

2020 -- H 7005

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

HOUSE RESOLUTION

JOYOUSLY CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF RHODE ISLAND'S
RATIFICATION OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT, GRANTING WOMEN THE RIGHT TO
VOTE

Introduced By: Representatives Lima, Williams, Ajello, Speakman, and Mattiello

Date Introduced: January 07, 2020

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, While women had the right to vote in several colonies prior to 1776, by
2 1807 every State Constitution in the United States still denied women the right to vote. By the
3 middle of the 19th century, numerous organizations were actively working on behalf of women's
4 rights and equality; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1848, the Seneca Falls Convention adopted the Declaration of Sentiments
6 which called for the right of women to vote to be secured and for equality between the sexes.
7 Soon thereafter, suffragette activists including Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton
8 became politically active in support of amending the United States Constitution in order to
9 guarantee women's right to vote throughout the United States; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1878, an amendment was introduced in the United States Congress that
11 would have guaranteed women the right to vote, but it failed to pass. By the late 19th century,
12 new states and territories in the American West began to grant women the right to vote; and

13 WHEREAS, In the early 20th century, momentum began to grow across the country in
14 favor of passing the 19th amendment, especially as a result of the United States entry in World
15 War I, and the patriotic support of that endeavor by the National American Women Suffrage
16 Association. The National Woman's Party organized marches, demonstrations, and hunger
17 strikes, and poignantly juxtaposed the contradiction of fighting for democracy abroad while
18 denying women the right to vote at home; and

19 WHEREAS, Public opinion began to move in favor of ratifying the 19th Amendment,

1 with President Wilson announcing his support in 1918. In 1919, the 19th Amendment passed
2 Congress and was adopted in 1920, immediately enfranchising 26 million American women; and

3 WHEREAS, In Rhode Island, the Women's Suffrage movement began in earnest in 1868,
4 when the Rhode Island Women's Suffrage Association was organized by Paulina Wright Davis
5 and Elizabeth Buffam Chace as they returned from the organizational meeting of the New
6 England Suffrage Association in Boston. A year later, the Rhode Island Women's Suffrage
7 Association would host the National convention of the National Women's Suffrage Association in
8 Newport; and

9 WHEREAS, For over forty years, the Rhode Island Women's Suffrage Association was
10 the sole entity advocating for the right of women to vote in Rhode Island. Each year they
11 petitioned the Rhode Island General Assembly to submit a constitutional amendment in support
12 of women's suffrage. Momentum in support of passage of the 19th Amendment grew
13 exponentially in Rhode Island culminating with the Rhode Island General Assembly's passage of
14 the Resolution on January 6, 1920, and Rhode Island Governor R. Livingston Beeckman signing
15 the Resolution into law on January 7, 1920; and

16 WHEREAS, On the historic date of January 6, 1920, suffrage supporters packed the State
17 House, waiting for the House to convene at 12:00 in the afternoon. After the Senate was
18 summoned to meet with the House of Representatives in Grand Committee, the Governor read his
19 message to the State in which he recommended ratification. Shortly thereafter, the resolution was
20 passed with 89 votes in support and only three votes in dissent. The resolution then advanced to
21 the Senate where it was passed by voice vote with only one dissenting vote. With that, history
22 was made, and a magnificent victory dinner was held for the important suffragette leaders and
23 supporters who had fought so tirelessly and valiantly over the prior fifty years in support of
24 women's equality and their right to vote. The following day, on January 7, 1920, Governor
25 Beeckman put an exclamation point on what is one of the most momentous occasions in Rhode
26 Island history when he signed the Ratification Resolution; now, therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
28 Providence Plantations hereby joyously celebrates the 100th Anniversary of Rhode Island's
29 ratification of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
2 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Ms. Jane Koster, President of the League of
3 Women Voters, Rhode Island.

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