



March 19, 2018

Honorable City Council
Sacramento City Hall
915 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: The Luella Johnston Council Chambers

Dear Mayor Steinberg and Members of the City Council:

On behalf of the Fem Dems of Sacramento, I am writing to urge your support of Councilwoman Angelique Ashby's resolution to rename the Old City Hall Council Chambers after Luella Johnston, the first woman elected to city council in Sacramento, in California, and likely in any major city in the United States.

Luella Johnston was a pioneer for gender equality and an important figure in Sacramento's political and cultural development. A teacher by profession, Luella quickly became a leading local voice for women's rights in early 1900s Sacramento. She turned the Tuesday Club, an early women's social and philanthropic club, into a political force in a time when women were still barred from voting. In 1904 she founded the Woman's Council, an association of several dozen women's clubs, to give women a seat at the table in the city's civic development. And, in 1911, she was a leader in the local effort to pass a state constitutional amendment which finally granted California's women the right to vote.

In 1912, the year after women won the vote, she did the unthinkable and ran for the Sacramento City Council and, in part on the strength of the women's vote, was elected. She immediately set to work on implementing governance reforms, passing infrastructure improvements, and overseeing the city's schools. The *Sacramento Bee*, in endorsing her run for re-election, praised her work on the council, saying she had run "a very successful administration." It is hard to understate what a landmark achievement this was in a deeply sexist time. Luella Johnston had proven not only that women could be elected, but that they could govern.

Sadly, despite Ms. Johnston's importance to Sacramento, and to women's history, her contributions have been overlooked. There are no significant memorials to Ms. Johnston in the city.

The resolution to rename after her the Old Council Chambers, in which she served, is a fitting way to right this oversight and to honor the rich history of women's leadership in our city. We are in strong support.

Sincerely,

Caity Maple
Fem Dems of Sacramento