

# GREENWICH POST

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*On eve of election*

## Expert speaks on women's suffrage

By Maggie Caldwell  
Editor

"Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity." The statement is attributed to a doctor who admonished men, including President Woodrow Wilson, who would have Alice Paul and other suffragists institutionalized for their battle to win women the right to vote.

It was less than a century ago that Ms. Paul and 32 other women were arrested for picketing outside the White House. Officially charged with "obstructing sidewalk traffic," some of the women were jailed for weeks and subjected to terrible conditions and brutality. When Ms. Paul and others went on a hunger strike, prison authorities attempted to force-feed the women rancid food.

News of their condition was leaked to the press, which put pressure on the Wilson administration and eventually helped lead to the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Ms. Paul and the others were eventually given Presidential pardons after the Supreme Court ruled their arrests unconstitutional.

On the eve of this year's election, which marks the 90th anniversary of women winning the right to vote, Westchester-based author and



Kate Kelly, local historian and author, is speaking on the history of women winning the right to vote on Election Day eve at the Greenwich Library.

followed suit.

"People are surprised that places like Wyoming were much more forward-thinking than the Eastern states were," Ms. Kelly said. "You can look at the headlines about women getting the right to vote, but if you look back at the story, it

Amendment, and we're still sitting here with no Equal Rights Amendment," Ms. Kelly said. "We rely on the next generation to be picking up responsibilities. Communicating this message to younger people is vital."

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On the eve of this year's election, which marks the 90th anniversary of women winning the right to vote, Westchester-based author and historian Kate Kelly will be at Greenwich Library to discuss this history and remind women of what their mothers and their grandmothers fought for. The free event takes place Monday, Nov. 1, at 7 p.m. in the library meeting room.

"Especially in a midterm election, when people are not as likely to bother to vote, it is important for modern-day citizens to realize that this was not something we were given," Ms. Kelly said. "People were willing to die for this."

A successful nonfiction author and blogger for the Huffington Post's "Politics" section, Ms. Kelly runs the Web site Americacomesalive.com, which features a collection of her writings on American history. Every election cycle, Ms. Kelly speaks about the history of women's suffrage and the challenges and triumphs of activists in the decades leading up to the amendment's passage.

One of the things that surprises people is that women in the Western territories got to vote as early as 1869, decades before the rest of the country

followed suit.

"People are surprised that places like Wyoming were much more forward-thinking than the Eastern states were," Ms. Kelly said. "You can look at the headlines about women getting the right to vote, but if you look back at the story, it was a 72-year-old battle."

Born out of the suffragists' fight was the Women's Rights Movement and the creation of such organizations as the League of Women Voters. As early as 1920, the league was already running educational seminars about voters issues, Ms. Kelly said. Still, with all the progress, the movement was not without its shortcomings.

"Alice Paul in 1923 pushed forward for the Equal Rights

Amendment, and we're still sitting here with no Equal Rights Amendment," Ms. Kelly said. "We rely on the next generation to be picking up responsibilities. Communicating this message to younger people is vital."

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