



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Centennial of "Spirit of 1776" Wagon highlights New York as cradle of women's rights movement

BETTY LITTLE June 19, 2013

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July 1, 2013 designated as the "Spirit of 1776" Wagon Day by legislative resolution

The historic "Spirit of 1776" wagon used in organizing for Votes for Women in New York State received special attention as the focus of a press conference Wednesday, June 19, 2013 in The Well of the Legislative Office Building, in Albany.

Both houses of the NYS Legislature passed a special resolution on Tuesday, June 18 to honor the centennial of the suffrage campaign wagon's first trip for organizing purposes 100 years ago on July 1, 1913. The resolution designates July 1, 2013 as the "Spirit of 1776" Wagon Day in New York. The resolution makes the connection between economic development, tourism

and the upcoming Votes for Women suffrage centennial for NYS in 2017 and the national suffrage centennial in 2020.

Members of the bipartisan NYS Legislative Women's Caucus who took the lead and sponsored the resolution about the wagon's centennial spoke at June 19 press conference. This includes the chairs of tourism committees in both houses of the legislature: Senator Betty Little (45th Senate District) and Assembly Member Margaret M. Markey (Assembly District 30).

The legislative resolution cites the “Spirit of 1776” suffrage campaign wagon's connection to current policies of economic and cultural tourism development, the urgent need for NYS to complete the upstate Women's Heritage Trail, and the support and preservation of key historic homes related to the 72-year campaign to win the vote for women. The suffrage movement took from 1848 and the Seneca Falls Convention to the 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution.

Stated Senator Betty Little, chair of the Senate Cultural affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation Committee: “The 'Spirit of 1776' suffrage campaign wagon is a powerful historic symbol reminding us all of the 'new frontier' that was traveled and conquered by brave and determined women to whom we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. Many of the suffragists didn't live to see the destination – the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution – but each and everyone contributed to ensuring a brighter future not only for women, but for our nation and the world. I'm honored to join my colleagues today in this legislative effort to memorialize the wagon as work progresses on plans for that mission.”

Margaret M. Markey, chair of the Assembly Tourism, Parks, Arts and Sports Development Committee noted: “New York led America in extending the vote to women. It's an honor for us to mark the centennial of the 'Spirit of 1776' wagon and to salute some of the crusading pioneers who helped galvanize the nation to adopt the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution. In the coming years we look forward to establishing a Women's Heritage Trail to connect the historic sites around the state that show the vital role that New York women had in this historic movement.”

Susan Zimet, founder of [Votes for Women 2020](#) and New Paltz, NY Town Supervisor, will be in attendance at the press conference, as well as Deborah L. Hughes, President and CEO of the Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, a member of the Votes for Women 2020 advisory board.

“As New Yorkers we have a special place in history,” continued Susan Zimet, founder of Votes for Women 2020, the nonprofit organization planning suffrage centennial events in 1917 and 2020. “New York's women led the way from Seneca Falls to the Supreme Court. The

importance of the work of these brave warriors who paved the way for myself and my daughter are unsung heroes who deserve to have their proper place in history. The passage of this resolution by our New York State elected leaders is a critical step in the recognition of the work ahead of us.”

Deborah L. Hughes, President and CEO of the [National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House](#) in Rochester, NY and a member of Votes for Women 2020 advisory board, said: “One speech, one march, one wagon at a time...the women of New York have changed the world for all women.”

One hundred years ago on July 1, 1913, Votes for Women activists Edna Kearns, Irene Davison, and eight-year-old Serena Kearns left Manhattan from the headquarters of the NYS Woman Suffrage Association and headed to Long Island in the horse-drawn wagon called the “Spirit of 1776” They spent the next month organizing in many communities to gather support for women voting. The wagon and its journey was covered by many New York City and Long Island newspapers.

Four years later in 1917, New York's women finally won the franchise. This was followed by the vote being extended to millions of American women nationwide in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution.

“Having the 'Spirit of 1776' honored like this is the dream of our family,” said Marguerite Kearns, granddaughter of Edna Kearns and a member of the advisory board of Votes for Women 2020. Kearns writes and edits a website and blog inspired by her grandmother's “Spirit of 1776” suffrage wagon: <http://suffragewagon.org>

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Susan Zimet, Votes for Women 2020 (<http://votesforwomen2020.org>), cofounder of Votes for Women 2020 (845-527-5309); Deborah L. Hughes, National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House in Rochester, NY and member of Votes for Women 2020 advisory board (585-235-6124); Marguerite Kearns, granddaughter of suffragist Edna Buckman Kearns of Rockville Centre, NY, is a member of the Votes for Women 2020 advisory board (505-670-3124, 505-753-9760). Complete historical information about the “Spirit of 1776” suffrage campaign wagon is available on: <http://suffragewagon.org> The “Spirit of 1776” suffrage campaign wagon is in the collection of the New York State Museum.

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State of New York Legislative Resolution (Senate:2421, Assembly:642)

Whereas, New York State is the cradle for the women's rights movement in the United States and it is critically important to celebrate women's history as well as support programs that build economic development through cultural and heritage tourism, including the development of a New York State Women's Heritage Trail,

Whereas, A Governor's Capitol women's exhibit in 2012 pointed out how New York's women led the way from "Seneca Falls to the Supreme Court" and the exhibit showcased a horse-drawn campaign wagon called the "Spirit of 1776" that was used in parades and special events on Long Island and New York City,

Whereas, This "Spirit of 1776" suffrage campaign wagon is held in the collection of the New York State Museum and it is a prime historical artifact symbolizing the significance of New York women's participation in the suffrage movement over a 72-year period starting in 1848 in Seneca Falls, NY and ending with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1920,

Whereas, Attendant to such interest in our history, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Assembled Body is justly proud to memorialize the "Spirit of 1776" wagon as it celebrates the centennial of its first journey for freedom on July 1, 1913 when the wagon left the state headquarters of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association in Manhattan and headed to Long Island for a month of grassroots organizing for the vote, in addition to later appearances in New York City suffrage parades,

Whereas, Celebration of this "Spirit of 1776" wagon centennial is in alignment with the Legislative Women's Caucus of New York State's mission to educate citizens of New York State by celebrating our rich cultural heritage and advancing the centennial of New York

State's women winning the vote in 1917, followed by the national suffrage centennial in 2020,

Whereas, Celebration of the Spirit of 1776" wagon celebration is in alignment with the State of New York's " Path Through History " program that includes women's rights as one of the 13 identified themes building on New York's already robust heritage tourism attractions,

Whereas, The mission of Votes For Women 2020 is to celebrate, educate, inspire, and promote the history of women's right to vote with a focus on the past and an eye to the future with the goals of preserving and promoting NYS history sites, including but not limited to the Susan B. Anthony House, Matilda Joslyn Gage Home, Harriet Tubman Home and others; creating a NYS Women's Heritage Trail with the "Spirit of 1776" wagon" inaugurating that trail; and hosting national celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the women's right to vote in 2020, beginning in 2017 with the centennial of women gaining the right to vote in New York State,

Resolved, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew Cuomo to proclaim July 1, 2013 as the "Spirit of 1776" Wagon Day in the State of New York ; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this Resolution, suitable, engrossed, be transmitted to the Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.

Adopted in Senate on _____

Adopted in Assembly on _____

State of New York Legislative Resolution