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WSN CELEBRATES WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

August 18, 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the landmark passage of the 19th amendment, granting women the right to vote in the United States. It took many decades of organizing for women to finally achieve the right to vote.

Looking back in history, a pivotal milestone was the first women's rights convention on July 19-20, 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. In those early days of the women's rights movement, the agenda included much more than just the right to vote. Their broad goals included equal access to education and employment, equality within marriage, and a married woman's right to her own property and wages, custody over her children and control over her own body.

The origins of the women's suffrage movement was tied to the Abolitionist movement. Early suffragists were also abolitionists which included Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman. The work of these early pioneers and many more, created a springboard to many influential women's advocacy groups such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, National Association of Coloured Women, and Women's Trade Union League.

Before the passage of the 19th Amendment, millions of women already had access to either full or limited voting rights across 27 states and the Alaska territory. Their influence helped build momentum for the 19th Amendment. Approximately, 10 million women voted in 1920.

However, many women were still barred from casting a ballot including African Americans who faced tremendous obstacles as well as violence for exercising their right to vote. Indigenous Americans were also not guaranteed the right to vote in every state until 1962. In reality, voting was not accessible to Indigenous and racialized Americans until the Voting Rights Act was passed on August 6, 1965 at the height of the civil rights movement, a monumental piece of federal legislation that prohibits racial discrimination in voting.

By 1980, women's voter turnout rates began exceeding male turnout rates, with 61.9% of women voting compared to 61.5% of men. Today, more than 68 million women vote in elections because of the courageous suffragists and civil rights activists who never gave up the fight for equality.

On this occasion, the IFPTE Women's Solidarity Network takes a moment to think about what it means to vote. Members of the Women's Solidarity Network Planning Committee share their thoughts:

I remember accompanying my mother as she went to vote. I remember I couldn't wait to be old enough to register to vote and on my 18th birthday I did! I voted in every election since, exercising my right to vote and having my voice heard. I always remind my friends and family to vote and help them get registered, if needed. I teach my children the importance of voting and to pay attention to the issues in our community. I live in Washington state where we vote by mail and the postage is paid for by the state. We are so fortunate because this helps to reduce many of the obstacles people face in order to be able to vote. I feel strongly that EVERYONE in this country has the right to vote and have their voices heard! I intend to always do my part, and if able, help others to be able to exercise their right to vote. **Dede Chance, IFPTE Local 12**

I have cast a ballot in every election I have been eligible to vote in! Whether it be political elections at the municipal, provincial or federal levels or elections related to union activities, my vote is my voice. From a very young age, my mother instilled in me the power of voting. I can remember accompanying her to the polling stations and watching as she cast her ballot. My mother demonstrated the importance of voting and participating in every election. She explained to me that there were many people in the world that did not have the right to vote. She considered the right to vote to be a privilege that had been hard fought for. The ability to cast a ballot is something I will never take for granted. My Vote is my VOICE! **Tracy Miller, SUP/IFPTE Local 160**

I grew up in a rural town just outside of Selma, Alabama. I heard stories about Civil Rights freedom fighters, voting rights advocates, and leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lewis. They organized protest marches from Selma to

the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery. I spent many weekends driving across the Selma bridge with my family, where less than a decade before, a young activist named John Lewis was beaten as he marched, advocating for Black citizens' right to vote. This happened on March 7, 1965 and would become known as "Bloody Sunday", which is now commemorated each year in Selma, in recognition of Mr. Lewis' and other civil rights leaders who sacrificed and fought for the Voting Rights Act. I haven't missed an election since turning 18. Now, more than ever, it is important for all voters to use our voice to protest against continued inequalities and injustices in this country with the upcoming election in November! **Tryshanda Moton, GESTA/IFPTE Local 29**

As a woman, voting is how I take ownership and responsibility for the world around me, so that the community I leave behind bears my mark. It's how I teach my children that their voice matters, that they can make a difference, and that by listening, thinking, and acting, they are empowered. **Mimi Tsankov, NAIJ/IFPTE Judicial Council 2**

Voting is a privilege many Americans take for granted and do not take seriously! Today that privilege is viewed as an entitlement provided to one when they turn 18 years of age. The blood, sweat, and tears of the women who fought for us to have this privilege is long forgotten in the history books. Were it not for the determination of women before us, we would still be under the tyranny of men. Nothing should hold you back from getting out to vote; not the weather, kids, work, or household duties. There is also the chance to absentee vote. Now is the time to read about the issues at hand so you have a fair understanding on what you desire to vote for in November. **Mary Wolff, IFPTE Local 7**

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