



REMARKS

BY

**SEN. THE HON. ALLYSON MAYNARD GIBSON
ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

ON THE

**RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, MARKING THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT**

MONDAY 26TH NOVEMBER, 2012

Madam President and Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

It is no coincidence that we mark the 50th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage during the 40th Anniversary of the Independence (or the Sovereignty) of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas. We acknowledge the advancement of Bahamians over the past 40 years. I suggest that today we must refocus on the words in our Constitution which state the imperative of The Bahamas' light shining out to the world as a "Free and Democratic Sovereign Nation founded on Spiritual Values and in which no Man, Woman or Child shall ever be Slave or Bondsman to anyone or their Labour exploited or their Lives frustrated by deprivation". Mrs. Mary Ingraham, Mrs. Eugenia Lockhart, Miss Georgiana K. Symonette, Mrs. Mabel Walker, Dame Albertha Isaacs, Dame Doris Johnson and the thousands of men and women who supported them stood for these principles.

These women united to promote a common cause and laid the cornerstone for the modern Bahamas. They answered God's call in their time. What is God calling us to do in our time?

As stated by the Prophet Micah, God's call is for us "to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God". In my view God's call is unchangeable and immutable.

The quest of these humble God called women: justice and mercy (or kindness) – is as important today as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow.

We, standing on their shoulders, must emulate them as "doers of the word".

We must act with alacrity to remove all forms of discrimination against women from our Constitution. We must release the shackles of second class citizenship from Bahamian women.

Stable, meaningful and fruitful national development mandate that the spouse of a Bahamian **woman** has the

same right to citizenship as the spouse of a Bahamian **man** **and** that the children of **all** Bahamian **women** have the same right to Bahamian citizenship as the children of all Bahamian men. We undermine marriage (the foundation of a strong society) when we discriminate against married Bahamian women.

Our Constitution states that we advance a “national commitment to Self-discipline, Industry, Loyalty, Unity and an abiding respect for Christian values and the Rule of Law”. As we increase our quest for excellence in national and international development, **now** is the time to measure all of our efforts by this yardstick. This is a unique and complex formula. It is a formula that promotes:

- equal pay for equal work;
- elimination of poverty;
- equity in access to health care;
- excellence in our education system;

- elimination of domestic violence;
- a safety net for our children and disadvantaged citizens;
- responsibility in reproductive choices;
- an awareness that we are citizens of the world;
- more women representatives in Parliament;
- and so much more.

Our country, The Bahamas, is calling upon each of us gathered here today to do our part.

Any vestige of discrimination against women is destructive and profoundly affects men and the entire Bahamian society. **Now** is the time for Bahamian men (as they did during the Suffragette Movement) to join their mothers, wives and daughters in the fight to eradicate discrimination from our Constitution “so as to fully and irrevocably engage and utilize the indomitable spirit of Bahamian womanhood in nation building”.

Thank you Madam President and Mr. Speaker for the opportunity to second the Motion to pass this historic Resolution.