

National Organization for Women

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March 16, 2005

The Honorable Joe Baca
Member of Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Baca:

The National Organization for Women, the oldest and largest feminist organization in the country with 500,000 members and supporters, is pleased and encouraged to see a bill that would recognize the accomplishments of Alice Paul. The Alice Paul Congressional Gold Medal Act would grant long overdue recognition for the deserving and courageous woman who successfully fought for not only women's suffrage, but for the Equal Rights Amendment.

Most know Alice Paul for her dedication to the suffrage movement in the early 1900s. Yet, the story of her life includes so much more. After completing doctoral work at the University of Pennsylvania in 1912, she became the chair for the congressional committee of the National American Suffrage Association. While holding this post, Paul organized a thousand-strong march in Washington D.C. the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in 1913, showing support for a amendment giving women the right to vote. At the time, Wilson did not support women's suffrage.

In 1913, Paul broke from the National American Suffrage Association to form the more aggressive Congressional Union for Women Suffrage, which later became the National Women's Party. She aggressively picketed the White House before and during World War I to show the irony of fighting for democracy overseas while denying people in the U.S. democracy at home. After enduring a three-week hunger strike while jailed for picketing, Paul was able to see the 19th Amendment passed in 1919, granting women the right to vote. An increase in public and political support for women's suffrage forced President Wilson to reverse his position on the issue.

After the ratification of 19th Amendment in 1920, Alice Paul continued her fight for women's equality in the United States and abroad. Alice Paul also worked tirelessly overseas to bring equality to all citizens. She founded the World Women's Party in 1938,

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which was based in Geneva, Switzerland. She worked to improve thousands of people's lives through her international work, and worked diligently to include sex equality in the preamble to the United Nations Charter. She also wrote the language of Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 and sent it to the U.S. Congress, hoping to establish equal rights for women in the Constitution. She fought for its passage and ratification until her death in 1977.

With the Congressional Gold Medal, Alice Paul's memory and accomplishments of the past will be forever recognized in our nation's future.

Sincerely,

Kim Gandy
President