



Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission was created by Congress to mark the 100-year anniversary of women's right to vote in 2020 and to ensure that the untold stories of women's decades-long battle for the ballot are recognized and celebrated across the U.S. The Commission was committed to telling an inclusive, diverse, and complete history of the fight for the vote, and was proud to lead the nationwide commemorations of this historic centennial.

Even in the face of a global pandemic, the Commission found creative and impactful ways to bring the pivotal story of American women's fight for the vote to communities across the country during the centennial year. Through its major campaigns and initiatives, the Commission leaves a legacy of statues, memorials, murals, historic markers, exhibits, memorabilia, and educational resources that will continue to reach millions of Americans and keep the story of the trailblazing suffragists alive for generations to come.

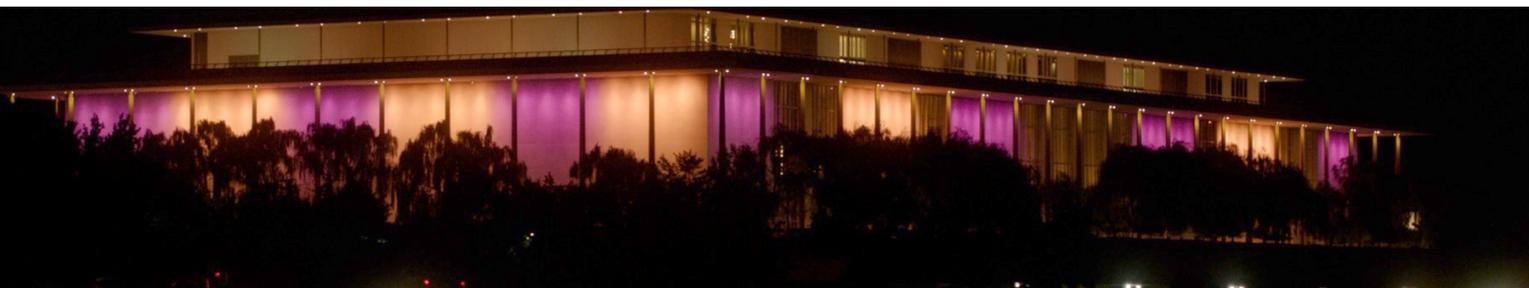
The Commission's centennial commemorations began on May 21, 2019 with the passage of Commemorative Resolution H.Res.354, which marked 100 years since the **U.S. House of Representatives** passed the 19th Amendment. Two weeks later, on June 4, 2019, the **U.S. Senate** recognized its own suffrage anniversary, passing Commemorative Resolution S.Res.212. On both anniversaries, Members wore yellow roses provided by the Commission and gave floor speeches acknowledging the unique roles their states played in the suffrage movement. The passage of the commemorative resolution in the House of Representatives was followed by a celebratory and reflective reception in the Capitol hosted by Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Also on June 4, 2019, the Commission attended the opening of the *Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote* exhibition at the **Library of Congress**. The suffrage centennial exhibitions at the **Library of Congress**, the **National Archives**, the **National Portrait Gallery**, and the **National Museum of American History** throughout 2019 and 2020 engaged a new generation of trailblazers and raised the profile of the women's suffrage movement in the narrative of American history.

The **White House** honored the suffrage centennial through a ceremonial bill signing, a Presidential Pardon, and a commemorative proclamation. In November 2019, President Donald Trump invited the Commission to The White House for the signing of the legislation that created the Women's Suffrage Centennial Silver Dollar. In August 2020, the Commission attended the signing of the President's suffrage centennial commemorative proclamation, during which President Trump also announced that he would pardon Susan B. Anthony for her 1872 conviction for illegally voting.

To recognize the official 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, the Commission worked with the U.S. Congress to designate August 2020 as **National Women's Suffrage Month**. The Senate designated this month-long celebration through S.Res.648, led by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and sponsored by all 26 women senators. Congresswomen Debbie Lesko (R-AZ) and Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), co-chairs of the Bipartisan Women's Caucus, led the designation effort in the House, securing the passage of H.Res.1046.

To celebrate National Women's Suffrage Month, the Commission and its partners held suffrage-inspired programming throughout August to spark a national dialogue about the history of women's fight for the vote and the legacy of the suffrage movement. Each week's programming focused on a unique theme: **Educate, Activate, Celebrate, and Inspire**.





Signature programs of National Women's Suffrage Month included the ***Our Story: Portraits of Change*** mosaic, the ***Building the Movement: America's Youth Celebrate 100 Years of Women's Suffrage*** student art exhibit, the ***Forward Into Light*** campaign, an **all-women flyover** of National's Park in Washington, D.C., and more.

From August 24-29, 2020, the Commission sponsored a 1,000-square-foot mosaic of the iconic suffragist and civil rights leader, Ida B. Wells, in the Main Hall of Washington, D.C.'s Union Station. The mosaic, titled ***Our Story: Portraits of Change***, was assembled from prints of thousands of historical photographs of suffragists, with each image telling its own story about the fight for women's right to vote.

Also on August 24, the White House unveiled ***Building the Movement: America's Youth Celebrate 100 Years of Women's Suffrage***, an art exhibit presented by the Office of the White House Curator, the Office of the First Lady, and the Commission. First Lady Melania Trump asked students across the United States, grades 3-12, for submissions of suffrage history inspired artwork. The First Lady selected artwork from each of the 50 states and Washington, D.C. to include in the exhibit. The Commission was proud to work alongside the Office of the White House Curator and the Office of the First Lady to host the official ***Building the Movement*** digital exhibit on the Commission's website.

To mark the official centennial date, the Commission partnered with the U.S. Air Force and the Washington Nationals to honor the anniversary with a **women-led helicopter flyover** in Washington, D.C. on August 26, 2020. The 1st Helicopter Squadron from Andrews Air Force Base flew two UH-1N Huey helicopters over **Nationals Park** at the start of that evening's baseball game between the Washington Nationals and the Philadelphia Phillies. The theme of the August 26 Nationals game was "Women's Suffrage Centennial: 100 Years of the 19th Amendment." Lindsay Ell, country music hitmaker and member of the Song Suffragettes, an all-women singer-songwriter collective that partnered with the Commission in August 2020 to honor the centennial, sang the National Anthem. Actress and comedian Retta, who is a co-host of the Commission's suffrage history podcast ***And Nothing Less: The Untold Stories of Women's Fight for the Vote***, threw the first pitch via video. And Commission Executive Director Anna Laymon and her son invited the teams to "Play Ball!"

As the centerpiece of its centennial efforts, the Commission partnered with federal, state, and local leaders to illuminate the country in purple and gold on August 26, 2020 for its signature ***Forward Into Light*** campaign. More than 500 institutions, organizations, and individuals throughout the country participated in the ***Forward Into Light*** campaign, including the White House, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, Smithsonian museums, the Empire State Building, Niagara Falls, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, MO, state capitol buildings, dozens of National Park sites nationwide, and many more.

Also in August 2020 and in celebration of National Women's Suffrage Month: the Commission partnered with the Nashville-based all-female singer-songwriter collective, **Song Suffragettes**, to host livestreamed weekly performances from the Listening Room Cafe every Monday in August; the Commission joined with **Twitter** and the Smithsonian Institution to design an official National Women's Suffrage Month emoji; the U.S. Mint released the 2020 Women's Suffrage Centennial Silver Medal and Coin on August 18; the U.S. Postal Service released the "19th Amendment: Women Vote" forever stamp on August 22; and the Commission joined with Snapchat to create a custom lens available exclusively on August 26, 2020.

Dozens of additional Commission partnerships and projects amplified the centennial throughout 2020 through **educational initiatives**. Through podcasts, blogs, books, exhibits, and panel discussions, the Commission found creative ways to share suffrage history in all its complexity with millions of Americans across the country.

The Commission reached Americans of all ages with the history of women's fight for the vote through several podcast projects produced in partnership with podcast leader PRX, including: ***And Nothing Less: The Untold Stories of Women's Fight for the Vote***, the Commission's narrative-style suffrage history podcast for adult listeners cohosted by actresses Rosario Dawson and Retta; ***The Magic Sash***, the Commission's historical fiction children's podcast, hosted by gold medal gymnast and advocate Aly Raisman; and ***The Agitators***, the Commission's podcast based on the play of the same name written by playwright Mat Smart, which tells the story of the enduring, tempestuous friendship of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass.

The Commission's blog, "**The Suff Buffs: Your Not So Average Herstory Series**," brought together leading suffrage historians for a series of articles that provided an unparalleled anthology of suffrage literature available free-of-charge on the Commission's website. The collection of 25 essays, published weekly over the spring and summer in 2020, reached 340k+ readers through the Commission's website and cross-publication. The Commission also published the series as an e-book titled *On Their Shoulders*, made available for download on the Commission's website.

In 2020, the Commission partnered with the **American Library Association** (ALA) to provide children's suffrage history books to libraries across the United States, ensuring that the story of women's fight for the vote is accessible to learners and future changemakers in diverse communities nationwide. The Commission and the ALA provided 17,964 books to 2,842 libraries across the country, reaching all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Also in 2020 and made possible by the support of the Commission, the **National Archives** provided 2,500 free suffrage history popup displays, titled *Rightfully Hers*, to schools and cultural institutions nationwide.

The **Library of Congress** held its annual **National Book Festival**, founded by Mrs. Laura Bush, through virtual stages from September 25-27, 2020, and the Commission was proud to support the festival during the suffrage centennial. This year's all-digital format allowed attendees to navigate events from their homes, and they could choose to follow "Timely Topic Threads" through specific online portals. The Commission sponsored the "Fearless Women" thread, featuring 23 authors during 19 programs, including discussions with U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, historian Rebecca Boggs Roberts, philanthropist Melinda Gates, and lawyer and disability rights advocate Haben Girma. Members of the Commission joined featured authors on the "Fearless Women" virtual stage for author interviews, introductions, and moderated discussions.



Engaging young learners in the history of the suffrage movement was an essential component of the Commission's work. Early in 2020, the Commission partnered with playwright Mat Smart, Phoenix Theater in Indianapolis, Indiana, Riverside Theater in Iowa City, Iowa, and Theatre Horizon in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to sponsor special live performances for hundreds of students of ***The Agitators*** play. After the closure of theaters due to the coronavirus pandemic, Theatre Horizon again worked with the Commission to create a virtual workshop for high school students using *The Agitators* as the basis of the curriculum. Over 100 students participated in this course free-of-charge. The students explored and created monologues inspired by Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, and other "agitators."

In another of its efforts to inspire young leaders with the story of women's fight for the vote, the Commission partnered with the **Girl Scouts of the United States of America** (GSUSA) to commemorate 100 years of the 19th Amendment through a special Votes for Women 1920-2020 Patch. The Commission covered the full cost of the special edition suffrage centennial Girl Scouts patch for the first 7,000 girls who earned the patch. For each of these girls, the Commission also provided a suffrage history book in recognition and celebration of her engagement with the history of the 19th Amendment.

The Commission's commitment to **public art** enabled the agency to tell the stories of the suffrage movement in ways that make women's history visible and accessible, and to ensure that this history is taught, told, and remembered for the next 100 years. In 2019, the Commission joined forces with the **National Votes for Women Trail**, led by the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites, to support their initiative to place at least 250 historic roadside markers at significant suffrage history sites in all 50 states. In 2020, the Commission permanently loaned statues of suffragists Lucy Burns and Dora Lewis to the **Lucy Burns Museum** at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, Virginia. Today, the Workhouse Arts Center is a dynamic, multi-use artistic space, but in 1917, it was the site of the Occoquan Workhouse, where dozens of suffragists were imprisoned for picketing the White House in support of women's right to vote.

To be unveiled in 2021, the Commission partnered with the Town of Seneca Falls for a one-of-a-kind commemorative centennial statue, titled ***Ripples of Change***, that will bring to life the earliest chapters in the story of women's fight for the vote. The statue will be placed in People's Park, just across the street from the historic Wesleyan Chapel, site of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention and now the Women's Rights National Historical Park. *Ripples of Change* will depict four suffragists whose work spanned generations, including Laura Cornelius Kellogg, Harriet Tubman, Martha Coffin Wright, and Sojourner Truth. Also to be unveiled in 2021, the **Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association**, in partnership with the Commission, is building a national memorial dedicated to the generations of bold women who fought for the vote. The site of the memorial is in Occoquan Regional Park in Lorton, Virginia, on part of the historic prison grounds where suffragists went to jail for picketing outside the White House in 1917. The Commission contributed statues of suffragists Alice Paul, Mary Church Terrell, and Carrie Chapman Catt to the memorial, and worked with the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to secure a loan to the memorial of a section of the historic White House fence, in front of which suffragists picketed in the early 1900s.

The Suff Shop, the Commission's online webstore dedicated to creating original and historical suffrage centennial merchandise, was an essential tool in the Commission's mission to educate and inspire. With nearly 3,000 items sold, sales peaked during National Women's Suffrage Month in August.

During the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which secured women's right to vote in the U.S. Constitution, the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission amplified the story of women's fight for the vote and investigated a more complete and full history of the suffrage movement than has been traditionally told. The Commission leaves a legacy of public art, educational resources, and scholarship that will ensure the visibility of women's stories for the next 100 years, uplifting the complexities of an imperfect but powerful movement for change and motivating a new generation of leaders.