Oregon Historical Society and Oregon Women’s History Consortium Commemorate Voting Rights Activism with #ChalktheVoteOR Campaign

**OHS and OWHC will share community activities and educational materials now through the November 3 election to encourage voter participation and a deeper understanding of the history of voting rights in the United States.**

Portland, OR — August 18, 2020 — August 18, 2020, marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment by Tennessee. On August 26, 1920, U.S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby signed the proclamation, formally extending voting rights to American women citizens. As we commemorate this centennial, the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) and the Oregon Women’s History Consortium (OWHC) are launching the #ChalktheVoteOR campaign, a community engagement project to generate conversations and spread knowledge about the many changes to voting rights in our state’s and nation’s history.

The traditional narrative of woman suffrage begins at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, when educated and elite white women aired their demands and grievances in the “Declaration of Sentiments,” and concludes in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Such a narrow, self-contained version of suffrage history is an injustice to the movement and its legacy — which is inextricably linked to race, gender, and citizenship. It would not be until passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) that many Black and Indigenous women would realize the promises of 15th and 19th Amendments. In 2013, furthermore, the U.S. Supreme Court severely weakened the VRA.

To help individuals, families, teachers, community organizations, and workplace groups better understand this complex and important history, this social media–based campaign
promotes community activities and educational resources that explore the long and continuing struggle for — and suppression of — universal suffrage in the United States.

“As the Oregon Historical Society explores the history of woman suffrage in its current exhibit, *Nevertheless, They Persisted*, and as the nation prepares for a presidential election, we are excited to share ways that everyone in our community can learn about the history of voting rights — including moments of progress and setbacks, and the powerful role of protest in advancing the cause of universal suffrage,” said OHS Director of Community Engagement Eliza E. Canty-Jones. “Access to the vote is something that Oregonians have long fought about and fought for, and it is our job as the Oregon Historical Society to provide historic context to this critical right of citizenship.”

The #ChalktheVoteOR campaign officially launches today with a post on the OHS Dear Oregon blog that introduces the history of chalking as a form of activism as well as provides an interactive timeline detailing five critical pieces of voting rights legislation: the 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments and the Voting Rights Act.

After learning more about these crucial pieces of voting rights legislation, OHS and OWHC encourage readers to chalk the text of these significant amendments and acts, draw pictures, or write the names of voting rights activists to help encourage education around and participation in voting. This activity will spark cross-generational dialogue about how voting rights intersect, currently and historically, with protest, activism, and civil rights.

Chalking sidewalks in support of votes is not a new concept. In 1912, noted national lecturer on suffrage and labor issues, Frances Squire Potter, came to give a lecture at the Taylor Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon. On the day of the event, young supporters chalked the sidewalks around the church to encourage passersby to attend that lecture.

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The Oregon Women’s History Consortium is a partner with the National Votes for Women Trail online map project, and they are actively working with individuals and organizations across Oregon to add locations to this national online resource, documenting where woman suffrage history happened. For Portlanders who are interested in chalking at historic locations, places to consider include:

- **Eva Bailey**’s residence at 409 SW 11th Avenue, currently the site of the Mark Spencer Hotel and formerly the Hotel Bower’s when Bailey resided there (avid anti-suffragist)
- **Mary Beatty**’s resident at 749 SW Yamhill (early Black suffragist)
- Dr. S.K. Chan, Bertie Chan, and Lillian Chan’s business and residence at 531 SW 1st Avenue (suffragists)
• Abigail Scott Duniway’s residence at the Fordham Apartments, 742 SW Vista Avenue (Oregon’s "Mother of Equal Suffrage")
• Sara Bard Field’s residence at 2103 NE 37th Avenue (suffragist who traveled Oregon to promote the 1912 suffrage campaign)
• Amanda Garvin’s residence at 274 N Wheeler Street (a former enslaved person who voted in the 1916 election)
• Former site of the Portland Hotel, now Pioneer Courthouse Square (many suffrage events occurred here)
• Former site of the Mt. Olivet First Baptist Church at 311 NW Broadway (where suffragist and church member Hattie Redmond held suffrage meetings in 1912)
• Verdell Burdine and Otto Rutherford’s residence at 833 NW Shaver Street (Oregon civil rights leaders)
• Billy Webb Elks Lodge at 6 N Tillamook Street (former Williams Avenue YWCA and offices for the Portland chapter of the NAACP)

To learn more about the National Votes for Women Trail or to nominate a site, email oregon2020@oregonwomenshistory.org.

Over the next three months leading up to the November 3 national election, OHS and OWHC will be sharing other community activities on Dear Oregon to encourage voter registration and continued education around the history of voting rights, such as creating a toy protest, recreating protest signs from voting rights movements, and even baking a recipe from a suffrage cookbook!

Share your photos on social media with the hashtag #ChalktheVoteOR and tag OHS (@oregonhistory) and OWHC (@oregonwomenshistory) on Facebook or OHS (@oregonhistoricalsociety) and OWHC (@oregonwomenshistory) on Instagram. Both organizations will share posts on their social channels between the woman suffrage centennial on August 26, 2020, and the national election on November 3, 2020 — and will feature a selection of community photos in an election day post on Dear Oregon.

For further resources to learn about the history of the women and men involved in Oregon’s ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, visit the Oregon Women’s History Consortium’s exhibit, Oregon2020. In addition to learning about ratification by the Oregon Legislature in January 1920, virtual visitors will meet suffragists who participated in protests for the 19th Amendment in Washington, D.C., and learn what Oregonians across the state were engaged in when ratification occurred in August 1920.

Folks are also encouraged to visit the Oregon Historical Society’s original exhibit, Nevertheless, They Persisted: Women’s Voting Rights and the 19th Amendment, which chronicles the complicated history of woman suffrage and broad voting rights and profiles the brave activists who fought for woman suffrage. Now extended through
August 15, 2021, this exhibit shows the many ways Oregon history connects to the national history of woman suffrage and to the complex history of American democracy. Additional online resources include brand new state standards aligned curriculum for educators based on the history presented in this exhibit as well as articles of noted suffragists on The Oregon Encyclopedia including an essay on Woman Suffrage in Oregon.

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**About the Oregon Historical Society**

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.

**About the Oregon Women’s History Consortium**

The Oregon Women’s History Consortium (OWHC) is a 501c3 educational organization that provides leadership to support research and education related to the history of women in Oregon. Established in 2010, the Oregon Women’s History Consortium led the statewide commemoration of the centennial of Oregon women gaining the right to vote in 2012, Century of Action: Oregon Women Vote, 1912–2012. The OWHC is engaged in educating the public about Oregon activists’ role in gaining the right to vote and to place women’s voting rights in the United States Constitution with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920.