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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 230-4-11

SUBJECT: EOP – WOMEN’S EQUALITY DAY

Purpose: To provide information about an upcoming NRCS program and Women’s Equality Day.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2004.

Miriam Simmons and Laurie Boche will speak to us about the importance of voting, the history of women and voting and about the League of Women Voters. **This non-partisan program will be held in the NRCS State Office Conference Room on Wednesday, September 1st from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.** This program is open to all NRCS employees. For more League of Women Voters information, the website is: <http://www.lwv.org/about/>

Women Equality Day Celebrates 84th Anniversary
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Thursday, August 26, 2004, marks the 84th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, extending the right of suffrage to women. Suffrage, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, tenth edition, means *to support with one's vote*. It is also stated as *the right or the exercise of the right to vote in public affairs*.

The 19th Amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1878. Though it failed to pass, it was introduced at every session of Congress for the next 40 years. Tennessee was the 36th state to ratify the Amendment on August 18, 1920. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby certified the ratification on August 26, 1920. In 1848, Seneca Falls, New York was the site of the first conference on women's rights. The women and men there adopted a Declaration of Sentiments that called for women to have the same rights as men such as education, property ownership and management and voting. However, women's suffrage was their main goal. Opposition was strong and relentless. Many felt that granting women equal right and encouraging their participation in politics would be the end of family life. There were those who believed that women were not intelligent enough to represent their views and would be better served remaining under the protection of the men in their family.

Obtaining the right to vote was a long, difficult struggle that required perseverance and sacrifice. In their struggle to gain equal rights women willingly protested, chained themselves to the White House fence, were arrested and went on hunger strikes. Several generations of woman's suffrage advocates and supporters wrote, petitioned, demonstrated, marched, lobbied, and were harassed, beaten, scorned, mocked and jailed. Many lived long lives and died never seeing victory for the dream they worked so hard for. Before the U.S. Constitution was amended in 1920, many U.S. cities and states amended their constitutions allowing women the right to vote, in some cases, as early as 1910.

In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to grant women the right to vote. Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, Germany and Sweden gave women of their countries the right to vote in the early 1900s. There are countries that still have not granted women the right to vote.

Born on July 24, 1920, it was only fitting that New York House of Representative Bella Abzug (1920-1998), *always a champion of women's rights, human rights, equality, peace and social justice*, would be the person to introduce legislation to commemorate August 26 as *Women's Equality Day*. In 1971, A Joint Resolution of Congress designated as follows:

"WHEREAS, the women of the United States have been treated as second-class citizens and have not been entitled the full rights and privileges, public or private, legal or institutional, which are available to male citizens of the United States; and WHEREAS, the women of the United States have united to assure that these rights and privileges are available to all citizens equally regardless of sex; and WHEREAS, the women of the United States have designated August 26, the anniversary date of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, as symbol of the continued fight for equal rights: and WHEREAS, the women of United States are to be commended and supported in their organizations and activities, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that August 26th of each year is designated as Women's Equality Day, and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation annually in commemoration of that day in 1920, on which the women of America were first given the right to vote, and that day in 1970, on which a nationwide demonstration for women's rights took place."

As we continue to work for equality, strive for excellence and value our diversity, let us not forget to remember those who did the same, so that we may all have the freedom to vote. When we exercise our right to vote, encourage others to register, teach our children the value of and the need for their participation in the election process, we pay tribute and high honor to those who gave their best service to us all. *"Yet, as man advances, woman is elevated, and her elevation in turn advances him. No liberty ever given her has been lost or abused or regretted. Where most has been given her she has become best. Liberty never degrades her; slavery always does. For her good, therefore, she needs the ballot."* Exert from House Report No. 2289. Views of the Congressional Minority Favoring Women's Suffrage (1886)

Sources

www.womenshistory.about.com

www.archives.gov

www.greatwomen.org

www.nwhp.org

www.sdc.wa.gov

www.teacher.scholastic.com

www.lwv.org/

www.archives.gov

www.worldbook.com

If this has sparked an interest to learn more about women suffragists, contact Sandra Jerzak, Marshall Area Office, for the videotape "*Iron Jawed Angels*". Other Sources

www.suffragist.com/timeline.htm

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State Conservationist

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