

• Wisconsin Women Firsts •

1919



Wisconsin becomes the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment giving women the vote. The Wisconsin Women's Suffrage Association was formed 50 years earlier, in 1869—the year the Wisconsin legislature passed a law allowing women to run for school boards and other elective school offices, though they still could not vote in school board elections until 1884!



1957

Dena Smith becomes Wisconsin's first female State Treasurer. Initially appointed to fill a vacancy caused by her husband's death, she was subsequently elected to the office.

1973



Virginia Hart becomes the first woman appointed to a Governor's Cabinet post in Wisconsin as Secretary of the Department of Regulations and Licensing.

Governor's Commission on the Status of Women was voted its first budget by the Legislature: \$20,000 per year.

Barbara Thompson becomes the first woman elected as Wisconsin's State Superintendent of Education.

1979

Governor Dreyfus vows to "croak" the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women and closes down the Commission.

Vel Phillips, elected Wisconsin's Secretary of State, becomes the first African American woman in the nation elected to a statewide office.



1996

Shirley Abrahamson becomes Wisconsin's first female Supreme Court Chief Justice and continues to serve in that capacity.

2002



Barbara Lawton becomes the first woman elected as Wisconsin's Lieutenant Governor.

Peg Laughtenschlager becomes the first woman elected as Wisconsin's Attorney General.

Governor Jim Doyle's Cabinet recognized as the most diverse in Wisconsin history and among the most diverse in the Nation.

2004

Gwen Moore becomes Wisconsin's first African American Congresswoman, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.



1948

Ruth Bachhuber Doyle becomes the 4th generation of her family to serve in the State Assembly— following her father, grandfather and great-grandfather.



1925

Mildred Barber, Hellen Brooks, and Helen Thompson become the first three women elected "assemblymen." Since 1925, 95 women have served in the Wisconsin State Assembly.

1976

Shirley Abrahamson becomes Wisconsin's first female Supreme Court Justice. Since that time, six women have served on the state Supreme Court.



1993

Wisconsin Glass Ceiling Commission created to recommend measures to ensure that the state's economy takes full advantage of the talents of Wisconsin women and minorities.



1998

Tammy Baldwin becomes Wisconsin's first Congresswoman, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. No woman has yet to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

2003

Senator Mary Panzer becomes the state Senate's first female Majority Leader.



2001

State Senator Margaret Farrow is appointed to the Office of Lieutenant Governor becoming the first woman to serve in that Office in Wisconsin.

2005

Judge Kitty Brennan becomes the first female Chief Judge of Wisconsin's First Judicial District (Milwaukee County).



1975

Kathryn Morrison becomes the first woman elected to the State Senate. Since 1975, 21 women have served in the Wisconsin State Senate (most of whom also served in the State Assembly).



The Governor's Commission on the Status of Women is established, with Kay Clarenbach as Chairman, following the Wisconsin Conference on the Changing Status of Women.



1983

Wisconsin Women's Council formed as a permanent state agency governed by a bi-partisan Board appointed by the Governor and Legislative Leaders.