

## Exhibits, Events Celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women Suffrage

**Women's Equality Day** on Monday, August 26, 2019 is a reminder that we are fast approaching the centennial in 2020 of the ending of men's denial of women's fundamental right to vote. Women did not merely "win" or "were granted" suffrage, but women fought for, organized and were jailed and even tortured for their actions to stop an unjust constraint on our constitutional right as citizens. It took more than 150 years to accomplish: women in the colonies and in the new republic of 1776 began pressing for their right to vote.

It wasn't until 1878 that the first women's suffrage amendment resolution was introduced in Congress, where it lingered in committee. Momentum grew in the late 1800s when middle-class women, temperance advocates, unionists and progressive organizations joined in the effort. **Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone** and later **Alice Paul**, among many others, were the determined leaders.

Public speeches, rallies and marches in Washington and the states began to have an impact. A half dozen Western states recognized women's right to vote lending momentum. Suffragists carried on long vigils in front of the White House, resulting arrests and imprisonment at a jail in Virginia where they were force fed and beaten. It was the stark vision of starving and ill women released from the Occoquan Workhouse that pricked the conscience of the nation and of President Woodrow Wilson to finally support women's suffrage. (For the dramatic history of women's suffrage, go to. [Women's Suffrage in the United States.](#))

Women's Equality Day commemorates the 1920 adoption, following ratification in the final state -- Tennessee, of the **Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution**. The Amendment's plain language reads, "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."