



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
**CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE**  
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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Jim Lopez, Deputy City Manager  
Erika Mascorro, Diversity Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Manager  
Daniel Lazo, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator

**Date:** February 5, 2026

**Subject:** **2026 Women's History Month Proclamation**

### RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Mayor proclaims March 2026 as Women's History Month in Kirkland.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Women's History Month is a federally recognized annual observance in the month of March, including March 8 as International Women's Day, to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.
- This proclamation aligns with Kirkland's City values and strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).
- This proclamation is part of the City Council's adopted 2026 proclamation schedule.

### BACKGROUND:

The origins of Women's History Month date back to 1909 with "National Women's Day," which took place in New York City in late February. In 1911, this important commemoration of women's rights was recognized globally through "International Women's Day," which is celebrated on March 8 around the world. In the same year, Carrie Shumway became the first woman Councilmember in the City of Kirkland and first woman elected to a City Council in the state of Washington. Kirkland's Council elected its first woman Mayor, Doris Cooper, in 1984.

In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to designate the month of March as "Women's History Month." The National Women's History Project is a nonprofit organization founded in 1980 to "promote multicultural women's history awareness." The project's work to facilitate the passage of a congressional resolution to establish the month of March as "Women's History Month" was its first formal act as an organized nonprofit entity.

In March 2020, the United States celebrated 100 years of women's suffrage. In 1883, Washington state became one of the first places in the world where women could vote.

Although the right was eventually overturned, Washington suffragists were undaunted as they continued to strive for the right to vote. Women earned the right to vote in Washington state by way of a permanent amendment to the Washington State Constitution in 1910, a full decade before the rest of the country's women could vote.

Kirkland's own journey with women in leadership began decades ago with resident and notable bellwether Doris Munz Cooper, who was elected to the Kirkland City Council in 1973, elected Kirkland mayor by her male peers in 1984, and served as mayor until 1990.

This trailblazing Kirkland icon was the only woman on the Kirkland City Council for 16 years. In 2012, the City honored her tremendous work to preserve Kirkland's lush shorelines for parklands by renaming Houghton Beach as "Doris Cooper Houghton Beach Park." Former Mayor Cooper set the bar high, but fortunately, service-minded, passionate, and courageous Kirkland women continue to answer the call to serve

Kirkland has a history of a strong line of women in leadership across the organization and has had a woman Mayor for thirteen years. Former Mayor and Councilmember Penny Sweet served on the council since 2010, as Deputy Mayor, Mayor, and Councilmember. Our current Mayor Kelli Curtis, elected by her colleagues to her second term as Mayor in January 2026, and Councilmember Amy Falcone have both served since 2019. Councilmember Shilpa Prem also serves the current Council. The City also has women in significant leadership roles, including Tracey Dunlap, Deputy City Manager; Darcey Eilers, City Attorney; Lynn Zwaagstra, Parks and Community Services Director; Julie Underwood, Public Works Director; Smitha Krishnan, Information Technology Director; and Brooke Bascom, Human Resources Director.

To keep expanding women in leadership roles, this year the City of Kirkland will be hosting its fourth annual Women's Leadership Summit for staff. The Women's Leadership Summit was planned and coordinated by the City's women leadership team, along with other women staff, and was led by Julie Underwood, Public Works Director. She also founded the Northwest Women's Leadership Academy in 2018, a program sponsored by the Washington City/County Management Association, to advance women working in local government into leadership roles.

In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision that established a constitutional right to abortion. The Kirkland City Council adopted resolution R-5550 in July 2022, affirming its support of individuals' right to comprehensive, safe, and accessible reproductive healthcare, including abortion, and its support of marriage equality. The City also expressed its support of amendments to the Washington State and United States Constitutions, including legislation that protects visitors to Washington State seeking abortion healthcare.

During Women's History Month, the City seeks to be inclusive in celebrating transgender women as they are part of the movement towards equality. There are many courageous transgender women who paved the 2SLGBTQIA+ movement. Some of these pioneer transgender women include Sylvia Rivera, Marsh P. Johnson, Miss Major, and many other activists who championed women and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.

By proclaiming the month of March 2026 as Women's History Month in Kirkland, all community members are invited to celebrate and reflect on the countless contributions of women to our region, our nation, and the world.

## DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

This proclamation aligns with Kirkland's City values and strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). Council has adopted legislation supporting these values, including:

- **Resolution R-5240** (2017) declaring Kirkland a safe, inclusive, welcoming community for all people;
- **Resolution R-5434** (2020) expressing commitments to improving the safety and respect of Black people and approving the framework to create a community committed to examining and dismantling interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism in Kirkland;
- **Resolution R-5548** (2022) adopting the City's DEIB 5-Year Roadmap;
- **Resolution R-5686** (2025) declaring Kirkland as a welcoming, inclusive, and safe city for the Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual Plus (2SLGBTQIA+) people and recognizing their human rights and well-being; and
- **Resolution R-5693** (2025) reaffirming the City's commitment to being a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community where all people belong.

## NEXT STEPS:

The person accepting this proclamation will be announced at the Council meeting.

## ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – 2026 Women's History Month Proclamation



# A PROCLAMATION OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND

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## Women's History Month March 2026

**WHEREAS**, Women's History Month is a federally recognized annual observance in the month of March, including March 8 as International Women's Day, to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political sacrifices and achievements of women; and

**WHEREAS**, women have been at the forefront of standing against injustice, including Princess Angeline, the oldest daughter of Chief Seattle, who remained in her home after the Duwamish people were forced off their land; and

**WHEREAS**, the City is inclusive and celebrates transgender and gender expansive people as they are part of the movement and have championed women and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights; and

**WHEREAS**, the City is proud of its long history of influential women within its elected body, beginning in 1911 with the election of Kirkland's and the state's first woman Councilmember, Carrie Shumway, as well as Kirkland's first woman Mayor, Doris Cooper, in 1984; and

**WHEREAS**, the City is a champion for women in leadership, with women holding cornerstone positions within the Kirkland City government, including Mayor Kelli Curtis, Councilmembers Amy Falcone and Shilpa Prem, Deputy City Manager Tracey Dunlap, and five women Directors; and

**WHEREAS**, Julie Underwood, Public Works Director, founded the Northwest Women's Leadership Academy in 2018, and continues to progress women in leadership through the City's Women's Leadership Summit; and

**WHEREAS**, Women's history is global history, and this month brings to light the significant roles women have played in shaping the nation and the world, highlights pioneers who are inspirations to the next generation of women, and fosters environments where women and communities can thrive;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, Mayor Kelli Curtis, on behalf of the Kirkland City Council, proclaims March 2026 as Women's History Month in Kirkland, Washington, and encourages the community to celebrate the historic and current achievements of Kirkland women in arts, culture, science, business, non-profit, religious, and civic institutions in our City.

Signed this 3rd day of March, 2026

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Kelli Curtis, Mayor