



Councilmember Kate Harrison
District 4

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 15, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**From: Councilmember Kate Harrison, District 4
Councilmember Susan Wengraf, District 6
Councilmember Sophie Hahn, District 5**

Subject: Centennial Proclamation Honoring the Passage of the United States 19th Amendment and the National Women’s Suffrage Movement

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution honoring 2020 as the centennial of the winning of women's suffrage at the federal level in the United States.

SUMMARY

August 26th, 2020 was "Women's Equality Day", the 100th anniversary of the declaration that the 19th Amendment was in effect nationwide and the 100th Anniversary of newly franchised American Women Voters in Their First Presidential Election.. This resolution recognizes the centennial and the many people that have worked to ensure that women have access to the ballot.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None.

BACKGROUND

August 26th was "Women's Equality Day", honoring the 100th anniversary of the declaration that the 19th Amendment was in effect nationwide--women had finally won the right to vote throughout the country. Tennessee was the 36th state to ratify the amendment, on August 18, but it needed to be officially certified by Federal officials; that took place on August 26, 1920, putting the amendment into full effect. The Amendment stated, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

The struggle for the enfranchisement of women begins both long before this and in places far from the nation’s capital. The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention was the first major gathering for the US women’s suffrage movement, called by Quaker women active in the abolitionist movement along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton moved to add a resolution on women’s right to vote, which shocked many other attendees,

before eventually being included. It was the impassioned support from Fredrick Douglass that swayed many attendees. He said "In this denial of the right to participate in government, not merely the degradation of woman and the perpetuation of a great injustice happens, but the maiming and repudiation of one-half of the moral and intellectual power of the government of the world." ¹

Later, here in Berkeley, women were prominent leaders in the sustained efforts to win women's suffrage in California. In 1909, Elinor Carlisle was elected to Berkeley's School Board even before women had won the right to vote. Among others, Berkeley's Mary McHenry Keith—the first woman to earn a law degree in California—was a central figure in the California suffrage movement which culminated in the passage in 1911 of women's voting rights in California. Berkeley's male voters had supported women's voting rights in California in a suffrage campaign that failed in 1896, and Berkeley was the only large city in California to vote in favor of statewide suffrage in 1911.

Soon, women from Berkeley ran for local and State offices culminating with Anna Saylor becoming one of the first four women elected to state office in California in 1918. She represented Berkeley in the California State Assembly, was an advocate for child welfare and criminal justice reform, and later became the first woman appointed to the Governor's Council—essentially the State cabinet—in California. Saylor was the joint nominee of the Republican, Democratic, and Progressive parties when she first won office, and was re-elected four times. Two other women elected to the Assembly from other parts of California at the same time as Saylor were UC Berkeley alumnae – Grace Dorris and Esto Bates Broughton. Later, in 1947, Carrie L. Hoyt was the first woman to serve as Berkeley's Mayor.

The 19th amendment that went into effect in 1920 was the culmination of a nationwide movement for women's rights but it was also the beginning of many more struggles. Berkeley women participated in the national movement including traveling to Washington, D.C. Carrie H. Gibbs traveled at the age of 44 to witness the first Washington DC parade in 1913. Gibbs was the President of the Berkeley Federation Mothers' Club – now the PTAs (1912-1913) and began her work as a member of the School Board for three terms starting in 1915.

There were still many women who could not vote easily or even at all following the passage of the 19th amendment. Poll taxes, so called "literacy" tests, and other unjust laws prevented many women of color from becoming citizens or exercising the right granted to them by the 19th Amendment. It was not until later, after legislation including the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act, the 1965 Voting Rights act, or the 1965 Immigration and Nationality act, that many indigenous, Asian American, Filipino, Latino, and African American women were unequivocally allowed to vote.

¹ Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement. Sally McMillen. Oxford University Press, Sep 8, 2009. Pp 93-94.

Even today, voter suppression is still a great concern. Many states continue to uphold voter ID laws that have been used to disenfranchise many communities of color as well as transgender and nonbinary Americans that are often unable to apply for an ID that reaffirms their gender identity.² Additionally, the lack of comprehensive federal immigration reform keeps the process to become a citizen arduous and complicated. The modern barriers to voting that many women still face are a great threat to a democracy, particularly in this election season.

In 2020, the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, we must remember and honor the people of many backgrounds that have organized their communities and fought for the right for women to have a say in their own government, from the Seneca Falls convention and before, through Berkeley's activism on voting rights more than a century ago, to the present day.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impacts to environmental sustainability

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

To honor the many people that have worked to ensure voting rights for women and access to voting in the history of our country, state, and city.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CONTACT

Councilmember Kate Harrison: (510) 981-7140

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution

² The Potential Impact of Voter Identification Laws on Transgender Voters in the 2020 General Election. UCLA School of Law Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-voter-id-impact/>

RESOLUTION NO. XXXX-N.S.

RESOLUTION HONORING AS THE CENTENNIAL OF THE PASSAGE OF THE UNITED STATES 19TH AMENDMENT AND ITS ROLE IN ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF ALL WOMEN

WHEREAS, On November 1, 1919 the State of California was one of the first states to ratify the 19th Amendment, and, finally on August 18th, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th and final state needed to ratify the 19th Amendment and establish it as the law of the land; and

WHEREAS, On August 26th, 1920, the Federal Government formally acknowledged the successful ratification of the 19th Amendment, placing it with the original Constitution in the State Department vault; and,

WHEREAS, The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy and the fundamental right upon which all of our civil liberties rest; and

WHEREAS, The 19th amendment declared that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex;" and,

WHEREAS, The 19th Amendment came to be law only due to the hard work of many dedicated activists, organizers, and others who risked great personal consequence in their struggle for justice; and,

WHEREAS, The 19th Amendment did not guarantee suffrage for all women, including Native Americans who did not gain the right to vote until 1924, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans who were not permitted to be citizens until 1952 and African-American and Latin Americans who suffered voter suppression until passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and 1975; and

WHEREAS, The fact that today women are active in local, state, and national government and are running for office in unprecedented numbers reminds us that we all follow in the footsteps of these resolute American and Berkeley Suffragists; and

WHEREAS, The 19th Amendment to the United State Constitution has played an important role in the advancing the right of all women

WHEREAS, The struggle to ensure that all eligible woman voters have full access to a ballot is ongoing to this day:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That Berkeley's residents and all citizens Celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, The City of Berkeley

remembers and honors the people of many backgrounds and eras that have organized their communities and fought for the right of women to have a say in their government, from the Seneca Falls convention and to the present day.

