

to 3 o'clock," Shelton said. "We'll have speakers representing all of these different issues from voting rights to the environment to gun safety. They'll be speaking as well as candidates. The presidential candidates will all have proxies. We've got four for Congress. ... We have [Reno] City Council, Sparks City Council."

Since this year's event will be taking place at the Reno Events Center, there will be additional security, and marchers will be prohibited from bringing in certain items, like any sticks attached to their signs, water bottles, food and dogs—except service animals. (There will, however, be a water bottle and sign valet at the entrance.) In an effort to focus on diversity and inclusion, Shelton said, organizers have worked to ensure that volunteer marshals and hired security for the event includes people of different genders and races. There will also be a gender-neutral bathroom designated at the events center.

SUFFRAGE CELEBRATION

As 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the march will also be part celebration of the occasion and will feature additional women speakers giving spoken word performances.

"We'll have eight to 10 women who are each speaking," Shelton said. "Some are doing a Chautauqua-style, like, representing the women's suffrage movement. We have one who's a veteran, so she's talking about women in the military; one who's an athlete, so she's talking about sports before Title IX. We have a transgender woman represented, a refugee and then a young woman [speaking as a future voter]."

For Shelton and fellow organizer Daela Gibson, who works as director of public affairs for Planned Parenthood Marmonte, the hope is that the march will also serve as a chance to remind people that ratification of the 19th Amendment was not a magic bullet to solve women's inequality—or even suffrage for all women.

"I've been a big fan of diversity forever, but I'm constantly reminded why it's important ... like the 19th Amendment," Shelton said. "You know, I said that to somebody. I said, 'Yeah, the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.' And I had an African American woman say to me, 'Well, white women.' And I went, 'Oh, right. Right.'"

"While the 19th Amendment helped secure the vote for disenfranchised white women, it didn't help everybody," Gibson

said. "It's just important to understand that. And it's also, I think, important for people to understand that these rights weren't given to us. Somebody wasn't just magnanimous one day and said, 'Hey, we should just let women vote. Why didn't we ever think of this before?' Instead, they really worked to keep us from voting—and, even today, it's a common fight."

People get disfranchised and taken off of voter rolls arbitrarily a lot of times. And it's to suppress the vote, and that's not OK. That's not American. That's not what we were raised as Americans to believe happens or should happen."

They are, of course, correct about the 19th Amendment.

When it was ratified on Aug. 26, 1920, there were a fair number of American women whose status wasn't really changed. Aside from the

women who lived in states where voting rights had been granted them prior to ratification of the federal amendment, there were Native Americans and Asian immigrants—men and women—who were denied citizenship. In the South, black people continued to be subject to voter-suppression laws and vigilante tactics.

Nonetheless, the amendment did allow for the registration of millions of new woman voters. The League of Women Voters was borne of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. And women voters' perspectives began influencing the national agenda on everything from labor reform to child welfare.

And, of course, ratification of the 19th Amendment eventually led to the present era in which Nevada's Legislature became the first in the nation with a female majority. It's one with a long list of legislative successes under its belt from the 2019 session, to include a new gun background check law, new renewable energy requirements, a minimum wage increase, protections for abortion, incorporation into state law of provisions of the Affordable Care Act, voter rights protections and collective bargaining for state workers.

That's all in addition to new laws that add permanent funding for rape kit testing at the state level, increase the state's domestic violence penalties and remove the requirement for a doctor to ask a woman if she's married before she's given access to an abortion. □

Learn more about the 2020 Reno Women's March by visiting womensmarchreno.org.

"It can be very easy to just put your head under the covers and be sad about the state of the world. But there are actual things you can do."

Jackie Shelton
Women's March Organizer



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