

BY: M. of A. Lupardo

MEMORIALIZING Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 14, 2017, as Women's Public Address Day in the State of New York, commemorating the anniversary of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Address to the Legislature of New York"

WHEREAS, On February 14, 1854, for the first time, a New York woman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, attempted to address the State Legislature regarding women's suffrage, divorce rights, and a right to trial by a jury of peers among other sex-based civil injustices of the time; and

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Cady Stanton intended to address the New York State Legislature, yet was prohibited; and

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Cady Stanton then delivered the speech by printing 50,000 copies of her now famous "Address to the Legislature of New York" and distributed a portion of these copies to members of the Legislature while selling the remainder to other suffragists; and

WHEREAS, This "Address to the Legislature of New York" initiated a tradition where every year after 1854, New York suffragists would visit the State Legislature and advocate for women's suffrage; and

WHEREAS, In the year 1917 the suffragists' attempts finally proved successful as New York granted women the right to vote prior to the majority of other states in the United States; and

WHEREAS, New York's early support for women's suffrage then encouraged lawmakers across the United States to further national support for women's suffrage which ultimately led to the 19th Amendment to the United States' Constitution, granting all women of the United States the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, The following excerpts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Address to the Legislature of New York" serves as a historical account of the perils resulting from the disenfranchisement of women:

"It is not enough for us that by your laws we are permitted to live and breathe, to claim the necessities of life from our legal protectors--to pay the penalty of our crimes; we demand the full recognition of all our rights as citizens of the Empire State. We have every qualification required by the constitution, necessary to the legal voter, but the one of sex."

"Now, gentlemen, we would fain know by what authority you have disfranchised one-half the people of this state? You who have so boldly taken possession of the bulwarks of this republic, show us your credentials, and thus prove your exclusive right to govern, not only yourselves, but us."

"At this moment among the hundreds of women who are shut up in prisons in this state, not one has enjoyed that most sacred of all rights--that right which you would die to defend for yourselves--trial by a jury of one's peers."

"Look at the position of woman as wife. She cannot testify, in many cases, against her husband. She can get no redress for wrongs in her own name in any court of justice. She can neither sue nor be sued."

"She can own nothing, sell nothing. She has no right even to the wages she earns; her person, her time, her services are the property of another."

"The right to property will, of necessity, compel us in due time to the exercise of our right to the elective franchise, and then naturally follows the right to hold office."

"Look at the position of woman as mother. There is no human love so generous, strong and steadfast as that of the mother for her child; yet behold how cruel and ruthless are your laws touching this most sacred relation."

"A mother's love can be no protection to a child; she cannot appeal to you to save it from a father's cruelty, for the laws take no cognizance of the mother's most grievous wrongs. Neither at home nor abroad can a mother protect her son."

"But when woman's moral power shall speak through the ballot-box, then shall her influence be seen and felt."

"Many times and oft it has been asked us, with unaffected seriousness, 'What do you women want? What are you aiming at?'"

"What can woman want under such a government? Admit radical differences in sex and you demand different spheres--water for fish, and air for birds."

"But if, gentlemen, you take the ground that the sexes are alike, and, therefore, you are our faithful representative--then why all these special laws for woman? This, men and brethren, is all we ask at your hands. We ask no better laws than those you have made for yourselves."

"Now, do you candidly think these wives do not wish to control the wages they earn--to own the land they buy--the houses they build? To have at their disposal their own children, without being subject to the constant interference and tyranny of an idle, worthless profligate?"

"In conclusion, then, let us say, on behalf of the women of this state, we ask for all that you have asked for yourselves in the progress of your development, since the May Flower cast anchor side Plymouth rock; and simply on the ground that the rights of every human being are the same and identical."; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to

memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 14, 2017, as Women's Public Address Day in the State of New York, commemorating the anniversary of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Address to the Legislature of New York"; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.