



## Action Alert

August 26, 2019

From NFDW President Cindy Jenks:

August 26 is celebrated as Women's Equality Day because on this day in 1920, our country ratified the right of women to vote. This hard-fought struggle took almost 100 years.

In 1848, a group of abolitionists, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, gathered in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss the problems associated with women's rights. The convention attendees agreed that women deserved their own political identities. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," proclaimed the **Declaration of Sentiments**, "that all men *and women* are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

A key component of the activists' concerns was that women should have the right to vote. White men, regardless of how much property they owned, had the right to vote. After the Civil War, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments were added to the Constitution. The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment defines "citizens" as "male." The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment guaranteed black men the right to vote. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony led advocates to refuse to support the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

With much unrest about the strategy of how women would win the right to vote, the **National Woman Suffrage Association** began in 1869 and led the fight for a universal-suffrage amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Women were beaten, put into jail, and accused of being mentally ill, but the activists prevailed and voting rights for women were confirmed on August 26, 1920.

In 1973, Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY) passed a Joint Resolution of Congress that stated, "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 certification of the Nineteenth Amendment, as a symbol of the continued fight for equal rights, and WHEREAS, the women of the United States are to be commended and supported in their organizations and activities, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by 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."

There was a diversity of women who participated in the Suffrage struggle and it took them more years to achieve the right granted in the 19th Amendment. We appreciate their presence and participation in the Suffrage movement and in the ERA movement of today. It is time for inequality to end for all women, and women be guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution of the United States of America.

One of the greatest and massive peaceful civil rights movements had been successful in 1920, and again in 1973. Now, in 2019, NFDW is continuing to celebrate Women's Equality Day as we direct our attention to achieving another unresolved issue of women's rights—the passage of the **Equal Rights Amendment**. Our members will conduct celebrations before, after, and on August 26<sup>th</sup> to acknowledge the momentous occasion of **Women's Equality Day** and to emphasize the need to add the ERA to the U.S. Constitution.