

State of Vermont
Executive Department
A Proclamation

- WHEREAS,** the right to vote is the very foundation of our democracy; and
- WHEREAS,** August 26, 2020 is the 100th anniversary of the certification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which states that “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;” and
- WHEREAS,** the fight for women’s right to vote began as early as the 1840s; involved a long, bitter struggle that spanned three generations of suffragists; and the Amendment, first proposed and rejected in 1878, was reintroduced every year for the next 41 years; and
- WHEREAS,** African American and other suffragists of color nationwide worked tirelessly while facing systematic racism in the movement; and the 19th Amendment did not guarantee suffrage for all women; Native Americans and Asian Americans were denied citizenship and therefore were not eligible to vote until after 1924 and 1952, respectively; and until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African Americans and other people of color were frequently denied their right to vote; and
- WHEREAS,** Vermont women engaged in the suffrage movement for decades; notable among them: Clarina Howard Nichols of Townshend, who petitioned the legislature for voting rights in school district elections; Laura Moore, the “Saint of Barnet” and longtime Secretary of the Vermont Woman’s Suffrage Association; Lucy Daniels of Grafton, who protested disfranchisement by refusing to pay her taxes; Annette Parmelee of Enosburg Falls, labeled the “Suffragette Hornet” for persistent legislative lobbying; and Lillian Olzendam of Woodstock, who organized a massive campaign to convince legislators to ratify the 19th Amendment; and
- WHEREAS,** in 1919, Governor Percival Clement vetoed the Presidential suffrage bill passed by the Vermont Legislature and refused to call a special session of the legislature so that Vermont could become the 36th and final state to ratify the amendment, inspiring 400 suffragists, in April 1920, to march through mud, snow, and driving rain to the State House in the largest protest in the state’s history to demand that the governor call a special session, which he refused to do, allowing Tennessee to become the final ratifying state; and
- WHEREAS,** after certification of the 19th Amendment in August 1920, women of Vermont, 28,159 of whom had registered, were able to vote for the first time in a General Election that November, an expansion of the electorate by approximately one third; and
- WHEREAS,** Edna Beard of Orange became the first woman to win a seat in the Vermont House of Representatives, and was counted among the Vermont legislators who finally ratified the 19th Amendment on February 8, 1921; and

WHEREAS,

even as we celebrate the accomplishments of these women, we call out the flaws of the suffrage movement and acknowledge its incomplete legacy; to this day, structural obstacles to voting in many parts of the United States disproportionately affect people of color; and

WHEREAS,

Vermonters must not take the right to vote for granted; our votes are our voice in this democracy; and we must continue to fight for voting rights, racial equality and justice for all citizens of the United States.

NOW, THEREFORE,

I, Philip B. Scott, Governor, hereby proclaim August 26, 2020, the centennial anniversary of women's suffrage, as

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

in Vermont.



Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont on this 26th day of August, A.D. 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Philip B. Scott'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Brittney L. Wilson'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Brittney L. Wilson
Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs