



Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
The Honorable Bill Coley, Chairman
Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 30
Megan Wood, Ohio History Connection
Director of Cultural Resources
February 26, 2019

Chairman Coley and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

My name is Megan Wood and I am here on behalf of the Ohio History Connection in support of Senate Bill 30, co-sponsored by Senators Kunze and Williams.

I would like to provide some context on the suffrage movement in Ohio and the efforts by organizations across the state to prepare to celebrate this centennial and ensure inclusivity.

From the first days of the movement, long before 1848 and the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, Ohio and Ohioans led the nation in campaigning for equal rights and opportunities for women:

1828

Frances Wright becomes the first woman in the United States to speak in public, launching what would become an international speaking career in the Hamilton County (Ohio) courthouse. An abolitionist and woman's rights activist dubbed "The Red Harlot of Infidelity," Wright persisted despite harsh criticism and threats of physical violence.

1848

Less than 2 months after his participation in the Seneca Falls Convention, Frederick Douglass led the National Convention of Black Freemen in Cleveland, Ohio, which became the very first national convention to permit participation by women when a "Mrs. Sanford" was allowed to address the participants.

1850

Activists, including Betsy Mix Cowles, in Salem, Ohio host the Ohio Women's Convention, the first convention to be run and organized entirely by women.

1851

Sojourner Truth delivers her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech at the Ohio Women's Rights

Convention in Akron.

1862

Mary Jane Patterson, a daughter of fugitive slaves, becomes the first African American woman to earn a bachelor's degree, from Oberlin College.

1869

Inspired by events he witnessed at the 1850 Ohio Women's Convention at Salem as a young man, John Allen Campbell, first territorial governor of Wyoming, signs into law a bill establishing Wyoming as the first place in the United States to extend equal suffrage to women.

The American Woman Suffrage Association is formed at a meeting in Cleveland, Ohio.

1870

Victoria Woodhull of Homer, Ohio becomes the first female candidate for president of the United States.

1876

The Republican party holds its national convention in Cincinnati. Sarah J. Spencer of the National Woman Suffrage Association is permitted 10 minutes to address the convention.

1880

The Democratic party holds its national convention in Cincinnati. Susan B. Anthony is permitted to ascend to the platform.

1903 to 1910

The National Woman Suffrage Association is headquartered in Warren, Ohio.

1904

Suffragist Pauline Perlmutter Steinem (grandmother to activist Gloria Steinem) is elected to the Toledo school board, possibly becoming the very first Jewish woman elected to public office in the United States.

1920

Suffragists declare Ohio as crucial to final effort for ratification in Tennessee as they seek the aid and influence of presidential candidates Warren G. Harding (Marion) and James M. Cox (Dayton).

I could go beyond 1920 and even include the present and future of women in leadership in Ohio and Ohioans working towards women's rights, but those discussions are one of the true opportunities in celebrating the suffrage centennial.

Last September, with generous support from Ohio Humanities, the Ohio History Connection in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Ohio held a six-stop listening tour where we talked to representatives of organization all over the state about their needs for celebrating this centennial. We know that libraries, schools, Girl Scout troops, women's organizations, historical societies, local Leagues of Women Voters, universities, and many others are planning and will plan events to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the 19th amendment. We know that they are looking for and hoping for our great state to officially recognize the anniversary. And much like the effort to advocate for the right to vote, this anniversary celebration will take place in communities all over Ohio. This legislation will create a commission can that support and magnify the great work that organizations statewide are doing.

In our listening tour we also saw that organizations, including the Ohio History Connection, are shaping programming that uses the centennial of women obtaining the right to vote as a springboard to talk more broadly and inclusively about the role of women. Through the lens of activism and women using their voice --our voices-- this celebration will look not only at the path taken by women to achieve the right to vote, but also the history of civic action led by a diverse spectrum of women throughout Ohio and American History. We will explore how current issues are connected to the stories of the past, and invite others to tell their own stories. We are committed to the many experiences of women inclusive of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, national origin, religious affiliation, age, physical or mental ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Finally, I also want to thank Secretary of State Frank LaRose and his office for their leadership on this initiative. As the Ohio History Connection and the broader community of organizations prepare to mark this important anniversary, I am honored to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 30 to create the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on this important topic. I would be happy to answer any questions you have of me.

#

OHIO HISTORY CONNECTION

800 E. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43211-2474 • 614.297.2300 • ohiohistory.org