



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Column: Exercise Your Right to Vote, Honor Those Who Made It Possible

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In this centennial year of the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote, we are reminded that voting is one of the most important rights and responsibilities we have as American citizens.

We proudly celebrate that the women who secured equality at the ballot box did their pioneering work from right here in the Finger Lakes region.

At the Hunt House in Waterloo, Jane Hunt hosted the tea party that launched the women's suffrage movement and the first Women's Rights Convention held at Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls in 1848. Three years later, on a nearby street corner, Amelia Bloomer introduced Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In 1873, at the Ontario County Courthouse in Canandaigua, Susan B. Anthony was tried and convicted of voting illegally as a woman. Today, the road outside that courthouse is dedicated in her name.

Underground Railroad leader Harriet Tubman, whose work is enshrined at Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in Auburn, was also a strong voice in the women's suffrage movement. Though women nationally gained the right to vote in 1920, Black women would wait 45 years more to exercise that right, when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

When we vote, we honor these women, and all women of the suffrage movement. We honor our veterans, and military servicemen and women, who have fought to protect our right to vote, and the freedoms we enjoy as Americans.

Susan B. Anthony said, "There will never be equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers."

I am proud to be the first woman elected to represent the 54th District in the New York State Senate, and I am committed to do my part to encourage more women to run for public office. Less than 30 percent of federal and state elected positions are held by women.

Voting is one of the best ways to achieve more equal representation in government, and more equitable policies and laws for all people. Voting is how progress is made.

I encourage you to make sure your families, friends and neighbors vote this fall.

Registered voters can vote one of three ways: by absentee ballot, in-person early voting, or in-person voting on Election Day, November 3.

All registered voters can request an absentee ballot if they are concerned about COVID-19. Early voting runs from October 24 to November 1. Check with your county board of elections for information on absentee ballots and early voting times and locations where you live.

If you want to honor the women who raised their voices so that the voices of all women could be heard, vote. If you want to honor the women and men who have fought to preserve the rights and freedoms of all Americans, vote. If you want to better your community, your state and your nation, vote. It's your right and responsibility.