



Constitutional Commission's Statement on the Right to Vote
22 May 2017

Today, the citizens of the Cayman Islands enjoy universal adult suffrage and the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. It should not be forgotten, however, that this significant achievement did not occur overnight and, in some respects, was only realised after a lengthy campaign.

The story of women's suffrage in the Cayman Islands can now be accessed via the engaging "Her Story is Our History" documentary, which the Constitutional Commission trusts will be viewed both widely and often. The key milestones of this story do however bear repetition, particularly at this time. In 1948, twenty-four women from George Town wrote to Commissioner Ivor Smith stating their intention to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming general election. Having been denied this right, the women of the Cayman Islands rededicated their efforts and, on 29 May 1957 three hundred and fifty-eight Caymanian women signed seven identically worded petitions. These petitions from seven different districts demanding that women be granted political rights were submitted to the Legislative Assembly and, as a result of this protest, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Law was passed on 8 December 1958. Seven months later, on 4 July 1959, the rights of women to vote and stand for election were enshrined in the Cayman Islands (Constitution) Order in Council 1959.

The right to vote is now embodied in section 92 of the 2009 Constitution ("the Constitution"), which provides for any person who is registered as an elector to vote at the general election for an elected member of the Legislative Assembly. Reflecting on this provision, the Constitutional Commission notes that:

"This is a precious right, the importance of which is neatly encapsulated in Benjamin Todd Jealous' explanation that: 'The right to vote is the right upon which all of our rights are leveraged - and without which none can be protected'. Accordingly, as we approach a general election on Wednesday, 24 May 2017, it is a right that ought to be cherished and valued."

This statement is issued by the Constitutional Commission with a view to promoting understanding and awareness of the Constitution. For more information on the Constitutional Commission, including educational materials on the Constitution itself, please visit www.knowyourconstitution.ky, or contact info@knowyourconstitution.ky or 244-3685.

Ends.