Discussion Guide

Directions: Discuss the following questions with your partner(s).

1. For what cause was Alice Paul working?

2. What can you infer about Paul's experience with nasogastric feeding in England?

3. Paul returned to the U.S. in 1910 after her stay in England. As a member of the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NWSA), she scheduled a parade to coincide with President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. The parade was not without its challenges. Paul recalled years later: “We did hear a lot of shouted insults … the usual things about why aren't you home in the kitchen where you belong.” Other men shoved and tripped the marchers, while police did little to assist. One hundred marchers were taken to the hospital. How do these events reveal Paul's determination and perseverance?

4. The parade got the president's attention. Paul went to the White House two weeks later, and the president promised to give the idea of voting rights for women his “most careful consideration,” but this promise did little to satisfy Paul. Should she have let that conversation be the end of it?

5. Paul founded a new organization, the National Woman's Party, in 1913. This group engaged in activities many at the time considered extreme. She organized demonstrations, wrote and distributed leaflets, and organized daily pickets in front of the White House. The picket signs addressed Wilson directly and used his own words to make their case: “Mr. President, you say liberty is the fundamental demand of the human spirit,” and “Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?” Demonstrators burned copies of Wilson's speeches. They even burned an effigy of Wilson at the White House gates. Applying what you know about the First amendment, did any these actions warrant arrest?

6. Paul and the 500 others who were arrested for speaking, publishing, peaceably assembling, and petitioning became known as political prisoners. Why might Wilson have ordered the suffragists to be released from prison?

7. Paul's efforts, coupled with NAWSA's newly focused and effective strategy led the suffragists to victory. Wilson lent his support to the Women's Suffrage Amendment in January of 1918. Congress approved it within a year, and it was ratified by the states in 1920. How do these events illustrate the value and importance of perseverance?

8. If you were writing a eulogy for Alice Paul, what would you say, and why? How should Paul's efforts on behalf of women's suffrage be remembered?

9. Identify two other examples of perseverance in United States history. How has perseverance on the part of individuals helped the United States to be the kind of nation its founders envisioned? How can perseverance play a part in maintaining our republic?