

January 31, 2022

To the Chairman of the Committee on Federal and State Affairs,

I am making this submission in support of SB 179 designating February 15 as Susan B. Anthony day, as the author of three books on votes for women and the speaker for the Leavenworth County Historical Society, Kansas for the commemoration of the centenary of the Nineteenth Amendment on August 26, 2020. My most recent book, "No Vote for Women: The Denial of Suffrage During Reconstruction," focuses significantly on the Kansas 1867 suffrage referendum campaign, of which Susan B. Anthony was a leader.

The following anecdote strengthens the claim for special recognition for Anthony in Kansas, as she was living and working on equality in Leavenworth in 1865. The most significant piece of information I found was Anthony's speech in Ottumwa, Coffey County, on July 4, 1865, wherein she called for votes for black men, but added that "so-called 'universal suffrage'" in its new, contrived meaning of male suffrage only was unsustainable:

When I speak of the inalienable rights of the negro, I do not forget that these belong equally to woman. Though the government shall be reconstructed on the basis of universal manhood suffrage, it yet will not be a true republic. Still one-half of the people will be in subjection to the other half, and the time will surely come when the whole question will have to be reopened and an accounting made with this other subject class. There will have to be virtually another reconstruction, based on the duty of the national government to guarantee to every citizen the right of self- protection, and this right, for woman as for man, is vested in the ballot.

To my knowledge, this was the first time such a public call for votes for women was made in the United States during Reconstruction - perhaps signified when local Republicans berated Anthony for her stand and pressured her to leave out this section of her speech in the printed version. When she spoke again that August in Leavenworth, local Republicans again pressured her to leave it out.

Anthony made her call for the inclusion of women in voting rights within two months of the first post-war public call by Abolitionists for a "men-only" vote policy, which Washington, D.C. politicians soon picked up. While easterners spoke and wrote frequently about this policy, it appears that no public pronouncements about women's simultaneous inclusion were made before Anthony took her stand that July 4, 1865, in Ottumwa. The next month, Anthony left Leavenworth and Kansas, heading home to begin the campaign for women's inclusion in Reconstruction.

In the 1860s, despite the call Anthony made in Ottumwa – which women followed up with several major campaigns for their right to vote, including the 1867 Kansas campaign - only men were given the right to vote and women were left to fight for another 52 years to win it themselves, against all odds.

It seems to me, therefore, that Susan B. Anthony deserves recognition for the very first votes-for-women call after the Civil War in the United States – a call from Anthony which she presented in the context of equality for all. The State of Kansas, and Ottumwa specifically, also deserve recognition for being the location of such a momentous announcement.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Cahill

124 Woodhaven Drive

Vicksburg, Mississippi

318-614-8444

124 Woodhaven Drive
Vicksburg, MS, 39180

Bernadette Cahill
Historian, Writer, Speaker, Artist
Phone: 318-614-8444
historian@reagan.com

NO VOTE for WOMEN
The Denial of Suffrage in Reconstruction America
BERNADETTE CAHILL

Also Available:
Arkansas Women and the Right to Vote: The Little Rock Campaigns

Alice Paul, the National Woman's Party and the Vote
The First Civil Rights Struggle of the 20th Century
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