A RESOLUTION

Commemorating the centennial of the Commonwealth's ratification
of the 19th Amendment on June 24, 2019, and recognizing the
Justice Bell as a symbol of the suffrage cause.

WHEREAS, Passed by the Congress of the United States on June
4, 1919, and ratified by the Commonwealth on June 24, 1919, the
19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States provides
that the right to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the
United States or by any State on account of sex"; and
WHEREAS, On August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment was ratified
as approved by 36 state legislatures; and
WHEREAS, on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was certified
by the United States Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby; and
WHEREAS, Millions of women voted in national elections for
the first time in 1920; and
WHEREAS, The social and political movement to secure equal
voting rights for women originated at the historic Seneca Falls,
New York Convention of 1848; and
WHEREAS, A resolution drafted there states that "it is the
duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise"; and

WHEREAS, While some state legislatures enacted suffrage laws, the Congress of the United States blocked or defeated proposed constitutional amendments; and

WHEREAS, Diverse activism and opposition continued into the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, In 1915, the General Assembly agreed to a referendum for a suffrage amendment to the Constitution of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, As part of the lobbying campaign to urge male voters to expand the State electorate and then "announce the completion of democracy," Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger of Tredyffrin Township, Chester County, commissioned a near replica of the Liberty Bell; and

WHEREAS, Known as the Justice Bell or the Women's Liberty Bell, the bell is inscribed:

ESTABLISH JUSTICE

PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF

MENEELY BELL CO

TROY, NY

MCMXV;

and

WHEREAS, A flatbed truck carried the Justice Bell, with its bronze clapper silenced by chains, to all 67 Pennsylvania counties; and

WHEREAS, When the 1915 Statewide referendum failed by a vote of 385,348 to 441,034, the Justice Bell tour continued in other states; and
WHEREAS, The Justice Bell was present at the Victory Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Chicago in 1920; and

WHEREAS, The Justice Bell's clapper was unchained on September 25, 1920, at Independence Hall in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Justice Bell is permanently displayed at the Washington Memorial Chapel in Valley Forge; therefore be it RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives commemorate the centennial of the Commonwealth's ratification of the 19th Amendment on June 24, 2019, and recognize the Justice Bell as a symbol of the suffrage cause.