
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6816 of August 16, 1995

The President

Women's Equality Day, 1995

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Seventy-five years ago this Nation took a great step forward by ratifying the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. Twenty-eight simple words—"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex"—brought to a triumphant conclusion the long decades of struggle waged by generations of suffragists. Looking back from the vantage point of the present, when the contributions and influence of women enrich every facet of our national life, it seems remarkable that as recently as 1920 most American women were still denied their right to full participation in the political activity of this country. Our history continues to remind us that humanity's age-old enemies of ignorance and prejudice are not easily defeated.

But defeated they were, by an army of women and men who, inspired by the staunch courage and unswerving commitment of leaders like Susan B. Anthony, changed people's minds and the course of U.S. history. Using the classic tools of democracy—assembly and petition, exhortation and example, peaceful protest and political shrewdness—these champions of liberty won a lasting victory for civil rights. The fight was hard, the margins slim, and the outcome often in doubt. But after years of effort and sacrifice, after countless acts of courage and conscience, advocates of women's suffrage rejoiced as the Congress proposed an amendment to the Constitution in 1919 and as Tennessee, the last State needed for ratification, approved that amendment on August 18, 1920, by a single vote, when a young legislator heeded his mother's plea to support suffrage. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was finally proclaimed part of the United States Constitution, fulfilling Susan B. Anthony's pledge that "failure is impossible."

Women's Equality Day, while a fitting occasion to commemorate this great victory of wisdom over ignorance, is also a time for sober reflection that American democracy is a work in progress. The Declaration of Independence was only the first step in our long journey toward equality for all Americans. And while we have made much progress, until all women have an equal opportunity to develop their full potential and to make contributions that are accepted and welcomed by our society, our freedom as a Nation will be incomplete.

Let us observe Women's Equality Day, then, both as a celebration of past achievement and a promise for the future: a promise to promote and protect with vigor and vigilance the rights of all our citizens; a promise to decry the policies of exclusion and to pursue the ideal of equality for every American; and a promise to empower all of our people to take their rightful place as full and equal partners in the great American enterprise.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1995, as "Women's Equality Day." I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

William Clinton

[FR Doc. 95-20748
Filed 8-17-95; 11:32 am]
Billing code 3195-01-P