



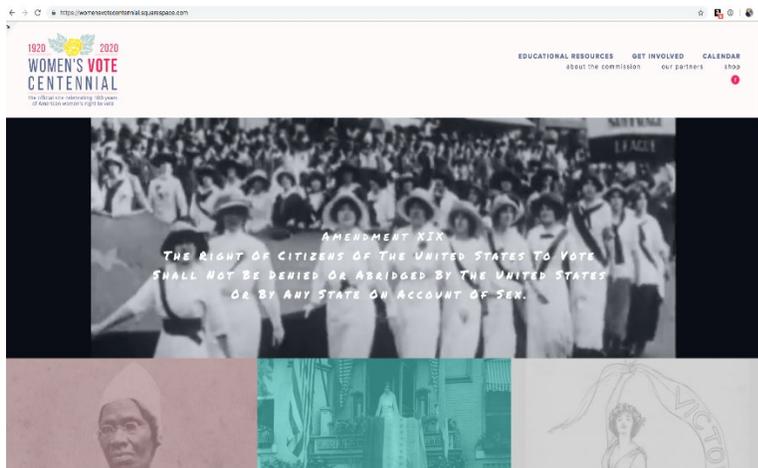
WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE
CENTENNIAL
COMMISSION

Fourth Report to
Congress and the
President
August 5, 2019

INTRODUCTION

In July 1848, the first American women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. This event, which produced a “Declaration of Sentiments” likened to the Declaration of Independence, is frequently credited as the beginning of the organized movement for women’s suffrage in America. For 72 years after the initial convention, women pursued ballot box equality. The movement, sometimes united, sometimes fractured, endured lulls in progress and near constant opposition. Even after 35 states had ratified it, the 19th amendment and its supporters faced an organized and passionate effort to stop women’s voting rights from becoming law in the final state for ratification. It stands in striking contrast, then, that the movement to commemorate the centennial of this historic stride in American equality has seen constant support, has moved quickly and near seamlessly and has served as a uniquely uniting movement among Americans. Since the last Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission report to Congress and the President, centennials of the 19th amendment’s passage and ratification in both Congress and a number of states have occurred. For each hundred year anniversary that has passed, the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission has commemorated and drawn positive attention to the occasion. The last report highlighted the Commission’s intentions to fulfill its charter in a robust way. This report details the first months of the Commission’s execution of its duties as prescribed by legislation.

WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE CENTENNIAL COMMISSION LAUNCH



The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission launched its website, www.WomensVote100.org, on May 17, 2019. Since its launch, the site has had more than 3,853 unique visitors and 10,982 page views. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The website is a robust resource comprised of educational resources, toolkits for those who wish to produce centennial

commemorations, a state-by-state listing of suffrage centennial activities and original content.

The Commission has also launched a variety of social media accounts and has gained traction with followers, likes and shares on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The Commission regularly posts original



content and produces a weekly video. The videos are launched through an additional Commission outreach, a weekly e-newsletter that gathers subscribers by soliciting readers from the Commission website.

The online home of the Commission also includes lists of experts and historians, as well as links to performers and reenactors. The website has suggestions for interactive visits to places of historical significance, as well as links to the online shops of the Commission's federal partners featuring suffrage centennial merchandise: The Smithsonian Institution, National Archives and Library of Congress.

WomensVote100.org is also a resource for states, counties and municipalities eager to commemorate the anniversary in their own ways. The site includes downloadable templates for a Joint Resolution and an Executive Order to recognize the occasion. Perhaps the most valuable online tool, though, is the connection to the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission itself, which has both produced original suffrage centennial events and supported events that have originated in states.

CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIONS IN CONGRESS

The launch of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission was followed by its first large-scale public relations events, which occurred after months of meetings and planning in our nation's capitol. The centennials of the passage of the 19th amendment in the US House and the US Senate occurred on May 21 and June 4, respectively. In each case, the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission spent months collaborating with members, their leadership, House and Senate

historians and congressional staff to develop individual resolutions to reaffirm the 19th amendment.



From L to R: Cokie Roberts, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (Ret.): WSCC Vice Chair, Rebecca Roberts, Honorable Kay Coles James: WSCC Chair, Rep. Brenda Lawrence, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Debbie Lesko, Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

On May 21, the US House of Representatives marked their centennial of passage by reaffirming the 19th amendment by unanimous consent. Led by Reps. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI) and Debbie Lesko (R-AZ), the House Bipartisan Women's Caucus assisted by the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, collected 169 cosponsors for House Resolution 354. Yellow roses donated to the Commission by Kroger Stores were pinned on members by Commission staff outside their conferences during the morning of the vote, then delivered to the Democrat Cloak Room and Minority Leader's office. Members made personal and passionate floor speeches about the hundredth anniversary of 19th amendment passage and the resolution, drafted with help from Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner's office, passed by unanimous consent. During a short break between

activities, the Commission quickly developed a shareable highlight video that was shared on Twitter.

The centennial commemoration day in the US House of Representatives wrapped with a grand reception in Statuary Hall sponsored by the Speaker of the House, featuring speeches by both the Speaker and Minority Leader. Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission Chairman, the Honorable Kay Coles James also made a speech, along with Vice Chairwoman Sen. Barbara Mikulski (Ret.). The Commission’s twitter hashtags were shared many times by members of Congress who posted videos and photos of themselves explaining the significance of both the yellow rose (a symbol of women’s suffrage) and the May 21 anniversary. Twitter hashtags #WomensVote100, #SuffrageSisters and #SuffraGents channeled the enthusiasm of the day. The Commission had provided members of the US House of Representatives with a toolkit that included opinion editorials, sample social media posts, and video scripts that could be adapted for use by members to inform constituents of the importance of the suffrage centennial. Many members made good use of the content and the first congressional centennial events were successful.

Past the initial website, social accounts and US House centennial commemoration, the

Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission turned its efforts to the US Senate centennial on June 4. The 100th anniversary of Senate passage of the 19th amendment began with the Majority Leader opening the day’s session with a tribute to women’s suffrage and the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission, specifically mentioning the Commission’s efforts in the day’s planned



The women of the US Senate pose for a formal portrait on the centennial of the 19th amendment’s passage. The yellow roses on their lapels were provided by the Women’s Suffraae Centennial Commission.

commemoration. The Leader, wearing a yellow rose on his lapel, particularly pointed to the efforts of Commission Chairman, the Honorable Kay Coles James, and Vice Chairwoman Sen. Barbara Mikulski (Ret.), mentioning each by name. As in the US House of Representatives, the Commission provided yellow roses to the legislators, a gift to the Commission from Kroger stores. Senators wore the roses throughout the day and, as in the House of Representatives, used the media toolkit provided by the Commission to produce social media posts and communications to their constituents. The women senators, all of whom were listed as

sponsors of the day’s resolution reaffirming the 19th amendment, made a point to pose in unity for a photograph marking the occasion. The senators made floor speeches highlighting the occasion and a roll call vote yielded passage of S.R. 212, “a resolution celebrating the 100th anniversary of the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, providing for women’s suffrage, to the Constitution of the United States”.

The Senate centennial provided an historic opportunity for the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission to coordinate with its federal partner, the Library of Congress, for the opening of its suffrage centennial exhibit, *Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote*. Wearing white in a nod to suffrage activists’ chosen color, members of the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission followed their support of the Senate’s centennial commemoration with their attendance-just hours later- at the Library of Congress exhibit opening. Chairman James and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski took the stage with members of Congress for a formal recitation of the 19th Amendment. Following the recitation and a legislative update on congressional initiatives championed by the Commission, actors from the suffrage tribute musical “19” surrounded the attendees of the Jefferson Building event for a performance of one of show’s original songs.



Members of the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission tour the Library of Congress exhibit. From L to R: US Treasurer Commissioner Jovita Carranza, Chair Honorable Kay Coles James, Commissioner Heather Higgins

COMMEMORATIONS IN OUR NATION’S CAPITOL

It is important to note that the Commission also supported the suffrage centennial exhibit openings of its other federal partners, the Smithsonian Institution and the National Archives.



Commissioners Clea Mitchell (L) and Marjorie Dannenfelser attend *Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote* at the National Archives

Vice Chairman Sen. Barbara Mikulski spoke, representing the Commission at the opening of the Smithsonian Portrait Gallery’s *Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence*. Additionally, several commissioners supported the opening of the National Archives exhibit, *Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote* where WSCC Commissioner and Deputy Archivist of the United States Debra Wall gave a speech in tribute to the suffragists.

The Commission's fourth federal partner, the Department of the Interior's National Park Service, held a foot race called the "Race to Ratification." Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission staff attended the race.

Future plans for work with federal partners continue to develop. The Commission recently held a federal information sharing meeting related to suffrage centennial activities in the Washington D.C. area. Attendees were not limited to the formal federal partnerships established by the Commission charter. The meeting yielded not only more events added to the Commission's online calendar of public activities, but also additional collaborations with federal partners. For example, the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission intends to lead its federal partners in a social media sharing strategy on August 26, 2019, the 99th anniversary of the 19th amendment's addition to the Constitution. The Commission will take tours, live tweet and Facebook Live experiences that the public can share. The Smithsonian Institution, National Archives and Library of Congress will, in turn, "like", "share" and otherwise collaborate with the social media efforts of the Commission to attract attention to the yearlong "countdown" to the centennial that begins on August 26.

Additionally, the Commission intends to partner with the Smithsonian Institution for its final "REMIX Night" of the season at the Portrait Gallery. REMIX is a monthly, ongoing public programming series that routinely attracts 1,000 or more young professionals. As the Portrait Gallery's partner for its September 26 REMIX Night, the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission will be listed on all promotional materials for the event. The event will feature food and drinks and is free and open to the public. Attendees will be able to make replica sashes, buttons, and yellow roses in support of the Portrait Gallery's 19th Amendment exhibit, *Votes for Women: Portrait of Persistence*.

CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIONS IN EARLY STATES

At the publication date of this report, 14 states will have commemorated the centennial of their legislatures' passage of the 19th amendment. The Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission extended an offer of event planning and media assistance to each state, through letters from Commission leadership to each governor and through personal outreach to governor's offices, legislative leadership and state historical societies.



Wisconsin's Centennial Celebration drew thousands of visitors to its first-in-the-nation commemorative event on June 10, 2019 in Madison.

In most states, the Commission’s assistance has been willingly and enthusiastically accepted. WomensVote100.org has both a downloadable executive order template and a downloadable template for a joint resolution and many states are finding the resources helpful. In Wisconsin, the first state to ratify the 19th amendment, Governor Tony Evers signed Executive Order #19 to create a “Committee to Celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of the 19th Amendment” and the legislature passed a joint resolution to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ratification. A large scale commemorative event drew thousands of visitors to Madison to not only participate in the program but view the original ratification documents on loan from the National Archives for 24 hours. As an extension of the event, the state’s capitol building now features a suffrage centennial exhibit in its rotunda which families can visit throughout the centennial year. The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission assisted in the event planning and supplied informational cards to event attendees.

On the same day, June 10, both Michigan and Illinois celebrated their centennials. In Michigan, Senate Resolution 59 and House Resolution 119 were introduced in the legislature to “commemorate June 10, 2019 as the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment by the state of Michigan.” Additionally, Governor Gretchen Whitmer designated the time between June 10, 2019 and August 26, 2020 as the “Year of the Women’s Suffrage Centennial”. In Illinois, Senate Resolution 9 declared June 10, 2019 “19th Amendment Ratification Day in Illinois”. A separate resolution originating in the state senate authorizes the Illinois State Treasurer to issue official commemorative state medallions to honor the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment.



Pennsylvania’s First Lady Francis Wolf (center) unchained the Justice Bell, a prized symbol of the women’s suffrage movement.

States did not have to be first in their ratification efforts to put on winning commemorations of their centennial anniversaries. Following Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan came Kansas, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Montana and Nebraska. While each state has developed unique events to highlight their suffrage centennials, Pennsylvania First Lady Francis Wolf’s involvement of a treasured suffrage artifact was particularly notable. Pennsylvania’s ratification centennial was marked by the ceremonial ringing of the historic

Justice Bell, a near replica of the Liberty Bell that was commissioned by suffragists in 1915. The Bell is inscribed, “Establish Justice. Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.”

Suffragists chained its clapper to the bell’s side, proclaiming that it could not ring in justice until women, too, had the right to vote. The bell toured Pennsylvania and the country rallying

support for women’s suffrage in the 1900’s. On the anniversary of Pennsylvania’s ratification of the 19th amendment, First Lady Wolf rang the bell at its home in Washington Memorial Hall in Valley Forge National Historical Park.

In Ohio, Governor Mike DeWine signed the unanimously-approved Senate Bill 30 to create the Ohio Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission to oversee statewide celebratory events. The Ohio Commission and its supporters engineered a distinctive suffrage centennial celebration at Great American Ballpark, home of the Cincinnati Reds baseball franchise. Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted, accompanied by some members of the Ohio commission, were recognized on the field. The recognition allowed thousands of baseball fans exposure to suffrage history. It also highlighted baseball history that few Americans know: the lyrics of America’s third best-known song, *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*, are inspired by an Ohio suffragist.



Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted, along with celebrants of the 100th Anniversary of Ohio’s Ratification of the 19th Amendment at Great American Ballpark, which recognized the suffrage centennial

FUTURE PLANS

In his Independence Day tribute to America, President Donald Trump said, “Throughout our history, our country has been made ever greater by citizens who risked it all for equality and justice. 100 years ago this summer, the women’s suffrage movement led Congress to pass the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote.” The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission is eager to continue the President’s involvement in commemorating the suffrage centennial. The Commission intends to continue coordinating with the White House to identify opportunities for the President, First Lady and other principals to bring more awareness to the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment.

Additionally, the Commission will continue to support initiatives on Capitol Hill that might educate, commemorate and celebrate the historic centennial. The Commission is currently taking a leading role in promoting a number of bipartisan legislative efforts to commemorate the 19th Amendment’s anniversary. The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commemorative Coin Act would create a coin honoring the centennial, the sales proceeds of which would go to the National Women’s History Museum. The Women’s History and Nineteenth Amendment Centennial Quarter Dollar Coin Program Act would create a state quarter program to highlight women suffragists from each state with an ongoing effort much like the state National Parks quarters. Quarter designs featuring suffragists from individual states would be originated in the

states themselves and approved by the Treasury Secretary. A bill “to authorize the *Every Word We Utter* monument to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes” would establish an outdoor monument in Washington D.C. that would honor the suffragists.



Commissioners Karen Hill and Jennifer Siebel Newsom support the opening of the Library of Congress exhibit

In addition to the efforts engaging with the White House and Congress, the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission also plans to reach Americans through mail, medals and magazines. The Commission is supporting an effort to create a Suffrage Centennial postage stamp. The Commission assisted with language petitioning the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee for a special stamp. The appeal for a postage stamp is a bicameral and bipartisan effort. In addition to its support of the Suffrage Centennial Coin legislation, the Women’s Suffrage Centennial

Commission is also pursuing the creation of a Suffrage Centennial Medal, to ensure that a memento for the year will be produced in time for gifting and commemorating the centennial. Too, the Commission is collaborating for another keepsake, a commemorative magazine to be produced in time for the centennial. The Commission will continue to seek partnerships to further educate Americans about the centennial and provide opportunities for commemoration and reflection.

The Commission will also look to the states to highlight monumental moments in women’s suffrage history. The Commission intends to hold a meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, the site of the first women’s rights convention. The meeting will call attention to the 72-year organized fight for women’s ballot box equality in America. The Commission also plans to visit the Hermitage Hotel, which played an important role in the suffrage movement, on the 100th anniversary of Tennessee’s ratification of the 19th Amendment. Calling attention to these historic places is the honor and obligation of a commission that seeks to share fascinating and patriotic history with all of America.

CONCLUSION

As more Americans become familiar with the tales and truths of the women’s suffrage movement in America and the upcoming centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment, the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission will continue to lead the way in recognizing the leaders and legends of the movement. The Commission’s weekly e-newsletter, its *Yellow Rose Journal* blog, its social posts and its commissioners’ outreach efforts will educate more

Americans. It is remarkable to reflect on the fact that women have had an electoral voice for less than 100 years in America. In their “Declaration of Sentiments”, signed during the first women’s rights convention in 1848, attendees wrote about man: “He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.” The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission continues to seek ways to give a voice to the historic fighters who battled for the voting equality that American women hold dear today.

WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

Chairman: Honorable Kay Coles James

Vice Chair: Sen. Barbara Mikulski (Ret.)

Jovita Carranza

Susan Combs

Marjorie Dannenfelser

Heather Higgins

Karen Hill

Julissa Marengo

Nicola Miner

Cleta Mitchell

Penny Nance

Jennifer Siebel Newsom

Colleen Shogan

Debra Steidel Wall