



Summary

Bill Number: **HF 1017**

LWV Minnesota **supports** Woman's Suffrage 100th anniversary commemorated, and money appropriated

Testimony as Delivered

Good afternoon. My name is Michelle Witte and I'm the Executive Director for the League of Women Voters Minnesota, and am delighted to be before you in support of House Bill 1017 to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Woman Suffrage in Minnesota. The 19th Amendment was fully ratified on August 26, 1920, but the Minnesota Legislature voted to ratify this U.S. Constitutional Amendment on September 8, 1919, and we therefore want to recognize this special day in Minnesota history when Minnesota men finally voted YES to allow women to vote. (It should be noted that Native American women did not receive the right to vote until 1924 when they became U.S. Citizens, and all women of color faced significant barriers to voting until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.)

LWV Minnesota was founded on October 29th of 1919, and during these nearly 100 years, we've remained committed to nonpartisan civic engagement, with 35 local grassroots Leagues located throughout the great State of Minnesota. As you can imagine, we are very excited about the opportunity to partner with the Minnesota Legislature, the MN Historical Society and many other nonprofit organizations to come together on September 8, 1919 to recognize this important day within our cultural heritage, and also to support local communities throughout Minnesota as they seek to commemorate the centennial of women receiving the right to vote. As Clara Ueland, our first President for the League of Women Voters Minnesota in 1919, once proclaimed - "The mainspring of this movement is not selfishness, but a love of justice and a desire to serve."



HF 1017 specifically allows for the following ways to honor the heritage of women suffrage here in Minnesota:

- **Highlight Minnesota-specific history** during the nationwide Centennial Celebration & build pride within our state for the leadership we showed during this national struggle. Many of the great leaders of the Suffrage movement in Minnesota are proudly honored today on the extended Capitol grounds through the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Memorial. A special event on September 8, 2019 would be a wonderful bipartisan show of support for both women and voting rights.
- **Serve as a clearinghouse for event coordination and promotion** related to the Centennial, to better serve all residents in helping them to know about and attend events throughout the entire state. Of course LWV Minnesota is not the only organization that will be celebrating the Centennial of the 19th Amendment, and support received through this bill would allow us to better promote information and support activities across the state.
- **But perhaps most compelling to me, is the opportunity for this esteemed Legislative body to underscore the importance of continuing to promote full access to and participation in this great democracy**, as seen through the historical 72-year struggle of women winning the right to vote AND to be seated alongside men as they are today here in this room. Many women's voices came to life in 1919 and 1920 in a new and powerful way. What a tribute it would be to women and to us all to celebrate the Centennial of a Women's Right to Vote through a special Day of Commemoration on September 8, 2019, and through supporting additional activities throughout 2019 and 2020 that will support state residents' ability to learn and be more fully aware and involved with our democracy.

Submitted by Michelle Witte, Executive Director, League of Women Voters Minnesota, mwitte@lwvmn.org

About LWV

LWV Minnesota is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. LWV Minnesota does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.