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Marin Voice: Commemorating 101 years of the women's right to vote in California

By Lois Moore
Guest op-ed column

Posted: 10/09/2012 06:10:00 AM PDT

CALIFORNIA was ahead of the curve when it came to the Women's Suffrage Movement. Nine years before the 19th Amendment was ratified, men and women working together with resolve against the prospect of defeat, gave victory to the 1911 legislation giving California women the right to vote.

Securing the right to vote was a bridge that connected women from all walks of life. Women concluded that if their lives were to improve, their voices had to be heard. They had to be part of the decision making process of the time.

Therefore, the right to vote was crucial.

Women across economic, cultural, and racial groups worked together to secure the right to vote. They were looking at the conditions of the time and came to the realization that if women could vote, America would be a better country for all of its citizens.

Women had to be able to use their voice to make policy decisions that affected their work place, their children and their communities. The right to vote was a powerful symbol for having a voice in the decisions that impacted their lives.

The women's right to vote was the first step. Exercising that right is the second step, and the next step is for women to use our vote and our voice to impact policy decisions that affect us and our communities.

One hundred and one years later, how are we doing?

Women have the right to vote, but at what level are we truly participating in

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take leadership roles on their jobs and in their communities.

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Lois Moore

civic engagement and public decision making?

In addition to voting, are we using our voice in day to day situations to improve the status of women, girls and our communities? In our workplace and in our community, do we have a seat at the table where policy decisions are made?

As California has been ahead of the curve on the women's right to vote, so too has Marin been in the forefront of moving women to the next step which is making sure the voices of women are present at the decision making level on their jobs and in their community.

Various Marin organizations have been doing exactly that — acknowledging women for their civic commitment and training them to

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The Marin Women's Hall of Fame (The Center for Excellence) is an organization that has been honoring the lifetime achievements and voices of women whose contributions to others have improved the conditions of many in Marin. Honoring the voices of women is further demonstrated through HALO, a seminar and speaker series; and through Teens & Leaders Connect, its mentoring and leadership development program scheduled for January. The organization's 25-year history of honoring the voices of women, and its recent efforts to cultivate the next generation of women, speak to their commitment of mentoring and leadership development for women and young girls.

The upcoming Teens & Leaders Connect Program affords an opportunity to sponsor a teenage girl.

Marin Grassroots is another organization cultivating women leaders to use their vote and their voice to impact policy decisions. Its first Marin County Women of Color Leadership Summit commemorates the 101st anniversary of the woman's right to vote in California. The event takes place Oct. 13 at the Four Points Sheraton in Terra Linda.

The summit "will explore and reflect upon the advancement of women of color as leaders in our region and our role in the broader movement for equity and justice."

Marin Grassroots also trains volunteers for leadership roles in the community. Its Equal Voice Leadership Academy prepares non-profit agency volunteers and staff to advocate for their constituencies through public policy.

Oct. 10 is the official commemoration date for women's right to vote in California. We might want to celebrate the entire month, supporting the dedication of Marin organizations who continue the charge of empowering women and girls.

Lois Merriweather Moore of Novato was inducted into the Marin Women's Hall of Fame in 2008. She is a former public member of the IJ's editorial board.

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