



Women's Council
· Wisconsin ·

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Remarks at Signing of Executive Order 5 establishing the Wisconsin Women's Council
Governor Anthony Earl - Wisconsin State Capitol
February 1, 1983

I am happy to be here and I am most appreciative. I am appreciative of the efforts that all of you have made as individuals or as members of groups to support the causes that I am trying with you to advance today – Business and Professional Women, League of Women Voters, Wisconsin Women's Network – so many of you have helped out.

Thinking about what motivates this kind of thing, I couldn't help but reflect on Eleanor Roosevelt, who like Franklin Roosevelt, was a particular hero of mine. Eleanor Roosevelt said, shortly before her death several years ago, "I feel confident that in years ahead many of the outmoded barriers to women's aspirations will disappear." Well some have. And I think it is fair and accurate to say that in this state, for the last 20 years or so, that politicians of every stripe – Democrats and Republicans – have worked to remove some of those barriers and there has been some positive progress. But Eleanor Roosevelt's wish has certainly not as yet been fulfilled. Many, many of the outmoded barriers remain and any fair and objective person recognizes that.

Unfortunately, even though much progress has been made, all of us recognize that today more women live in poverty than lived in poverty during the time of Eleanor Roosevelt. And that the feminization of poverty is not just an abstraction of the sociologists but is a fact that we see occurring around us all the time. It seems to me that there has to be more done to emphasize the fact that more women are in the workplace working for pay out of necessity. That a large number of our families are now headed by women who have to support themselves and their families – much larger number than ever was the case before. And that for the bulk of those women in the workplace, they are earning far less than their male counterparts. The 57 cents on

the dollar, regrettably, is all too accurate. They are in undervalued jobs, they are in jobs that are generally not considered very attractive, they are in jobs where promotion is slow, and these problems are particularly acute for older women and for minority women. It does us no good to simply reflect on the progress we've made if we ignore the problems that remain ahead of us. For all of our state's residents, not just women, for all of our state's residents, we've got to redress this difficult problem.

It is because of that that I have chosen today to sign an Executive Order creating a Wisconsin Women's Council. I hope that we can use this Council to build on the best of institutions which have preceded it. I think that we can do that. I want the Council – and I want to make this clear – I want the Council to be independent of the Governor's Office but have access to it. I want it to be broadly bi-partisan. This is not an exclusive club for people from the west side of Madison. [audience laughter] Although participation is vital! [more laughter] I want it to be forward looking. I want it to work with my office. I want it to work with the legislature, with all agencies of state government, including the university system and the vocational system, and equally importantly, with the private sector. I want the Council's scope to be broad and I want it to be very, very ambitious.

I am confident that if this Executive Order works as well as I believe it can, we will see some progress on those problems that I referred to in my earlier remarks. The Executive Order, however, just gets it started now. I will include in my budget provisions for statutorily establishing the Council and for financial support to keep it going. How well it succeeds doesn't depend upon the grand language that is in the Proclamation – though I think it is nice language. But rather on the participation and support it gets from people like you and I hope you will give it all the support you can. That will be necessary at the outset when you suggest to me the names of persons that should be appointed. It will be important when the legislature is asked to consider making the Council statutory rather than simply having it sustained by Executive Order. So, there are a couple things that can be done right away, and I commend your efforts to those ends.

I am going to sign the Executive Order now and I would be flattered if women who serve in the Legislature and the women who have done me the honor of agreeing to serve in this Administration would come up here with me while I sign this Executive Order.

Joining the Governor (see photo, Wisconsin Historical Society, Image 105289), from left to right: 1. Wisconsin State Senator Susan Engeleiter; 2. [not identified]; 3. Deputy Secretary Eileen Mershart (Department of Revenue); 4. Secretary Doris Hanson (Department of Administration); 5. Wisconsin State Representative Barb Gronemus; 6. Wisconsin State Representative Mary Lou Munts; 7. Wisconsin State Representative Sharon Metz; 8. Representative Barb Ulichny; 9. Wisconsin State Representative Marcia P. Coggs; 10. Secretary Linda Reivitz (Department of Health and Social Services); 11. Wisconsin State Representative Lolita Schneiders; 12. Roberta Gassman (Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor).

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With thanks to the Wisconsin Historical Society, State Archives, reference librarians for finding these remarks, which exists in the archives as a recording, and providing a transcript for the Council's 30th Anniversary.