



State Senator Stephanie Kunze
Ohio's 16th Senate District

Amended Senate Bill 30
Sponsor Testimony
March 27, 2019

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Amended Senate Bill 30.

When I was walking through the Ladies Gallery last year, I wondered what Ohio had planned to celebrate the upcoming 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution. I was looking at the portraits of the trailblazers who served in the Ohio General Assembly—those who paved the way for me to serve in the Ohio General Assembly-- Nettie McKenzie Clapp, the first woman legislator to sponsor a bill that was enacted into law; Lulu Thomas Gleason; Adelaide Sterling Ott, the first woman member of the House to temporarily preside over that body when she was asked by the Speaker of the House to occupy the chair during a session; May Martin Van Wye; Nettie Bromley Loughead and Maude Comstock Waitt. I went back to my office and began to inquire about what our state could do to celebrate this historic event—here is where the inspiration came from to introduce the measure that is before you today.

The Declaration of Independence reads: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” However, it took bold activists and reformers who were brave enough to fight against the status quo that only men were granted the God given right to vote in America.

The debate and struggle, led by pioneering, brave and bold women and their male allies who were not afraid to join the movement, thundered throughout our nation—in cities, villages, statehouses and throughout the countryside nearly 100 years—asking the one question-- did the phrase “all men are created equal” extend to allow women the right to vote in the nation that was their home? These suffragettes barnstormed the nation to activate their supporters, giving speeches and writing letters, essays and books imploring that a constitutional amendment be enacted to grant women the right to vote. These abolitionists were met with scorn, ridicule and resistance, but they were not discouraged and continued their fight for women’s suffrage.

Susan B. Anthony, in a paper entitled “Declaration of Rights” that was presented on July 4, 1876, the 100th anniversary of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence, wrote: “While the Nation is buoyant with patriotism, and all hearts are attuned to praise, it is with sorrow we come to strike the one discordant note, on this hundredth anniversary of our country's birth.... May not our hearts, in unison with all, swell with pride at our great achievements as a people; our free speech, free press, free schools, free church, and the rapid progress we have made in material wealth, trade, commerce, and the inventive arts? And we do rejoice, in the success thus far, of our experiment of self- government. Our faith is firm and unwavering in the broad principles of human rights, proclaimed in 1776, not only as abstract truths, but as the corner stones of a republic. Yet, we cannot forget, even in this glad hour, that while all men of every race, and clime, and condition, have been invested with the full rights of citizenship, under our hospitable flag, all women still suffer the degradation of disfranchisement.”¹

Towards the end of the 19th Century and beginning of the 20th, states began extending voting rights to women, and finally, after several failed attempts, on May 21, 1919, U.S. Representative James R. Mann, a Republican from Illinois and chairman of the Suffrage Committee, proposed the House resolution to approve the Susan Anthony Amendment granting women the right to vote. The measure passed the House 304 to 89—a full 42 votes above the required two-thirds majority. Two weeks later, on June 4, 1919, the U.S. Senate passed the 19th Amendment by two votes over its two-thirds required majority, 56-25. The amendment was then sent to the states for ratification. Within six days of the ratification cycle, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin each ratified the amendment. Kansas, New York and Ohio followed on June 16, 1919. By March 2020, a total of 35 states had approved the amendment, one state shy of the two-thirds required for ratification.

Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment as their state legislators’ 48-48 tie was broken with the vote of 23-year-old Republican Representative Harry T. Burn. Although Burn originally opposed the amendment, his mother convinced him to approve it.²

As the year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, Amended Senate Bill 30 seeks to create the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission consisting of the following members:

1. The Secretary of State or the Secretary's designee, who shall serve as the chairperson of the Commission;
2. Two members (not of the same political party) of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate;

¹ <http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/decl.html>

² <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/19th-amendment-1>

3. Two members of the House of Representatives (not of the same political party) appointed by the Speaker of the House;
4. One member of the Ohio Republican Party appointed by the chairperson of the Ohio Republican Party;
5. One member of the Ohio Democratic Party appointed by the chairperson of the Ohio Democratic Party;
6. Any additional members appointed by the Secretary of State in order to assist the Commission in fulfilling its duties.

This Commission's purpose is to plan and carry out events and activities throughout Ohio and educate the public during the year 2020 to raise awareness of the importance and historical significance of the Nineteenth Amendment and to honor the women's suffrage movement.

Amended Senate Bill 30 creates the "Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission Fund" and will consist of any moneys appropriated or donated to the Fund and any interest earned on the moneys in the Fund. The Commission may solicit and accept grants, gifts, or donations from any lawful source and shall deposit all such grants, gifts, or donations in the state treasury to the credit of the Fund. The Commission shall use the moneys in the Fund for the purpose of carrying out the Commission's duties. Any unobligated balance remaining in the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission Fund at the conclusion of its work shall be deposited in the General Revenue Fund.

Those serving on this Commission shall serve without compensation or reimbursement for expenses and their terms will expire on December 31, 2020. There is also a provision included that the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, and the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission Fund, will sunset on December 31, 2020 as their statutory purposes will conclude.

Amended Senate Bill 30 has the support of Secretary of State Frank LaRose and the Ohio History Connection and received no opposition testimony in the Ohio Senate. It was unanimously reported from the Ohio Senate 32-0 and all 33 members of the Ohio Senate have signed onto this legislation in support.

Chairman Wiggam and members of the House State and Local Government committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Amended Senate Bill 30. After my joint sponsor Senator Williams has presented her remarks, I am happy to answer any questions that the committee might have.