

Following in the Footsteps of Susan B. Anthony

Speech for Florida August 26, 2006.

Thank you June Littler for all the hard work you have done in bringing me to Florida . Thank you Mr. and Mrs.....

My host and hostess who are housing me and my friend Carol Wyndham, from Peterborough, N. H. whom I would like you all to meet.

When I had my 95th birthday two years ago, my dear son, Jim. said that it was time for me to give up driving my car, that the neighbors were complaining that I was driving in the middle of the road, and further that I could no longer go on a speaking engagement without another person to follow me. So Carol has become my Elizabeth Cady Stanton if I may be so bold as to imply I am trying to do a little of what Susan B. Anthony did following in her footsteps. For Susan created a Revolution and my group and I are attempting a semi=Revolution in New Hampshire.

Carol is as eager and as passionate as I am for the issue of public funding for state elections, and like Elizabeth Cady she brought up four boys and a girl before she became an activist. We have

Ruth Meyer from Keene, too, a third woman friend and a young man, Alexander Putnam Lee a recently graduated lawyer who has set up a new organization for our issue. He too is an ardent believer in Public Funding as a way to rid the control of the Corporations that have invaded the White House, the Senate the House of Representatives and our State Administrations.

Susan Anthony was the second child and I like to believe the oldest sibling was also a girl, because I was a second girl in my family. Being second girl when a boy was hoped for gives you a different slant on life, as you attempt to live up to their expectations, trying hard to excel in everything. Susan could read and write at the age of three. When her public school master refused to teach a girl how to do long-division, said it was only for boys, Susan's father established a home school for his children, with a woman teacher who better suited his four girls and two boys.

I am sure I must be telling things you already know and you are all aware that Susan accomplished many things in her lifetime, working on temperance, women's rights, particularly a woman's right to vote .

Susan died in 1906, and it was not until 1920 that the right to vote was made a law. I was ten years old, and I remember my mother, an English Canadian, who became a citizen of the U.S. when she married my father. She was so proud to cast that first vote. She knew all about Susan, and she copied what Susan's friend Amelia Bloomer did. My mother shocked the neighbors when she took an old tan-colored corduroy trousers of my fathers and cut off the legs just below the knee, put elastic around the bottom and said they were 'bloomers' and just perfect to go out in the fields to pick raspberries.

The right to vote happened in the state of Wyoming, which cheers me up when I hear people saying that public funding will never succeed. My picture is that now that we have Arizona and Maine who accomplished their public funding with a citizen's initiative, and the Legislature of Connecticut has made that state #3, I am challenging all the other states working on clean elections to be state #4. Our group of course, hopes that it will happen first in New Hampshire, that our Legislature will follow Connecticut's lead.

The women in Florida have been very brave and the ladies in the rest of the states give you great

credit for being able to block the last-minute shenanigans by Florida's House of Representatives who attempted to force campaign finance deforms onto Florida's electoral reform bill during the final weeks of the 2001 Legislative Session. You objected loudly and brought in many allies such as labor, NAACP, women's groups, Florida Clean Elections Coalition, Florida League of Conservation Voters to object . You activated grassroots telephone trees and email trees to shock the House Leadership with overwhelming disgust from citizens in key districts around the state. And in the end you won and the deforms effort fizzled.

The Democrats and the moderate Republicans stuck together on the conference committee and the Senate Committee Chair delivered crucial speeches to the House echoing the message that the public did not want More money in politics, but Less . And your coalition succeeded : Florida Clean Elections Coalition, Common Cause Florida, League of Women Voters of Florida, Sierra Club Florida Chapter, Florida League of Conservation Voters, labor etc. in stopping this blatant campaign finance deform language in the election reform legislation. We bring you congratulations from other states working on

Clean Elections and urge you to stay the course and continue improvements.

We trust that you will continue to the goal of full public funding of your state officials, governor, governor's council, Senate and House for it has the advantage in that it costs just one tenth those of our present system, with no need to give our candidates' donors, subsidies, tax breaks and the like. It frees up officials from having to raise large sums of money and saves them time to work for their constituents rather than the big donors.

New voices have great power in politics. I am an old voice. I keep saying the same old things and it is no longer newsworthy, no matter how correct it is. Let us spend our energy helping new voices speak up for themselves. It is time to do new things to advance new voices and new visions of the better world we want for our children, the world for which thousands have given their lives and for those who are involved in that fraudulent war in Iraq today.

If you are not already involved get involved. It may not make sense to you for an old woman to stand here and tell you that you may be the answer to the problems of a troubled world, but

that may indeed be the case. Learn what it means to be an American. It means involvement. If N. H. gets public funding other states will follow and when there is enough states with public funding a critical mass will form and the system will go federal. Think of a country in which there is a true Democracy once again. A Democracy of the people , by the people and for the people, that we have not let it perish from the earth, as Abraham Lincoln begged us not to do. Democracy is not a thing we have, but it is a thing we do. So do it.