

1-1-1989

Criminal Law, Voting Rights: United States v. Susan B. Anthony

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• CRIMINAL LAW •

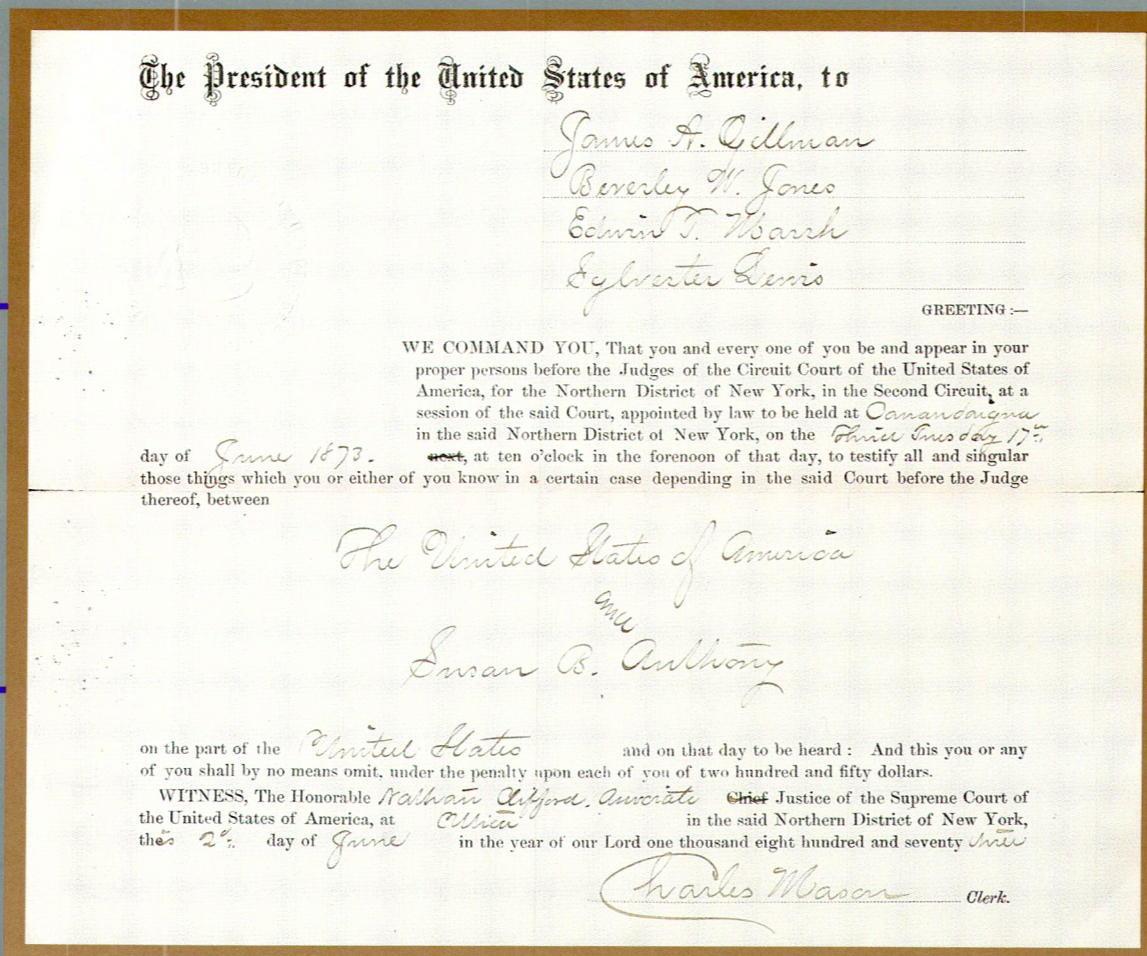
VOTING RIGHTS

United States v. Susan B. Anthony

U.S. Circuit Court for the Northern District of New York, Case No. 131, 24 F. Cas. 829 (C.C.N.D.N.Y. 1873) (No. 14,459) 1873

"Prisoner tried and convicted"

Indictment, January 24, 1873



Until 1920 the laws of most states, including New York, prohibited women from voting. Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), abolitionist, social reformer, and champion of woman suffrage, cast her ballot in New York in the 1872 national election, and thereby violated a federal law that required citizens to obey state voting regulations.

Her crime was part of a well-planned strategy to draw attention to women's disfranchisement. In her federal trial, the court found the outspoken suffrage leader, "a person of the female sex," guilty of violating the law. The court denied her defense, that the new Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited states from abridging the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States, made the New York State law invalid.

Although Susan B. Anthony lived for 86 years, she did not live long enough to see the fight for woman suffrage won. She died in 1906. It was not until 1920 that the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the vote, became part of the U.S. Constitution.

Unless credited otherwise, documents are from the National Archives, Records of District Courts of the United States.

1. "Indictment for Illegal Voting," January 24, 1873.
2. National Woman's Party suffrage banner, ca. 1917. Division of Political History, Smithsonian Institution
3. Subpoena to witnesses, June 21, 1873.
4. Susan B. Anthony, 1898. The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution
5. "Record of Conviction," June 28, 1873.
6. Suffrage parade, New York City, ca. 1912. National Archives, Records of the Office of War Information (208-PR-14M-1)

