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MEMORIAL TO SUFFRAGE PROTESTORS WILL INCLUDE HISTORIC SECTION OF WHITE HOUSE FENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 22, 2020 – The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission is excited to announce that a forthcoming national memorial in Lorton, Virginia, honoring the activists who fought for women’s right to vote will include a historic section of the White House fence in front of which they protested over 100 years ago. Suffragists first began picketing outside the White House gates in January 1917, the first group ever to do so. On June 22, 1917, exactly 103 years ago today, police began arresting the picketers on charges of obstructing sidewalk traffic.

Through a formal agreement, the National Park Service (NPS) will loan a section of the historic White House fence to NOVA Parks, the organization that operates the land on which the memorial will be built, to include in the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton, VA. This section of the fence, which was along Pennsylvania Avenue during the original suffrage pickets, was removed in 2019 as part of the White House fence replacement project. NPS historic preservationists are currently completing conservation work on these fence panels, which date to the late 1800s. The NPS has cared for the White House and its grounds since 1933. The loan of this section of the White House fence to the memorial is a collaboration among the NPS, the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSCC), Turning Point Suffragist Memorial (TPSM), and NOVA Parks.

The memorial, which the TPSM Association is building in partnership with the WSCC, will stand as a tribute to American suffragists, with a special focus on those who were imprisoned at the Occoquan Workhouse for protesting for the right to vote outside the White House gates. The memorial will honor these brave women and provide awareness and education about how their courage, methods, and commitment led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

“One of the commission’s major goals during the 2020 suffrage centennial is to address the lack of monuments and memorials acknowledging the suffragists, who led the longest social movement in U.S. history,” said Susan Combs, WSCC Chairwoman and the Department of the Interior’s appointee to the commission. “We are thrilled that not only will the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial indicate a major step forward in memorializing women’s contributions to our democracy, but that it will also include this authentic piece of suffrage history. The commission is grateful to the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service for recognizing the importance of including this genuine artifact from the suffrage demonstrations outside the White House as part of the memorial.”

“The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial will serve as a visual symbol and educational tool to elevate to their proper place in history the millions of little-known women who engineered the greatest expansion of democracy the world had ever seen,” said Pat Wirth, Director and CEO of the TPSM Association.

“Including this section of the historic White House fence, in front of which the suffragists stood over 100 years ago, will allow visitors to the memorial to feel even more in the presence of these courageous trailblazers.”

“We hope that those who stand in front of the White House fence at the Turning Point Memorial will feel inspired by the determination and sacrifice of the suffragists,” National Park Service Deputy Director exercising the authority of the Director David Vela, said. “The National Park Service is committed to telling the full story of our nation, and lending this piece of history to the memorial is an important way to honor women’s important roles in advancing our democracy.”

The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSCC) was formed by the U.S. Congress to coordinate the nationwide commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, which was officially ratified and signed into the Constitution on August 26, 1920. Led by a bipartisan group of 14 women leaders, the WSCC has a nonpartisan mission to ensure that Americans in every state across the country have the chance to participate in the centennial and to learn about this important but often overlooked history. For more information about the WSCC, its initiatives, and commemorative events across the country throughout 2020, visit www.womensvote100.org.

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