The road to equality for women

WPN to host International Women’s Day event March 10

By Lea Bishop
Women's Professional Network

Since 1890, the March 8 celebration of International Women's Day has shed light on the social injustices faced by women around the world. This year, Women's Professional Network (WPN) will host the annual "Hudson Valley Celebration of International Women's Day." It will be an event at which we can celebrate our achievements and our continuing fight for gender equality. The Women's Professional Network (WPN) is an educational and networking organization which promotes the professional development of women from the Hudson Valley.

Throughout history, women's roles were limited largely to taking care of their homes and families. Women could not vote on property unless they inherited it from their husbands or fathers.

Coveted, based in English common law, held that men and women were one financial entity and limited women's economic choices. Marriage was a necessity; education was not. Choices for opportunities and advancement were not given to women.

In 1848 in Seneca Falls, the first women's suffrage convention was held. The suffrage movement gained momentum through the resistance and opposition from both men and women.

In 1869, women's rights and educational opportunities were expanded for women. A 19th century society's view of women slowly started to change. The U.S. Married Woman's Property Act of 1874 removed the requirement that women needed a man to cosign for a loan or a credit card. Women were allowed to vote for the first time in 1920 in New York State.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was adopted by Congress giving women the right to vote. Women also fought for the right to work, to own property unless they inherited it from their husbands or fathers.

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Woman's Market in New York State. By 1920, the ERA was extended to the states to ratify. The Congress extended the deadline by three years. In January 2020, Virginia was the 38th state to ratify the ERA, and it will be submitted for consideration at the March 9 meeting of the Legislature.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which outlawed sex-based discrimination in the workplace. Employers were required to pay men and women equal pay for equal work. In 1963, women's labor was paid $0.55 for every dollar men were paid. In the 56 years between 1963 and 2019, this gap has narrowed to $0.21.

According to the official International Women's Day website (internationalwomensday.com), this is a "global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women." In fact, the theme for International Women's Day 2020 is "I Am A Game Changer" in a call to build a more gender equal world.

In 1974 the New York State's Married Woman's Property Act was replaced by the Women's Professional Network (WPN) which is an educational and networking organization which promotes the professional development of women from the Hudson Valley.

In 1971 and by the Senate in 1972. It was then sent to the states to ratify with a seven-year deadline. States needed to ratify it by 1979; otherwise, the ERA would have been counterciled and remain a bill. The ERA was introduced in Congress in 1923, but failed to pass the House until 1970 and by the Senate in 1972.

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Despite gains in educational attainment and changing views of women's evolving social and economic roles, women in the U.S. still earn, on average in 2019, $0.80 for every dollar that a man earns. This pay gap increases for women of different ethnicities and nationalities.

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