



## Women's Equality Day, 1989

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

On August 26, 1989, we will commemorate the 69th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. The adoption of that amendment secured for women an equal voice in our representative system by guaranteeing their right to vote. Its ratification in 1920 marked a watershed in American history by ensuring that women, equally with men, could enjoy fully the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The active role of women during World War I was one important factor in gathering the force of public opinion behind the women's suffrage movement. Women already had the vote in some States, but during the war, as they became essential workers in many industries, women gained increasing voice and stature throughout the country. Thus, after years of hard work and persistent lobbying by women's rights groups, the Congress passed the 19th Amendment in June 1919. It was finally ratified by the Tennessee legislature on August 18, 1920, and proclaimed as part of our Constitution on August 26.

By securing for women the right to vote—and allowing them full participation in the political life of our country—the 19th Amendment affirmed the principles upon which our Nation was founded. In essence, it called us to remain faithful to the vision of our Founders, who had pledged their lives and fortunes to defending the belief “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” The ratification of the 19th Amendment was a poignant reminder that the civil and political rights enshrined in our Constitution are the birthright of all.

By recognizing previously disenfranchised members of our society, the 19th Amendment took a place among other great landmarks in American history, such as President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. These legal milestones, and others that have since followed, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, have marked our Nation's progress in ensuring that all members of our society have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In recent years, women have continued their remarkable achievements in virtually every field of endeavor, gaining positions of leadership in government, education, business, medicine, and the arts. During our Nation's record peacetime economic expansion these past 80 months, 53 percent of the increase in employment has been among women; the wage gap has been closing; and today, increasing numbers of women are obtaining undergraduate and professional degrees.

On this 69th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, it is appropriate that we recognize the many accomplishments of women, as well as their unique role in keeping our families, communities, and Nation strong. But today let us also renew our commitment to protecting the rights of all Americans, so that the United States might truly be a land of “liberty and justice for all.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1989, as Women's Equality Day—a day to commemorate the 69th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

*George Bush*