

2021 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 606

Designating November, in 2021 and in each succeeding year, as Equal Citizens Month in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 27, 2021

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2021

WHEREAS, it took the participation and leadership of women from many backgrounds to win the right to vote in the United States through ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920; and

WHEREAS, on March 31, 1776, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband in Philadelphia "in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors"; and

WHEREAS, in 1851, Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I A Woman?" sounded the cry that women, black or white, should have rights just like men; and

WHEREAS, on July 19, 1848, the first women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls launched a 72-year battle in the United States to gain the right to vote for women; and

WHEREAS, in February 1886, the Senate Select Committee on Woman Suffrage favorably reported the Susan B. Anthony Amendment to the full Senate but it suffered a lopsided defeat when finally voted on nearly a year later; and

WHEREAS, nearly three decades later, although 100 women had to be hospitalized with injuries as spectators assaulted the participants, the first national woman suffrage parade held in Washington, D.C., demonstrated the strength of women's organizations in every state supporting women's suffrage and, on March 19, 1914, resulted in a second vote to pass the Susan B. Anthony Amendment that fell only 11 votes short; and

WHEREAS, the founder of the National Woman's Party, Alice Paul, and 32 other "Silent Sentinels," who had been peacefully holding banners and placards for 10 months in front of the White House to embarrass President Woodrow Wilson into giving more than lip service to women having the right to vote, were arrested on October 20, 1917; and

WHEREAS, those arrested included a Norfolk suffragist, Pauline Adams, who served her 60-day prison sentence in the District of Columbia's Occoquan workhouse where the women were subjected to horrendous conditions and deprivation; and

WHEREAS, in October 1918, the Senate again failed to pass the Susan B. Anthony Amendment by two votes and, in February 1919, by one vote; finally, on June 4, 1919, after 41 years, the Senate approved the Nineteenth Amendment; and

WHEREAS, in September and October 1920, Maggie Walker and Ora Stokes led a drive to help more than 2,000 African American women register to vote in Virginia, but it was not until four decades after passage of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided enforcement mechanisms to protect the right to vote of African American women and men; and

WHEREAS, the first two women were elected to the General Assembly in 1924 but by 1933 none of the six who had served remained, and it was not until 1954 that women were again elected during the struggle to keep Virginia's public schools open under Massive Resistance; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's General Assembly did not ratify the 19th Amendment until 1952 following the changed roles women assumed during World War II and, today, women serving in elected office throughout the Commonwealth represent the ever-expanding role of women embracing the potential of equal citizenship rights; and

WHEREAS, in 1920 Alice Paul said, "It is incredible to me that any woman should consider the fight for full equality won. It has just begun."; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate November, in 2021 and in each succeeding year, as Equal Citizens Month in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this month on the General Assembly's website.

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