Women's Equality Day (August 26)

Introduced by Rep. Bella Abzug (former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, lawyer, writer, news commentator, and feminist) and established in 1971, this day commemorates the passage of the 19th Amendment, the Woman Suffrage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which in 1920 gave women in the United States full voting rights.

Gender is one of the more restricting forces in all aspects of American life, most recently noted by numerous pundits and commentators during the 2008 presidential election. Compared with other democracies, the United States in fact has been slow to use the abilities of the majority of its citizens – the majority born female. Although we Americans think of ourselves as leaders in all things progressive, the fact is that 26 countries granted women the vote before the U.S. did, and the same is true of electing women as national leaders. The U.S. falls behind many others in setting this precedent, including Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, and Pakistan.

It is not as though American women haven’t tried: research shows that at least 35 women have run for president. Most are unknown, and some represented parties that arguably merit obscurity -- including the Surprise Party and the Looking Back Party. Although such may generate amusement, it nonetheless is true that the women who mounted platforms to speak to their issues were courageous: more than men, they knew that their audacity invited ridicule. As more and more accepted the risk, however, their candidacies elevated public esteem for women’s abilities.

Excerpts taken from National Women’s History Museum website: https://www.nwhm.org/