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ALBUQUERQUE— New Mexico Voices for Children cheered President Obama's designation of the Sewall-Belmont House in Washington, D.C., as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument April 12.

The historic residence was the epicenter of the Suffragist Movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The house, not far from the U.S. Capitol, was home to Suffragist leader Alice Paul and was where the U.S. movement for women's suffrage gained a foothold in the nation's capital. For years it served as headquarters for the National Woman's Party.

"Increased civic participation and equality across race and gender are a necessity as we seek to end poverty and provide better lives for our children," said New Mexico Voices for Children Executive Director Veronica García, Ed.D. "This monument is a statement that our country values inclusion and celebrates the story of women's struggle for recognition."

Using his authority under the Antiquities Act, President Obama made the designation on April 11. The Suffragist movement nurtured at Belmont-Paul House would serve as a blueprint for the broader civil rights movement that would flourish throughout the mid-20th century.

"This monument is also a demonstration that the fight for equality is ongoing. After gaining the right to vote, women still have to fight for true equality nearly 100 years later. And that's where this becomes an economic issue meaningful to families across our state," García said. "With more and more mothers working outside the home, issues like the pay gap and lack of maternity leave have become even more important to the well-being of children. Honoring the suffragettes and freedom fighters who came before us strengthens us as we take on these modern-day battles."

New Mexico Voices for Children, which advocates for policies that seek to alleviate poverty and improve public education and health care, is committed to dismantling the racial and gender inequalities that underlie institutional poverty.

"This monument, though nearly 2,000 miles away from us here in New Mexico, is nonetheless an important symbol," García said. "Knowing that our country now honors the struggles of all Americans – from the recent Cesar Chavez National Monument in California to the Harriet Tubman National Monument in Maryland to Belmont-Paul – is an incredibly empowering message to pass on to our children. It tells them their experience in America matters and is to be celebrated. Thanks to President Obama for this important designation."

In addition, García also joined other New Mexico women of influence in a joint letter to the president (http://prbnewmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Belmont-Paul-Women%E2%80%99s-Equality-National-Monument.pdf), thanking him for establishing the monument.

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