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## **Statement from Department of Veterans' Services Commissioner Hendon on the Centennial of the Passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment**

*New York City Department of Veterans' Services Commissioner James Hendon released the following remarks on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women's Right to Vote*

“One hundred years ago today, the long-planted seeds of the women’s suffrage movement – watered with the enduring hopes of generations of women dreaming of a better tomorrow – bore fruit with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution, giving women the right to vote.

It was a long journey, led by female trailblazers who were mocked and ridiculed for simply requesting the same rights as their male counterparts. Yet, they pressed forward in the face of unsurmountable adversity rather than remain silent before the injustice that they faced.

The first tilling of the soil occurred at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 – a conference in New York State that brought together prominent women abolitionists and future suffrage leaders – where they passed a “Declaration of Sentiments” calling for the right to vote. That gathering was followed by more than seven decades of struggle until finally, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Tennessee became the 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and women’s right to vote was forever enshrined in our Constitution.

The passage of this amendment transformed our country. Women were no longer without a political voice, though they continued to face the economic and social adversities of the times. The ability to vote helped to shatter the belief that women were secondary citizens. It opened the door for women to pursue degrees in higher education, careers in all fields, and family roles on their own terms—all independent of outside expectations. Given the dogmas of our society, this transition—culturally speaking—has not occurred overnight. However, things have moved in the right direction every day since August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1920, when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified.

The right to vote also helped open the door for women to serve in the military. Currently, women are the fastest-growing demographic within the United States Armed Forces and its associated Veteran community. That said, the population of women Veterans is expected to surpass two million this year.

Today, let us seek to continue the mission of gender equality. The right to vote was one critical step in an unfinished journey that includes closing the pay gap, not only between genders but between women of different races, encouraging more women to pursue leadership positions, and removing unfair challenges that stand in their way. Let us honor the brave women who laid this

groundwork and moved our country toward a more perfect union, not only for our sake, but that of our descendants.”