

Honoring Our History

History Repeated with ERA Ratification - The final phase of the ratification process is told in a recent book, *The Woman's Hour*, by Elaine F. Weiss, which recounts the all-out battle in Tennessee to pass a ratification measure against die-hard conservative suffrage opponents who claimed that the women's vote would end family life and emasculate men, among other outrageous claims. The account is an astonishing echo of the **Equal Rights Amendment** ratification experience that we have more recently lived through. Fortunately, one young man, Harry T. Burn, changed his vote – after an urging from his mother -- to support ratification and broke a tie in the House of Representatives, making history. This year and next, Tennesseans are celebrating their very special role in women's suffrage history and are honoring those suffragists that took the Nineteenth Amendment the final mile.

In fact, hundreds of celebrations, parades, memorials and ceremonies around the country are being planned or are in progress for the suffrage centennial. A national calendar of events is maintained by the [2020 Women's Vote Centennial Initiative \(WVCI\)](#), a collaboration between several organizations across the country who are holding events to celebrate the political achievements of women and to honor the legacy of suffragists through historical and artistic exhibitions, parades, and online archives. The WVCI writes, "The right to vote cannot be taken lightly as women have continued to fight back against disenfranchisement, gender oppression, and politicians who discard our needs. WVCI and their partners connect us with our history to show how far women have come and how far we must continue to go to gain true equality." _

Nation's Capital Honors Women's Suffrage History

In the meantime, there are several outstanding exhibits at Washington, D.C. venues that call attention to women's suffrage history. Many will be on display through 2020.

- **Newseum:** The Newseum has created an online exhibit utilizing their historic newspaper collection entitled, "[Women, Their Rights and Nothing Less: The First Amendment and the Women's Suffrage Movement.](#)"
- **National Portrait Gallery:** The exhibition, titled "Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence," is on view at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery at Washington, D.C., through January 2020. A comprehensive history of the American suffrage movement, the exhibition will feature approximately 105 objects including portraits of the influential leaders along with significant ephemeral culture such as suffrage posters, banners, photographs, postcards and more.
- **National Archives Museum:** "Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote". The exhibit includes the original 19th Amendment, rare footage of suffrage protest and women voting for the first time. Also, on display is a Petition for Woman Suffrage signed by Frederick Douglass, Jr. and Rosetta Douglas Sprague, plus interactive displays
- **National Women's History Museum:** The virtual National Women's History Museum has created an educational online resource center that highlights key aspects of how women won the right to vote. "Crusade for the Vote" examines the women's right movement from the early Republic era through the passage of the 19th Amendment. It continues short articles, biographies, guiding questions, suggested lesson plans, and primary sources to explore. The resource center is found at <http://www.crusadeforthevote.org/> and the NWHM is planning more events as the centennial approaches.

A national **Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission** was established by legislation sponsored by Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) and 15 women members of the Senate in 2017. Commission members were appointed by House and Senate leaders of both parties. Several public meetings have been held, but no announcement of 2020 plans have been made.

The commission is headed by several conservative women, Margery Dannenfelser, President of the Susan B. Anthony List, and Kay Cole James, former director of the U.S. Office Personnel Management under George W. Bush and currently of The Heritage Foundation. The commission's executive director is former Wisconsin Lt.

Governor Rebecca Kleefisch (R) who is known as a strong anti-feminist. Fortunately, former U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D- Md.) and Karen Hill, president and CEO of Harriet Tubman Home, and Jennifer Siebel Newsom, film maker and California's First Lady, are also members. The commission has a \$3 million budget which expires in early 2021.

States to Commemorate Women's Suffrage Centennial - The more meaningful commemorations of women's suffrage may well be observed in the states. Several state legislatures have establishing state suffrage centennial commissions to plan and organize various events. Many groups have launched websites providing historical information on prominent local suffragists. Statues are being erected, parks and trails created, plays are being written and lot of other creative initiatives are underway. Copies of a beautifully illustrated guide are available from the [National Women's History Alliance](#).