

# Justice for the Future

PLANNING FOR EXCELLENCE

September 17, 2020

The United States celebrates Constitution Day today, in recognition of the signing of the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787. For two hundred thirty-three years, this document has served as the guiding force behind American jurisprudence and citizens' rights.

The right of our citizens to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude was memorialized in the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution and was ratified on February 3, 1870, more than 80 years after the signing of the Constitution. Despite its language, the effect was to give African-American men the right to vote, but did not extend to women. It would be another 50 years before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920, memorializing women's right to vote. And it was another 45 years after that before the Voting Rights Act was signed into law in 1965, securing meaningful, consistent access to the polls for all U.S. citizens, regardless of sex or ethnicity.

The Arizona Supreme Court obtained an exhibit from the American Bar Association telling the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the women's suffrage movement leading to its adoption. That traveling exhibit was intended for display in courthouses and community centers throughout Arizona to mark the centennial of the Amendment's ratification. Unfortunately, as was the case most of us, the exhibit's travel plans were halted by the coronavirus pandemic. However, the Court created a virtual display for the exhibit, which I encourage you to view online at <https://www.azcourts.gov/newsandinfo/Press-Releases-News/19thAmendment100>.

The story of the struggle for women's suffrage is inspiring both because of the commitment and perseverance required and the results achieved, as well as the setbacks and frustrations overcome along the way. For an in-depth and insightful presentation on the suffrage movement, I encourage you to view *Your Vote-Your Voice-Our Democracy: The 19th Amendment at 100*, in which Arizona Supreme Court Vice Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer joined a panel of Arizona luminaries in discussing suffrage, modern struggles, and the issues that await us as a society in the future. The program is available online at <https://youtu.be/v3ychXDb3RY>.

This Constitution Day, we should reflect on equal justice under law and the rights we enjoy under the Constitution. The right for all adult citizens to vote in the United States has been fought for and won incrementally for over two hundred years. I hope you exercise this right and that you also take a moment to celebrate Constitution Day and all the rights we enjoy as individuals and as a nation.

Chief Justice Robert Brutinel