

CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF

Women's suffrage

LEWIS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which granted women the right to vote, reads, "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 bold, courageous and powerful women who fought for the August 18, 1920, ratification of the 19th Amendment deserve special celebration, especially in 2020, which marks the 100th anniversary of its ratification; and

WHEREAS, Washington voted to ratify the 19th Amendment on March 22, 1920; and

WHEREAS, but for a single vote in 1853, Washington Territory would have become first state/territory to grant women's suffrage; and

WHEREAS, in 1870, 15 women in South Thurston County successfully voted in a territory-wide general election, thereby testing an 1867 state law enacted after the Civil War that enfranchised "all white citizens above the age of twenty-one years." The territorial legislature responded swiftly to clarify its intent, passing a law in 1871 to explicitly deny women the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, women first earned the right to vote in Washington Territory in 1883 through legislative action that enabled black women in Washington Territory to be the first in the U.S. to vote. Women's suffrage was removed through court action in 1887, reinstated by the legislature in 1888, and again removed through court action the same year. Washington women continued the fight; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Constitution was permanently amended in 1910 to grant women the right to vote, 10 years before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Washington was the fifth state in the nation and the first state in the 20th century to grant women the vote after a nationwide hiatus of almost 15 years. Washington State revitalized the suffrage movement and inspired the national campaign that led to the passage of the 19th Amendment; and

WHEREAS, Lewis County holds a special place in women's suffrage history as hundreds of women advocated for the right to vote on the streets and in the newspapers; and

WHEREAS, the Centralia Daily Chronicle of October 28, 1908, contained the following announcement from Mary L. Shepard: "The Equal Suffrage Association meets the first and third Tuesdays in each month in the Christian Church. ... All made welcome." This group was active throughout 1908, as several meeting announcements were published that year. Among the group's guest speakers was "Mrs. Emma Smith DeVoe, State President of the Washington Equal Suffrage Association and Lecturer

and Organizer for the National American Woman Suffrage Association,” who gave two presentations at Christian Church – one in the morning, and one in the evening – on November 21, 1908.

WHEREAS, the 19th Amendment did not guarantee suffrage for all women, including Native Americans, who did not gain the right to vote until 1924. For Asian Pacific Islander Americans, it was 1952. African-American and Latin Americans suffered voter suppression until passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and 1975; and

WHEREAS, the fact that today women are active in local, state and national government and are running for office in unprecedented numbers reminds us that we all follow in the footsteps of these resolute American suffragists; and

WHEREAS, the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution has played an important role in advancing the rights of all women.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners hereby recommends that community members near and far join in

- Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, providing for women’s suffrage;
- Honoring the role of the 19th Amendment in further promoting the core values of our democracy as promised by the Constitution of the United States;
- Reaffirming the opportunity for students and adults in the county to learn about and commemorate the efforts of the women's suffrage movement and the role of women in our democracy; and
- Reaffirming our desire to continue to strengthen democratic participation and to inspire future generations to cherish and preserve the historic precedent established under the 19th Amendment.

Done in open session this 2nd day of November 2020.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEWIS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Gary Stamper, Chair

Edna J. Fund, Vice Chair

ATTEST:

Rieva Lester, Clerk of the Board

Robert C. Jackson, Commissioner