

Wisconsin Women's Political Firsts

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Wisconsin
first State to ratify
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!

Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-7679
 Political Equality League, Milwaukee used with permission



1919



Dena Smith
first woman to serve as
WI State Treasurer

Initially appointed to the vacancy caused by her husband's death, she was elected to the office in 1960 becoming the first woman elected to a statewide constitutional office in Wisconsin.

1957

Virginia Hart
first woman appointed to a
Governor's Cabinet Post

Appointed as Secretary of the Department of Regulations and Licensing.

Photo: WI Office of State Employment Relations Web Site

Barbara Thompson
first woman elected as
State Superintendent of Education



Shirley Abrahamson
first woman to serve as
WI Supreme Court Justice



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Photo used with permission

1973

1976

1979

Vel Phillips
first woman elected as
WI Secretary of State

And, the first African-American woman in the *nation* elected to a statewide office.

Earlier in her career, she was the first woman and first African-American elected to the Milwaukee City Council (1956), and the first black woman to serve as a judge in WI (1971).

1985

Senator Susan Engeleiter
first woman to serve as
Senate Minority Leader



Justice Shirley Abrahamson
 After two decades on the Court, becomes the first woman to serve as Chief Justice of the WI Supreme Court

1996

Senator Margaret Farrow
first woman to serve as
Lieutenant Governor



2001

Senator Mary Panzer
first woman to serve as
Senate Majority Leader



JoCasta Zamarripa
first Latina elected to
WI State Legislature,
 elected to the State Assembly

2011

Representative Pat Strachota
first woman to serve as
Assembly Majority Leader



2014



Carolyn Stanford Taylor
first African American woman to serve as
WI State Superintendent of Public Instruction

2019

1925



Mildred Barber
Helen Brooks
Helen Thompson
first women elected to the
WI State Legislature
 Originally called "Assemblymen" like their male colleagues, the official title for all members was changed to "Representative to the Assembly" in 1969.

1964

Governor's Commission on the Status of Women established
 Kay Clarenbach, Chair

The Commission followed the WI Conference on the Changing Status of Women and remained in existence from 1964 to 1989.

Nationally, Kay Clarenbach was instrumental in the creation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women's Political Caucus.

1975

Kathryn Morrison
first woman elected to
WI State Senate



Wisconsin State Journal Photo used with permission

1977

Marcia Coggs
first African-American woman elected to
WI State Legislature,
 elected to the State Assembly

Pictured 4th from the right below.



Wisconsin Women's Council
formed as a state agency

The Council has a 15-member board appointed by the Governor and Legislative Leadership.



Women's Council Archives

1987

Representative Betty Jo Nelsen
first woman to serve as
Assembly Minority Leader



Tammy Baldwin
first woman elected to
U.S. Congress from WI, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives

Previously, served in WI State Assembly (1992-1998)

Representative Shirley Krug
first woman to serve as
Democratic Assembly Minority Leader

2002

Barbara Lawton
first woman elected as
Lieutenant Governor

Peg Lautenschlager
first woman elected as
WI Attorney General



2004



Gwen Moore
first African-American woman elected to
U.S. Congress from WI, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives

Previously, served in WI State Assembly and State Senate (1989 to 2004)

Senator Judy Robson
first woman to serve as
Democratic Senate Minority Leader (2004)
 and **Majority Leader (2007)**.

2012

Senator Mary Lazich
first woman to serve as
Senate President



Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
 After seven terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, is the first woman elected to U.S. Senate from WI

2015



TIMELINE OF WISCONSIN WOMEN'S POLITICAL FIRSTS (2015)

Source Materials

Legislative Reference Bureau, "Wisconsin Legislators—A Historical List," Wisconsin Briefs, 15-3, January 2015, legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb.

Legislative Reference Bureau, Wisconsin Blue Book, 2013-2014, legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb.

"The Women's Suffrage Movement," Wisconsin Historical Society, www.wisconsinhistory.org.

"Assembly Women of Distinction," Office of the Assembly Chief Clerk, www.wisconsin.gov; State of Wisconsin, Elected Officials, www.wisconsin.gov.

Photographs

"*Car Full of Suffragists*" Members of the Political Equality League, Milwaukee, WHS-7679, Wisconsin Historical Society, Photo Archives, www.wisconsinhistory.org

Kathryn Morrison, Wisconsin State Journal, www.madison.com

Vel Phillips, Wisconsin Journal Sentinel, www.wsjonline.com

Wisconsin Legislators, Current and Past Official Photos, www.wisconsin.gov

Senator Tammy Baldwin, Office of Senator Tammy Baldwin web site, www.baldwin.senate.gov (past official photo)

Congresswoman Gwen Moore, Office of Congresswoman Gwen Moore website, www.gwenmoore.house.gov (official photo)

Governor Tony Earl signing the executive order creating the Wisconsin Women's Council, with women leaders in the State Legislature and Administration. Pictured (left to right) Sen. Susan Engeleiter 2. (not identified) 3. Eileen Mershart (Deputy Secretary DOR) 4. Doris Hanson (DOA Secretary) 5. Rep. Barb Gronemus 6. Rep. Mary Lou Munts 7. Rep. Sharon Metz 8. Rep. Barb Ulichny 9. Rep. Marsha Coggs 10. Linda Reivitz (DHSS Secretary) 11. Rep. Lolita Schneiders 12. Roberta Gassman (Policy Advisor Governor's Office), Women's Council archives

Did we miss someone? Please contact the Women's Council at womenscouncil@wi.gov with suggested corrections or updates.

Disclaimer. The information and sequence of events on the *Timeline of Wisconsin Women's Political Firsts* is indicative only and not exhaustive. The information has been gathered from a variety of sources. Neither the Wisconsin Women's Council, its members and staff, nor any other party involved in providing this study warrant that the information contained in the here is in every respect accurate or complete.