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Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas Celebrates Suffrage Painting and Post-Flood Return to State Street Office

Montpelier, VT – Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas was joined by dozens of guests Wednesday evening to celebrate the arrival of *The Light of Truth Upon Them*, a painting that commemorates voting and the centennial of the 19th Amendment, which will be temporarily exhibited in the Secretary's State Street office for the next few months. The gathering was also a chance for the Secretary to celebrate the return to her office at 128 State Street, which was closed due to the flood in early July.

"We are honored to be hosting *The Light of Truth Upon Them* and it was amazing to have so many folks come by to celebrate with us," said Copeland Hanzas. "It's also so special to be able to gather again with people in our office here in downtown Montpelier."

[*The Light of Truth Upon Them*](#) is an oil painting by artist [Cynthia Cagle](#) and was commissioned by the [Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance \(VSCA\)](#) to celebrate the 2020 centennial of the 19th Amendment. The [League of Women Voters of Vermont](#) led the Alliance and Sue Racanelli, President of the League, joined the Secretary in celebrating the artwork and the artist at the event.

"The Alliance decided to commission a painting that would create a permanent legacy to recognize this historic centennial. In Cynthia Cagle, we found an artist who would include a passionate depiction of the fuller history of women's suffrage, not only in Vermont, but in the U.S.," said Racanelli. "The painting tells the story of women's crusade – Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latina, and White – to have an equal voice in American democracy. Cynthia carried out amazing and thorough research in selecting her subjects and themes and her painting is a reminder that the story of the fight for the vote is both our legacy and our future."

Cynthia Cagle was also on hand and spoke about the women depicted in the piece and what they meant to her and the suffrage movement.

"These women were more than just activists; they were rebels, agitators, and warriors," said Cagle. "They were and are members of the BIPOC community for whom access to vote was barred in multiple ways, and they fought not just for women's right to vote, but the right to vote *for all*. Having the opportunity to paint these incredible women and help tell the story of voting rights through their portraits, has been a tremendous gift."

Secretary Copeland Hanzas is Vermont's third female Secretary of State and for the first time in the state's history, both the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of State are women.

"As the Chief Elections Officer for our Brave Little State, and as a woman here in 2023 who understands all too well what inequality, loss of autonomy, and sexism looks like, I can think of no better honor for this office than to be able to host this monumental work depicting some of the great suffrage leaders who have come before," said Secretary Copeland Hanzas.

The Secretary and others made a special point of highlighting the contributions of Louvenia Bright, one of the six women depicted in the painting and the first woman of color to serve in the Vermont House of Representatives.

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