



## **2019 Constitution Week Activities Report**

A continued commitment to the spread of democratic knowledge and principles is vital for fostering political and civic engagement on the University of Nebraska at Omaha's campus. Because of this, UNO held a number of on-campus events throughout the week of September 16-20 to celebrate Constitution Week.

Constitution Day, which fell on September 17, 2019, commemorates the 1787 signing of the U.S. Constitution and raises awareness about rights that the document granted to American citizens.



*Event organizer, Dr. Barbara Pickering, outside of "The Fight for the Right to Vote" keynote speaking event featuring Dr. Dianne Bystrom. Photo by Dr. Jeremy Harris Lipschultz.*

Students, faculty, staff, and members of the public were invited to participate in these events such as discussions about topics like voting rights and free speech.

To assist in the planning and execution of future successful Constitution Week events, thorough reporting of all events and activities is necessary. This report contains a summary of these activities, including speakers involved, attendance numbers, and a number of photographs documenting each of the events.

### **Tuesday, September 17, 2019: The Fight for the Right to Vote: It Still Matters**

**11:30 A.M. - 12:45 P.M. | Milo Bail Student Center | Nebraska Room**

In time for the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, UNO's Civic Engagement Coordinator, Dr. Barbara Pickering, introduced the audience to Dr. Dianne Bystrom who kicked off Constitution Day with her keynote presentation "The Fight for the Right to Vote: It still matters." Dr. Dianne Bystrom is director emerita of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University. At Iowa State she taught courses on women and politics, political campaigns, and women and leadership. Dr. Bystrom continues to serve as a speaker and commentator about women's issues, leadership and politics for community groups, professional organizations and the media.

In her presentation, Dr. Bystrom provided a historical context in which to understand voting rights by painting a thorough and inclusive picture of the suffrage efforts and eventual enfranchisement of various groups in U.S. history. Beginning with an overview of the 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments, termed "voting amendments," Dr. Bystrom explained the legal and

cultural limitations that kept people from voting and the efforts to challenge these barriers. After a detailed history addressed key figures and events in anti-slavery, universal suffrage, and women's suffrage movements, the introduction and evolution of the Voting Rights Act during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was discussed. Current voter statistics were also presented, and resources for voter information and registration were provided.

There were fifty-two attendees of the event including students, faculty, staff, and members of the public. Refreshments were provided to attendees, and the presentation was followed by a question and answer session. The event was sponsored by



*Dr. Dianne Bystrom speaks to the audience at Constitution Day presentation. Photo by Jodeane Newcomb Brownlee.*

UNO's Office of Academic Affairs.



*League of Women Voters volunteers prepare to register voters in Milo Bail Student Center. Photo by Larissa Churchill.*

**Tuesday,**  
**September 17,**  
**2019: Voter**  
**Registration**  
**11 A.M. - 1 P.M. |**  
**Multiple locations**

The League of Women Voters (LOWV) hosted two voter registration booths for students, faculty, and staff in the Milo Bail Student Center just outside the Nebraska Room as well as in the hallway just outside of the School of Communication offices. LOWV is a non-partisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and works

to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The event in Milo Bail Student Center registered 6 voters. The event outside of the School of Communication registered 8 voters. A voter registration event held by the student group UNO!Vote also registered 10 voters.

## **Thursday, September 19, 2019: The First Amendment Today Panel**

**2:30 P.M. | CPACS Commons**



*From left: Jody Neathery-Castro, Michael J. O'Hara, Amy Miller, and Michael Holmes pose before participating in the First Amendment Today Panel discussion. Photo by Jeremy Harris Lipschultz.*

Dr. Jeremy Lipschultz, Peter Kiewit Distinguished Professor within the College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media, hosted a panel on the First Amendment featuring himself and several guests including Michael Holmes, Amy Miller, Jody Neathery-Castro, and Michael J. O'Hara. The panel addressed a range of issues dealing with the First Amendment including limitations to free speech and increasing threats to freedom of the press. The panelists discussed the First Amendment from political, legal, media, and cultural standpoints providing a nuanced and thorough view of contemporary issues surrounding free speech.

Following the panel discussion and a brief question and answer session, the #UNO1ForAll Social Media Influence competition was announced. The contest gave all currently enrolled UNO students the chance to participate in a competition on Instagram and Twitter to promote the First Amendment. The UNO Social Media Lab received funding for the contest from the Middle Tennessee State University Free Speech Center at 1ForAll. A total of 8 students signed up for the contest at the panel event.

There were forty-six attendees of the First Amendment panel and contest launch including students, faculty and staff. Refreshments were provided for attendees, and audience members had a chance to speak individually with panelists following the event.