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Kuwaiti women get the vote

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17 May, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Kuwaiti women get the vote

BNE: Kuwaiti women have won the right to vote and stand in local and parliamentary elections. An amendment to the Gulf emirate's election law was passed on Monday (May 16) in parliament. It followed a marathon ten-hour session of political wrangling and maneuvering. The all-male legislators passed the bill with a majority of 35 in favour, 23 against, and one abstention. It ends years of struggle by Kuwait's women to achieve political equality. The news was greeted with "thunderous applause" from the amendment's backers in the public gallery, according to AlJazeera news service. Kuwait's women now join their counterparts from neighbouring Qatar, Oman and Bahrain in having the vote.

Islamist and tribal legislators opposed the amendment on the grounds that Islamic teachings bar women from participating in political life and from assuming positions of leadership. However, this was deemed out of synch with the Kuwaiti constitution, which stipulates equality between the sexes. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who had campaigned for women's suffrage since 1999, immediately told reporters: "I congratulate the women of Kuwait for having achieved their political rights." Women may not actually get to use their new political powers until 2009. Loose ends from Monday's law making may not be tied up in time for women to cast their votes in this year's municipal elections.

WARM-UPS

1. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics you are interested in, which do not look interesting and which look really boring:

Kuwait / elections / Emirates / marathons / voting / thunder / Aljazeera / Islamic teachings / sexual equality / congratulations / loose ends

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

2. KUWAIT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Kuwait. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

3. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: With a partner, engage in these fun 2-minute debates. Students A firmly believe in the opinions on the left, Students B strongly support the opinions on the right. Change partners often.

- a. A woman's place is in the home. vs. Women should never be tied to the home.
- b. It is OK for women to fight in the army. vs. Wars are no places for women.
- c. A man should always hold a door open for a lady. vs. That's sexist.
- d. Women should buy flowers for men. vs. Men would rather have something useful.
- e. Women make the best leaders. vs. Men have always been the best leaders.
- f. The word "mankind" should become "personkind". vs. That's going too far.
- g. Men should never cry. vs. There's nothing wrong with men crying.
- h. Women should never read maps. vs. Women are good at reading maps.
- i. Men who wear cosmetics look good. vs. A man who wears make-up is not a man.

4. POLITICAL EQUALITY: Talk about the degree of political equality in your country. When did women get the vote? Has there ever been a female president / prime minister? Are there equal numbers of men and women in your country's parliament? Are women barred from certain jobs or positions? How does your country compare to other countries in terms of political equality for women?

5. WOMEN WORLD LEADERS: What do you know about the following women leaders? All are / were (or were elected as) presidents or prime ministers of their countries.

Chandrika Kumaratunge (Sri Lanka), Indira Gandhi (India), Golda Meir (Israel), Isabel Peron (Argentina), Margaret Thatcher (U.K.), Corazon Aquino (Philippines), Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), Mary Robinson (Ireland), Helen Clark (New Zealand), Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar), Khaleda Zia (Bangladesh), Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Philippines), Mame Madior Boye (Senegal)

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Kuwaiti women won the right to vote in village elections. | T / F |
| b. The decision to allow Kuwaiti women to vote was unanimous. | T / F |
| c. Thunder was heard when Kuwaiti women heard they had the vote. | T / F |
| d. Kuwait is the first Persian Gulf nation in which women get to vote. | T / F |
| e. Islamist and tribal legislators opposed women voting. | T / F |
| f. Kuwait's prime minister voted against women's suffrage. | T / F |
| g. Kuwaiti women can definitely vote in this year's elections. | T / F |
| h. Loose ends to be tied up from the electoral law may delay women's voting. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| a. stand | argument |
| b. amendment | viewed |
| c. marathon | roaring |
| d. wrangling | modification |
| e. thunderous | specifies |
| f. legislators | never-ending |
| g. bar | unfinished business |
| h. deemed | run |
| i. stipulates | prevent |
| j. loose ends | lawmakers |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. stand in local and | wrangling and maneuvering |
| b. marathon | rights |
| c. political | ten-hour session |
| d. greeted with thunderous | the amendment |
| e. public | ends |
| f. opposed | parliamentary elections |
| g. this was deemed | gallery |
| h. women's | out of synch |
| i. achieved their political | applause |
| j. loose | suffrage |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces in the article.

BNE: Kuwaiti women have won the right to vote and _____ in local and parliamentary elections. An amendment to the Gulf _____ election law was passed on Monday (May 16) in parliament. It followed a _____ ten-hour session of political _____ and maneuvering. The all-male legislators passed the bill with a majority of 35 in favour, 23 against, and one _____. It ends years of struggle by Kuwait's women to _____ political equality. The news was greeted with "thunderous _____" from the amendment's backers in the public gallery, according to AlJazeera news service. Kuwait's women now join their _____ from neighbouring Qatar, Oman and Bahrain in having the vote.

Islamist and _____ legislators opposed the amendment on the grounds that Islamic teachings _____ women from participating in political life and from _____ positions of leadership. However, this was deemed out of _____ with the Kuwaiti constitution, which _____ equality between the sexes. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who had campaigned for women's _____ since 1999, immediately told reporters: "I congratulate the women of Kuwait for having achieved their political rights." Women may not actually get to use their new political powers until 2009. Loose _____ from Monday's law making may not be tied up in time for women to _____ their votes in this year's municipal elections.

achieve
wrangling
emirate's
applause
abstention
stand
counterparts
marathon
stipulates
bar
cast
synch
suffrage
assuming
ends
tribal

AFTER READING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**local**' and '**election**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare and talk about your answers to this exercise. After you agree, check your answers against the text.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT SUFFRAGE SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about Kuwait's new electoral law and women getting the vote.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

right

tribal

stand

leadership

marathon

out of synch

struggle

suffrage

applause

congratulate

counterparts

loose ends

LANGUAGE

AS FOR ME:

The following phrases have been adapted from the article.

1. Fill the gaps with the words from the bottom. Are your answers the same as your partner's?
2. Write down any new vocabulary from your partner(s).
3. Fill the gaps again so that this time the sentences are true statements about yourself or your opinions.
4. After you have finished, talk about these true statements with your partner(s).

I want to win the right to (a) _____ .

I sometimes have marathon sessions (b) _____ .

I am in favour of (c) _____ .

I always greet (d) _____ with thunderous applause.

I am opposed to (e) _____ .

I enjoy participating in (f) _____ .

I (g) _____ feel out of synch with (h) _____ .

I think equality between the sexes is (i) _____ .

The loose ends I have to tie up this week are (j) _____ .

my team scoring a goal
studying English
ending nuclear weapons
often
charity events

only fair
retire at the age of 50.
not so important
nuclear weapons
life

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you saw the headline of this article?
- b. Do you like reading about politics?
- c. What do you think of Kuwaiti women getting the vote?
- d. Do you think other Arabic countries will follow suit and allow their women to vote?
- e. Western countries often criticize Islamic countries' systems of democracy. What do you think about this?
- f. Is your country a perfect democracy?
- g. When did women achieve universal suffrage in your country?
- h. Is there a strong feminist movement in your country?
- i. Who wears the trousers in your family?
- j. Which is the stronger sex?

STUDENT B's questions (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. What do you know about Kuwait?
- c. Would you like to visit or live in Kuwait?
- d. Some Islamists say a woman's right is to stay at home. What do you think of this?
- e. Some Islamists say the Koran forbids women assuming positions of leadership. What do you say to this?
- f. Do the women in your country have exactly the same rights as men?
- g. What do women in your country complain about?
- h. What do men complain about in your country?
- i. When do you think a woman will become head of an Arab state?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: Role play the following people in a discussion on sexual equality. Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and "strategies" before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Role A (Woman)

You believe men are the stronger sex. You think they should always be in positions of leadership and power. You think your country will be stronger if men work outside the home and women look after the men and children. You think men are better at voting and women don't need to vote. You think feminists are not real women.

Role B (Woman)

You are head of a feminist organization in your country. You are a strong, strong woman. You have always beaten men in everything you have done – at school and at work. You are CEO of a multi-national corporation. You play rugby. You believe it is essential all women vote to create equality. Women have died for universal suffrage.

Role C (Man)

You believe that because men are physically stronger, it is their role in life to be leaders. You think it is the job of women to have babies and look after their men and children. You think feminists are destroying society – Mothers at work means children are left at home alone.

Role D (Man)

You are a twenty-first century man. You believe with all your heart that women and men are equal. However, you do think it is a man's and not a woman's job to vote. You want to be a house husband – stay at home while your partner works. You love housework. You hate sexism – they are self-centred and lazy.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

After the role play, talk about whether you believed what you were saying in your roles.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Kuwaiti women get the vote

BNE: Kuwaiti women have won the right to vote _____ and parliamentary elections. An amendment to the Gulf emirate's election law was passed on Monday (May 16) in parliament. It followed a marathon ten-hour session of political _____. The all-male legislators passed the bill with a majority of 35 in favour, 23 against, and one abstention. It ends years of struggle by Kuwait's women to achieve political equality. The news was greeted with "_____ " from the amendment's backers in the public gallery, according to AlJazeera news service. Kuwait's women now _____ from neighbouring Qatar, Oman and Bahrain in having the vote.

Islamist and tribal legislators opposed the amendment _____ that Islamic teachings bar women from participating in political life and from assuming positions of leadership. However, this was _____ with the Kuwaiti constitution, which stipulates equality between the sexes. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who had campaigned for _____ since 1999, immediately told reporters: "I congratulate the women of Kuwait for having achieved their political rights." Women may not actually get to use their new political powers until 2009. _____ from Monday's law making may not be tied up in time for women to _____ in this year's municipal elections.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information on Kuwait. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE: Make a poster about the history of women and the vote in your country. Show it to your classmates in your next lesson. Discuss with your classmates the most interesting points in your posters.

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the Prime Minister of Kuwait telling him your thoughts on the law that has just been passed that gives women the vote. Show your letter to the class next lesson. Did your classmates write similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE

a. F b. F c. F d. F e. T f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH

a. stand	run
b. amendment	modification
c. marathon	never-ending
d. wrangling	argument
e. thunderous	roaring
f. legislators	lawmakers
g. bar	prevent
h. deemed	viewed
i. stipulates	specifies
j. loose ends	unfinished business

PHRASE MATCH:

a. stand in local and	parliamentary elections
b. marathon	ten-hour session
c. political	wrangling and maneuvering
d. greeted with thunderous	applause
e. public	gallery
f. opposed	the amendment
g. this was deemed	out of synch
h. women's	suffrage
i. achieved their political	rights
j. Loose	ends

GAP FILL:

Kuwaiti women get the vote

BNE: Kuwaiti women have won the right to vote and **stand** in local and parliamentary elections. An amendment to the Gulf **emirate's** election law was passed on Monday (May 16) in parliament. It followed a **marathon** ten-hour session of political **wrangling** and maneuvering. The all-male legislators passed the bill with a majority of 35 in favour, 23 against, and one **abstention**. It ends years of struggle by Kuwait's women to **achieve** political equality. The news was greeted with "thunderous **applause**" from the amendment's backers in the public gallery, according to AlJazeera news service. Kuwait's women now join their **counterparts** from neighbouring Qatar, Oman and Bahrain in having the vote.

Islamist and **tribal** legislators opposed the amendment on the grounds that Islamic teachings **bar** women from participating in political life and from **assuming** positions of leadership. However, this was deemed out of **synch** with the Kuwaiti constitution, which **stipulates** equality between the sexes. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who had campaigned for women's **suffrage** since 1999, immediately told reporters: "I congratulate the women of Kuwait for having achieved their political rights." Women may not actually get to use their new political powers until 2009. Loose **ends** from Monday's law making may not be tied up in time for women to **cast** their votes in this year's municipal elections.

LANGUAGE – AS FOR ME:

(d) my team scoring a goal	(i) only fair
(b) studying English	(a) retire at the age of 50.
(c) / (e) ending nuclear weapons	(j) not so important
(g) often	(e) / (c) nuclear weapons
(f) charity events	(h) life