



NEWS RELEASE:

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On the eve of the elections, learn about the 19th Amendment at Washington State History Museum’s “Votes for Women: 100 Years and Counting”

TACOMA, WA - [Washington State Historical Society](#) planned to make the game-based exhibition *Votes for Women: 100 Years and Counting* its biggest celebration of the suffrage centennial. A festive opening night event was scheduled in April, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the museum closed its doors along with businesses and organizations across the state. This long-awaited exhibition will open at last on October 24, 2020 in the museum’s fifth floor galleries.

Mary Mikel Stump, the Historical Society’s audience engagement director, said “Visitors interact with the exhibition as an immersive game. They’ll learn about six different aspects of voting rights history—ratification, gerrymandering, civil rights, women’s clubs, enfranchisement, and the differing notions of majority—and suffrage ties to each topic. In each section of the exhibition, visitors will have an active role by voting for the most representative objects, and losing or gaining votes through spinning game wheels,” Stump explained.

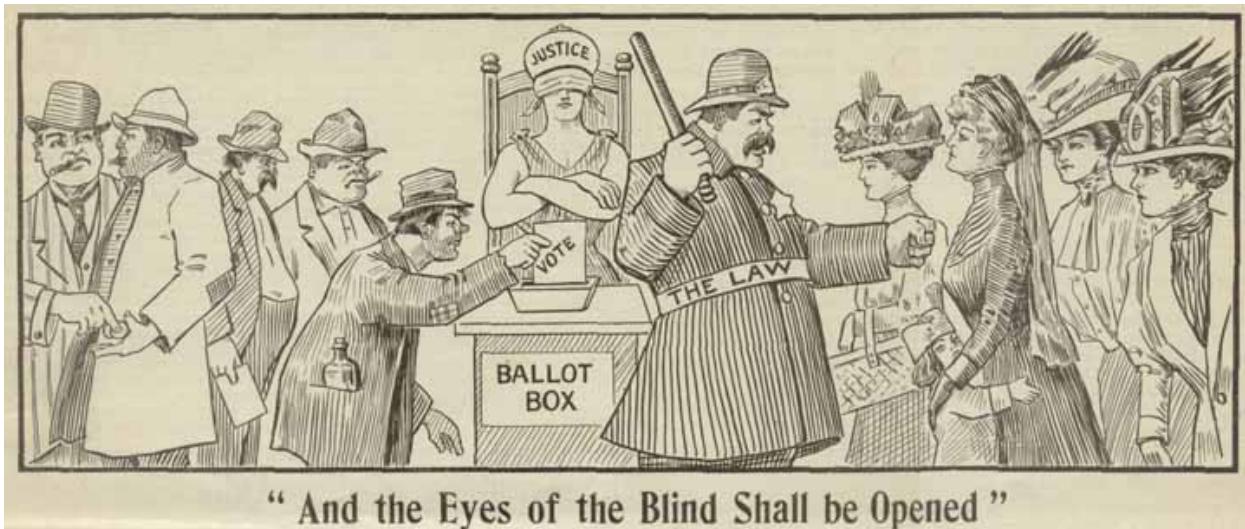
With the health and welfare of visitors and staff top of mind, the museum had made alterations to the exhibition so that everyone can play safely. Each visitor will be assigned individual voting tokens and a tool with which to spin the wheels, and six-foot distancing will be observed between visitor cohorts in the expansive gallery spaces, as well as mask-wearing and a one-way path through the space.

[Votes for Women: 100 Years and Counting](#) is a vibrant celebration of female achievements in politics and society. It focuses on both the national suffrage story and our state’s connections to that story, explaining how Washington women led the way at the turn of the 20th century for the eventual ratification of the 19th Amendment.

The exhibition’s creation was led by Tacoma writers and artists Jessica Spring and Chandler O’Leary. “When we started thinking about how we wanted to tackle telling this story in exhibition form, the complicated layers of who actually did and didn’t gain the right to vote in 1920, and Washington’s wonderful suffrage leaders, our minds immediately went to Jessica Spring and Chandler O’Leary. The creative work in their book [Dead Feminists: Historic Heroines in Living Color](#) made them a natural choice to highlight not only the women changemakers that paved the road for women’s votes, but also what that has meant in the one hundred years since Harry T. Burn dramatically changed his vote in the Tennessee legislature to give full ratification of the

19th amendment in August of 1920,” said Stump. “It’s been wonderful working with these two witty, wise women who have laid out the story in six succinct sections where the visitor also gets a chance to contribute.”

The exhibition will be richly illustrated with original artwork created by O’Leary and Spring, and visitors will see historic objects and ephemera from the Washington State Historical Society collections alongside reproduced historic photographs and ephemera from the National Archives.



Spring and O’Leary noted in their curator’s statement, “When asked to collaborate on *Votes for Women: 100 Years and Counting*, the Washington State History Museum put forward a challenge: Could we engage visitors in a journey to celebrate women gaining equality at the ballot box, but also consider all the obstacles that—to this day—prevent all Americans from exercising their voting rights equally? And what if that visitor experience could be a game? Because while democracy is *not* a game, the barriers voters still face have an uncanny resemblance to one.” They turned to some of their favorite childhood games for inspiration.

As a result of O’Leary and Spring’s approach, visitors will journey through an interactive history lesson where game components provide opportunities to synthesize and apply what they’ve learned. They’ll discover the who, what, where, why and why not of the nation’s suffrage battle and Washington’s role in it, while also exploring who could and could not vote at different points in time. They will understand the importance of voting to our society, and how women’s suffrage and winning the right to vote has impacted, affected, and influenced our nation over time.

WSHS is also hosting a related virtual gathering, “Cheers to Women: Virtual History After Hours.” Register ahead and pick up a kit for the evening’s activity including logo glassware (to cheer with), images of historic suffrage postcards, Votes for Women pins, and materials to craft your own suffrage postcard to send to a woman you admire. The Zoom event will include a signature cocktail and mixology lesson with Bryn Quarles of Artusi in Seattle using spirits created by the women owners of Brovo Distilling, A lively presentation from

Humanities Washington speaker Mayumi Tsutakawa who will highlight diverse Washington women of note including jazz musician Ruby Bishop, photographer Imogen Cunningham, journalist/activist Anna Louise Strong, Upper Skagit linguist Vi Hilbert, and artist Priscilla Chong Jue. (Note: The Humanities Washington presentation can be accessed free of charge and will be streamed on Facebook.) Tickets for the “Cheers for Women” can be purchased on the museum’s website (<https://www.washingtonhistory.org/event/cheers-for-women/>) and the event takes place on October 29, 2020.

“*Votes for Women’s* opening was delayed yet as it happens, the opening is very timely as we enter this very important election. I really encourage our community to explore this exhibition; you’ll come out knowing the names of those who fought for this basic constitutional right, and you’ll appreciate your right to vote as never before!” commented Stump.

Votes for Women: 100 Years and Counting will be on view through January 17, 2021.

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Image credit: Political cartoon, printed in *Votes for Women*, Volume 1 #4, March 1910, page 1, published by the Washington Equal Rights Suffrage Association, Seattle, Washington, continued under the title *New Citizen*. The cartoon shows five placing votes in a ballot box, while a bind-folded woman justice symbol presides and a police officer wields a club to prevent four women and a young girl from voting. Represents the idea of voters who may be blind to inequality and voter suppression. Collection of Washington State Historical Society, **catalog ID** 2000.104.38.2.1.

About The Washington State Historical Society

The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all. The Society’s most visible activity, the Washington State History Museum (WSHM) is located in downtown Tacoma on Pacific Avenue among a thriving cultural scene. The museum features interactive permanent exhibitions about Washington’s past in the Great Hall, unique rotating exhibitions highlighting the Society’s collections, and dynamic feature exhibitions.

Address: 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

Hours: 10:00 AM–5:00 PM Tues.–Sun. Tuesdays 10:00 AM-noon reserved for ages 65+.

Admission: [Free for members](#); Adults \$14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) \$11; free for children 5 and under; family rate \$40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18).

Patrons with a [Washington Quest card](#) and licensed Washington Foster Parents can attend for \$1 per person or \$2 per family.