



"Toward Equality"

Testimony on behalf of HF 1017: Women's Suffrage 100th Anniversary Commemoration

2020 marks the centennial of American women winning the right to vote with the 19th Amendment. The act of including half the population in our democracy's most fundamental right was a landmark in the history of our democracy. By enacting observances like the Fourth of July and Labor Day, our government has shown its vested interest in encouraging Americans to consider what it takes to create, maintain, and improve a democracy. Commemorating the ratification of the 19th Amendment is important for the same reason.

The national Women's Vote Centennial Initiative was established to encourage the celebration of 2020, not only in Washington, DC but all around the nation, in statehouses, libraries, schools and town squares. Our outreach in Minnesota tells us that there are many small groups around the state eager to commemorate the 19th Amendment.

The \$200,000 appropriation in HF 1017 would allow the Minnesota Historical Society to provide small grants to many of these groups around the state, allowing 2020 to truly be a statewide celebration, reaching people of all ages and walks of life. Projects we know of that are envisioned range from historical society exhibits focused on local suffrage history, re-enactments of events and theatrical productions in Minnesota suffrage history, and documentary records of state suffrage work. We expect most grants to be \$5,000-15,000.

Women in South St. Paul were the first in the U.S. to vote under the 19th Amendment. It is therefore highly appropriate that Minnesota government recognize the 2020 commemoration and encourage the celebration by appropriating funds. When we recognize women as makers and doers, they become an indispensable part of our state's endeavors and women see themselves as leaders as well. In this way, the Minnesota 2020 Commemoration offers us the chance to strengthen civic engagement across partisan party lines.

Jill D. Zahniser
Steering Committee, 2020 Women's Vote Centennial Initiative - jdzahniser@gmail.com