



September 10, 2012

NR12064

News Release

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NMCC to mark Constitution Day September 17 with special focus on the 19th Amendment

Aroostook County - September 17 does not resonate with the general public to the extent of July 4 or November 11, but the significance of the day certainly parallels in importance when it comes to the freedoms many Americans take for granted.

On September 17, 1787, the course of American History was dramatically changed with the signing of the U.S. Constitution by thirty-nine brave men. In recent years the day, now known as Constitution Day, is set aside as a time to reflect on the birth of our government and ideas that make us Americans.

Community members are invited to join in a local celebration of Constitution Day on the Northern Maine Community College campus, where a presentation on the 19th Amendment, a display on women's suffrage, and a voter registration drive are planned.

Dave Raymond, chair of the College's arts and sciences department and a long-time instructor in history and the humanities, will lead a discussion on the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. He will include a brief look at how the struggle for female suffrage played out in Maine. The presentation will be held in the Edmunds Library at 12:00 noon, followed by red, white and blue themed refreshments for attendees.

The 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed by Congress on June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920. It guarantees all American women the right to vote. Achieving this milestone required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest. Beginning in the mid-19th century, several generations of woman suffrage supporters lectured, wrote, marched, lobbied, and practiced civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change of the Constitution. Few early supporters lived to see final victory in 1920.

To tie in with Raymond's presentation, the staff in the NMCC library have prepared a display of books and DVDs on the women's suffrage movement. The display will be featured throughout the week in honor of Constitution Day. Members of the public are invited to stop by the NMCC library to learn more on this topic.

A student-led voter registration drive will also be held in the College library on September 17 between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. as part of Constitution Day. NMCC student Coleen Rand of Presque Isle is organizing the drive.

“One of the best ways we can exercise the freedoms provided to us through the Constitution and ensure they are protected is to get involved in our Democracy. For many of the new students on campus right out of high school, this November could be the first time they vote in a general election. We want to help them take advantage of that opportunity and privilege,” said Rand.

In 2004, the law establishing Constitution Day was enacted. The act mandates that all publicly-funded educational institutions provide educational programming on the history of the American Constitution on that day or an adjacent weekday.

Members of the public who are not registered to vote are also welcome to do so at NMCC on Constitution Day. For more information on the Constitution Day activities, contact the college relations office at 768-2809.

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