

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. SJ0003

Wyoming's Women Suffrage Day.

Sponsored by: Senator(s) Ellis, Anselmi-Dalton, Driskill, Hutchings, Nethercott, Schuler and Steinmetz and Representative(s) Burlingame, Clifford, Connolly, Dayton, Duncan, Flitner, Kinner, Newsome and Wilson

## A JOINT RESOLUTION

for

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION recognizing December 10, 2019 as Wyoming  
2 Women's Suffrage Day.

3

4 WHEREAS, Wyoming is often referred to as the "Cowboy State,"  
5 its more apt sobriquet is the "Equality State"; and

6

7 WHEREAS, women have always inherently held the right to vote;  
8 and

9

10 WHEREAS, Wyoming was not the first government to grant women  
11 the right to vote, but rather, the first to acknowledge and  
12 affirm women's inherent right to vote; and

13

1 WHEREAS, this inherent right, at the founding of the United  
2 States, was inhibited; and

3

4 WHEREAS, women, at the founding of the United States, were  
5 also prevented from holding office; and

6

7 WHEREAS, women's suffrage – the basic enfranchisement of  
8 women – began to burgeon in the United States in the 1840s  
9 and continued to gain momentum over the next decades, despite  
10 the oppressive atmosphere in which women were not allowed to  
11 divorce their husbands or show their booted ankles without  
12 risk of public scandal or worse; and

13

14 WHEREAS, during the 1850s, activism to support women's  
15 suffrage gathered steam, but lost momentum when the Civil War  
16 began; and

17

18 WHEREAS, in the fall of 1868, three (3) years after the  
19 American Civil War had ended, Union Army General Ulysses S.  
20 Grant was elected President, and chose John Campbell to serve  
21 as Governor of the Wyoming Territory; and

22

1 WHEREAS, Joseph A. Carey, who was thereafter appointed to  
2 serve as Attorney General of the Wyoming Territory, issued a  
3 formal legal opinion that no one in Wyoming could be denied  
4 the right to vote based on race; and

5

6 WHEREAS, the first Wyoming Territorial Legislature, comprised  
7 entirely of men, required consistent and persistent  
8 inveigling to warm to the notion of suffrage; and

9

10 WHEREAS, abolitionist and woman suffrage activist, Esther  
11 Hobart Morris, was born in Tioga County, New York, on August  
12 8, 1812, and later became a successful milliner and  
13 businesswoman; and

14

15 WHEREAS, Esther Hobart Morris, widowed in 1843, moved to Peru,  
16 Illinois, to settle the property in her late husband's estate  
17 and experienced the legal hardships faced by women in Illinois  
18 and New York; and

19

20 WHEREAS, Esther Hobart Morris married John Morris, a  
21 prosperous merchant, and in 1869 moved to the gold rush camp  
22 at South Pass City, a small valley situated along the banks  
23 of Willow Creek on the southeastern end of the Wind River

1 Mountains in the Wyoming Territory just north of the Oregon  
2 Trail; and

3

4 WHEREAS, William Bright, a saloonkeeper, also from the once  
5 bustling frontier mining town South Pass City, was elected to  
6 serve in the Territorial Legislature and was elected as  
7 president of the Territorial Council; and

8

9 WHEREAS, the Territorial Legislature met in 1869 in Cheyenne  
10 and passed bills and resolutions formally enabling women to  
11 vote and hold property and formally assuring equal pay for  
12 teachers; and

13

14 WHEREAS, William Bright introduced a bill to recognize the  
15 right of Wyoming women to vote; and

16

17 WHEREAS, no records were kept of the debate between Wyoming  
18 territorial lawmakers, although individuals likely asserted  
19 a myriad of motivations and intentions in supporting women's  
20 suffrage; and

21

22 WHEREAS, the Wyoming Territory population at the time  
23 consisted of six adult men for every adult woman, some

1 lawmakers perchance hoped suffrage would entice more women to  
2 the state; and

3

4 WHEREAS, some lawmakers may have believed that women's  
5 suffrage was consistent with the goals articulated in a post-  
6 Civil War amendment to the United States Constitution  
7 guaranteeing the "right of citizens of the United States to  
8 vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or  
9 by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition  
10 of servitude"; and

11

12 WHEREAS, some lawmakers inherently knew that guaranteeing the  
13 right of women to vote was, simply, the right thing to do;  
14 and

15

16 WHEREAS, the Territorial Legislature advanced a suffrage bill  
17 stating, "That every woman of the age of twenty-one years,  
18 residing in this territory, may, at every election to be  
19 holden under the laws thereof, cast her vote. And her rights  
20 to the elective franchise and to hold office shall be the  
21 same under the election laws of the territory, as those of  
22 electors" and that "This act shall take effect and be in force  
23 from and after its passage"; and

1

2 WHEREAS, when invited to join the Union, demanding that  
3 women's suffrage be revoked, the Wyoming Legislature said,  
4 "We will remain out of the Union one hundred years rather  
5 than come in without the women"; and

6

7 WHEREAS, in July 1890, Esther Hobart Morris presented the new  
8 Wyoming state flag to Governor Francis E. Warren during the  
9 statehood celebration, making Wyoming the 44<sup>th</sup> state to enter  
10 the Union and the first with its women holding the right to  
11 vote and serve in elected office; and

12

13 WHEREAS, the United States did not endorse women's suffrage  
14 until 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the  
15 U.S. Constitution; and

16

17 WHEREAS, Wyoming, the first to recognize women's suffrage,  
18 blazed a trail of other noteworthy milestones, such as Louisa  
19 Swain, of Laramie, casting the first ballot by a woman voter  
20 in 1870; and

21

22 WHEREAS, in 1870 the first jury to include women was in  
23 Wyoming and was sworn in on March 7 in Laramie; and

1

2 WHEREAS, Esther Hobart Morris was appointed to serve as  
3 justice of the peace in February 1870, making her the first  
4 woman to serve as a judge in the United States; and

5

6 WHEREAS, Wyoming women become the first women to vote in a  
7 presidential election in 1892; and

8

9 WHEREAS, in 1894 Wyoming elected Estelle Reel to serve as the  
10 state superintendent of public instruction, making her one of  
11 the first women in the United States elected to serve in a  
12 statewide office; and

13

14 WHEREAS, the residents of the town of Jackson in 1920 elected  
15 a city council composed entirely of women – dubbed the  
16 "petticoat government" by the press – making it the first  
17 all-women government in the United States; and

18

19 WHEREAS, in 1924 Wyoming elected Nellie Tayloe Ross to serve  
20 as governor of the great state of Wyoming, making her the  
21 first woman to be sworn in as governor in these United States;  
22 and

23

1 WHEREAS, all these milestones illuminate and strengthen  
2 Wyoming's heritage as the "Equality State"; and

3

4 WHEREAS, December 10, 2019 marks the 150th anniversary of the  
5 date women's suffrage became law.

6

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE  
8 LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WYOMING:

9

10 **Section 1.** That the Wyoming legislature commemorates  
11 2019 as a year to celebrate the one hundred fiftieth (150th)  
12 anniversary of the passage of women's suffrage.

13

14 **Section 2.** That the Wyoming legislature is proud of its  
15 heritage as the first state to recognize the right of women  
16 to vote and hold office, hereby affirming its legacy as the  
17 "Equality State."

18

19 **Section 3.** That the Secretary of State of Wyoming  
20 transmit a copy of this resolution to the National Women's  
21 Hall of Fame in support of Esther Hobart Morris' induction  
22 into the Women of the Hall.

23



1           **Section 4.** That the Wyoming legislature encourages its  
2 citizens and invites its visitors to learn about the women  
3 and men who made women's suffrage in Wyoming a reality,  
4 thereby blazing a trail for other states, and eventually the  
5 federal government, to recognize the inherent right of men  
6 and women alike to elect their leaders and hold office.

7

8

(END)