

## **Michelle W Bowman: Remarks – “Outstanding women of Kansas awards ceremony”**

Brief remarks by Ms Michelle W Bowman, Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, at the Outstanding Women of Kansas Awards Ceremony, Topeka, 19 August 2020.

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Thank you to the 19th Amendment Centennial Celebration Committee for the honor of being included among these distinguished awardees, whose achievements have done so much for our state and our nation.

We are here today because of the tireless efforts of brave women—including Kansas women—demanding that men and women have an equal right to vote and shape their destiny. The suffragettes didn’t only achieve something for women. Through their efforts, our country became a stronger democracy by extending the full opportunity for women to be counted and to take part in the political process.

The passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 enabled women to directly participate in selecting our country’s leaders. It paved the way for women to take part on equal terms, including by serving as leaders themselves. None of us singled out today would be here without the extraordinary efforts of those who secured the vote for women. In my case, it was serving as Kansas’s first female State Bank Commissioner, and the first person to serve on the Federal Reserve Board in the role designated by Congress for someone with community banking experience. The sacrifice and persistence of those women more than a century ago set an example for future generations of women and allows our daughters to dream that anything is possible with hard work, commitment, and determination.

That legacy has deep roots in Kansas. As many here know, in 1861, Kansas granted women a limited right to vote in school district elections; and, by 1867, Kansas became the first U.S. state to hold a statewide referendum on women’s suffrage. Even though this first referendum was defeated, it reflected and contributed to a new way of thinking about what it meant to be a woman and citizen. In 1887, Kansas elected the first female mayor in America. And in 1912, Kansas became the eighth state to approve women’s voting rights in all elections. I could not be more proud of my Kansas heritage.

The participation of women in the political and policymaking process brings a broader perspective. Throughout my career, and as an attorney and a public servant, I have found that the inclusion of individuals with a broad range of experiences deepens our understanding of the issues and results in better discussions and more thoughtful decisionmaking.

In my current role, I bring the perspective of someone from a small, rural, agricultural community, who has worked as a community banker and as a state regulator. Those aren’t typical experiences for a Fed policymaker. This diversity is a strength, as Congress recognized by creating a role on the Federal Reserve Board designated for someone with community banking experience. I am the first to serve in this capacity, and I strongly believe that our economic and financial system is strengthened when we consider the implications of our regulatory decisions for bankers on Main Street as well as on Wall Street.

I approach our monetary policy deliberations in a similar way. Our actions in response to the recent pandemic have clearly benefited from this perspective, as we understand how the varying state and local approaches have affected economic conditions across the nation.

In closing, it is appropriate that during this election season we honor the women who secured

that right, first in Kansas, and then through their campaign to ratify the 19th amendment. The greatest tribute to those women, and the best way to honor their legacy, is to vote. Another way is through public service, and I would strongly encourage all—but in particular women—to consider serving in government at the local, state, or federal level. It is the most challenging, but by far the most rewarding work that I have done, and I hope you will consider serving as well.

Thank you again for this honor.