

# Summary: Time of Reform

## Cleaning Up State Government

In 1906, San Francisco's mayor was arrested for taking bribes. The mayor and other leaders were paid by water, electric, and railroad companies to pass laws to help those businesses make money.

Some citizens, known as progressives, called for reforms. One reform they worked for was to end the power of the railroad companies. By the early 1900s, four men ran all the railroads in California. The Big Four, as they were called, controlled much of the state's shipping and trade. They used their power dishonestly and controlled the government in many cities.

In 1910, a lawyer, Hiram Johnson, was elected governor of California. He helped pass several laws to improve government. His reforms gave government more control of the railroad companies. Changes to the state constitution strengthened the rights of California voters. They could now create laws directly. Voters also gained the right to remove leaders from office at any time.

## Women Work for Change

Katherine Philips Edson was another progressive who worked for change. She led a fight for "pure milk" in 1909, so that consumers bought only clean milk for their babies.

Edson and other progressives fought for the rights of workers as well. In 1911, progressives convinced lawmakers to cut working hours for women to eight hours per day. In 1912, Governor Johnson hired Edson to study laws affecting women's pay and benefits. She pushed for reforms. In 1913, the state government set a minimum wage. New laws also created better working conditions, and employers had to pay medical bills for work injuries.

In the early 1900s, women's groups were working for suffrage. Women such as Edson and Grace Simons organized groups to write letters, make speeches, and march for reform. In October 1911, California became the sixth state to give women state voting rights. It was in 1920 that all women gained the right to vote in national elections.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**bribe** *noun*, payment made to do something illegal or dishonest

**reform** *noun*, an action that makes something better

**suffrage** *noun*, the right to vote

### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why did some businesses bribe city leaders? Highlight the sentences that explain what the businesses wanted.

**REVIEW** List two changes in working conditions for which progressives fought.

Draw a box around the paragraph that discusses reforms in working conditions.