

Women on Juries: *Hoyt v Florida*



Upon ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, some states allowed women jurors. Although women were first admitted to practice law in Florida in the late 1890s, it was not until 1949 that Florida allowed women to volunteer for jury service. Opponents ridiculed the idea of women serving on juries (above). Some argued that women would be corrupted, that jury duty would interfere with women's obligations as wives and mothers, or that they were too sympathetic and emotional (below). Few women registered to voluntarily serve and the jury room remained largely all male. In 1961 the United States Supreme Court upheld Florida's voluntary jury law for women in *Hoyt v. Florida*. The Court concluded that "despite the enlightened emancipation of women," they occupied a unique position "as the center of home and family life." It was 1967 before the Florida legislature passed a law requiring compulsory jury duty for women. In 1975 the United States Supreme Court reversed itself and held that excluding women from jury duty was unconstitutional.