

NEWS

Long Beach to create Commission for Women and Girls



by **Alicia Robinson**
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Women chant through residential areas in Long Beach on August 24, 2019, to kick off the centennial celebration of the 19th Amendment being ratified nationwide. Photo by Sarahi Apaez.

More than a century after Long Beach voters first elected a woman to a city office, the city will form an advisory group to focus on the needs and well-being of its female residents.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to create the Commission for Women and Girls, which will discuss issues affecting women and recommend policies and programs that promote equal rights, representation and opportunities for all female-identified people living or working in Long Beach.

Councilmember Cindy Allen timed her proposal for the new commission to the 100th anniversary of when the Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced to Congress. The amendment, which has never passed, would enshrine in the U.S. Constitution equal legal rights for all Americans, regardless of sex.

Women make up 50% of Long Beach's population, Allen said before the vote Tuesday night, but many still face "persistent barriers" and challenges such as unequal pay, difficulty accessing physical and mental health care and domestic violence.

Allen noted that a woman councilmember first proposed the idea of a women's commission in 1975, but none of her colleagues would second it.

"Boy, have we come a long way since then, and I am so, so very proud," Allen said. "This is a historic day for our city."

City Auditor Laura Doud paid a brief tribute to the first woman elected to a Long Beach office, Myrtelle Gunsul, who became city auditor in 1919 and served until 1951. Doud quoted Gunsul's words from a letter placed in a time capsule in 1931, saying, "I hope that increasingly, women shall enter into public service and instill high ideals and motives into both political and business life."

The commission will include representatives from each of the nine council districts as well as several seats for at-large members and youth, to be nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the council.