

The Opinion Page

Celebrate Women's Equality Day

POTSDAM - Tuesday marks the 94th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, when women achieved the hard-fought right to vote. Since 1971, America has observed this date as Women's Equality Day.

One way to mark the anniversary is to fly your flag on Women's Equality Day to honor the generations of Americans who worked for 72 years to win the right to vote for women.

Another good way to mark the day is to check your voter registration status and encourage family and friends to register to vote. The third annual National Voter Registration Day takes place on Sept. 24. According to the NVRD website, NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org, in 2008, "6 million Americans didn't vote because they missed a registration deadline or didn't know how to register."

Nearly one in four eligible Americans are not registered to vote this year. With 27 Congressional seats and all of New York's statewide offices up for election, as well as many local ones and three statewide ballot issues to be decided, the choices that voters make at the polls will determine the quality of life for everyone else.

No group of citizens has been more negatively affected by recent elections in the long term than the college-aged. There were 6.8 million young people eligible to vote in 2012; yet youth voter registration rates are much lower than those for older age groups. Young adults between the ages of 18 to 29 could wield far more political clout than they do, but only if they register to vote, be-

come educated about the issues and turn up at the polls.

As one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, the American Association of University Women has been working vigorously for more than 130 years to create educational, political and economic equity for women. AAUW believes Women's Equality Day is a time for all of us to remember that women weren't "given" the vote; they fought fiercely for that right. And women's votes are a vital tool they can use to shape the policy issues that affect them and their families every day.

Membership in the St. Lawrence County Branch, founded in 1927, is open to anyone who supports the mission of AAUW: Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

AAUW, with its nationwide network of more than 150,000 members and supporters, more than 1,000 branches conducting programs in communities across the country, and 869 college and university partners (including all four local colleges), has been a leading advocate for equity and education for women and their families since 1881.

For more information about AAUW in St. Lawrence County, contact President Betty Connolly at 386-7013 or Connolly@canton.edu or Public Policy Chair Kathleen Stein at 386-3812, kstein1@twcny.rr.com, or visit the branch website, <http://www.northnet.org/stlawrenceaauw/index.html>.