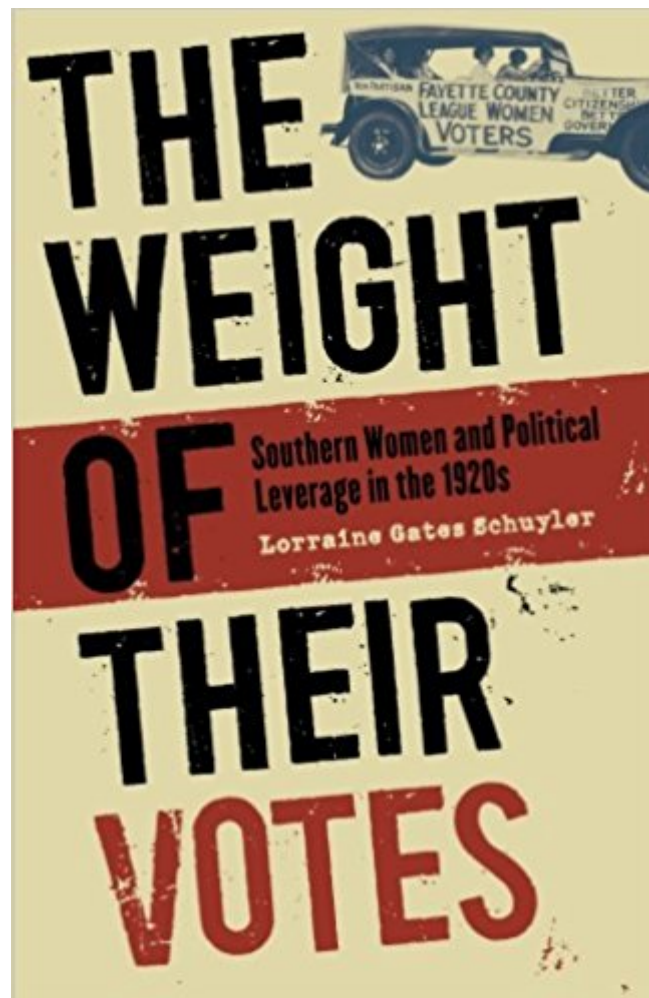


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# The Weight Of Their Votes: Southern Women And Political Leverage In The 1920s



## Synopsis

After the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, hundreds of thousands of southern women went to the polls for the first time. In *The Weight of Their Votes* Lorraine Gates Schuyler examines the consequences this had in states across the South. She shows that from polling places to the halls of state legislatures, women altered the political landscape in ways both symbolic and substantive. Schuyler challenges popular scholarly opinion that women failed to wield their ballots effectively in the 1920s, arguing instead that in state and local politics, women made the most of their votes. Schuyler explores get-out-the-vote campaigns staged by black and white women in the region and the response of white politicians to the sudden expansion of the electorate. Despite the cultural expectations of southern womanhood and the obstacles of poll taxes, literacy tests, and other suffrage restrictions, southern women took advantage of their voting power, Schuyler shows. Black women mobilized to challenge disfranchisement and seize their right to vote. White women lobbied state legislators for policy changes and threatened their representatives with political defeat if they failed to heed women's policy demands. Thus, even as southern Democrats remained in power, the social welfare policies and public spending priorities of southern states changed in the 1920s as a consequence of woman suffrage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Important.--Journal of American History  
Debunk[s] the argument that the political power of women  
lost potency after they received the vote.--Journal of Southern History  
Should be widely read, not

only by historians of southern women but also by scholars of southern politics. Clearly written and deeply researched, it should help redirect our attention to this much-neglected history of southern women after enfranchisement and challenge us to think more critically about the nature of women's political activism in the 1920s.--North Carolina Historical ReviewOffers a new perspective on key historical questions, and this influential study should guide many future projects.--The American Journal of Legal HistoryA superb and engaging book of historiographical significance.--American Historical ReviewPresents a highly original and convincing look at the contested right to vote.--Virginia Quarterly Review

Schuyler persuasively challenges the widely accepted notion about women's ineffectual political behavior after 1920. Her vast and deep scholarship enables her to give specific examples of women's impact on politics in nearly every southern state. This book will be quite valuable to scholars in women's history, southern history, and political history.--Pamela Tyler, University of Southern Mississippi It's about time. For years we have been waiting for just this kind of study of southern women and political leverage after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Schuyler argues that the suffrage amendment did not erode the power of women's political activism at the end of the 1920s, as many scholars have proposed, but that it instead opened a passage for women to further implement voting, political party activism, and office holding. Schuyler's study is both challenging and important.--Elizabeth Hayes Turner, author of *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920*A detailed and lively account of women's activism in southern politics in the early twentieth century. . . challenges--successfully--the exceptionally long-lived thesis that the post-suffrage women's movement in the United States was a flop. Rarely does a book reach so many audiences so substantially.--Arkansas Historical Quarterly

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