

# WOMEN IN CONGRESS



## *An Introduction*

Like all history, the story of women in Congress is defined by change over time: From a complete lack of representation in Congress before 1917, women have advanced to party leadership at the start of the 21st century. At times during the roughly 90 years women have served in Congress, change has been almost imperceptible, as exemplified by the subtle shift in women's committee assignments after World War II. At other times, change has been bold and dramatic, as evidenced by the 1992 "Year of the Woman" elections. Several questions, important not only to women's history in Congress but also to the development of Congress itself, have recurred throughout the process of researching and writing this book. How have women Members of Congress reacted to the political culture and traditions of Capitol Hill? Have women changed the way Congress conducts its business, or have they modified their behavior to conform with the institution? Have the experiences of the women Senators differed from those of women Representatives and, if so, what might account for these differences? What kinds of experiences do Congresswomen have in common, despite the differences in their legislative styles and political ideologies?

### LEGISLATIVE STYLES

For decades, observers of Congress have studied the influence of the "insider" and "outsider" legislative roles.<sup>1</sup> The insider influences colleagues by earning their trust and respect through one-on-one contact and personal persuasion by being accessible, performing favors, and ceaselessly networking. The outsider route accrues power by appealing to external sources like the media and public opinion and most often favors "a more ideological, issue-

oriented" approach than that of the insider.<sup>2</sup> Many women Members have followed one of two approaches: 1) assimilating into the institution and minimizing gender differences by de-emphasizing "women's issues" or 2) stressing their role as partisan spokespersons or advocates for feminism and "women's issues." The latter style often involved "surrogate" representation, meaning a Congresswoman spoke for a cross section of American women beyond the borders of her district or state.<sup>3</sup> These contrasting legislative styles have contributed to a constant tension among women Members about the best way to promote women's political participation.

This book portrays four successive generations of Congresswomen whose legislative role evolved over time, because of changed perceptions about gender roles and because of the new opportunities that resulted. The first two generations of women in Congress (1917–1934 and 1935–1954) tried to integrate themselves as knowledgeable, "professional" insiders.<sup>4</sup> Chiefly, they aimed to fit as seamlessly as possible into the institution. Mary T. Norton of New Jersey, Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts, and Frances Bolton of Ohio practiced this approach, achieving considerable success as respected and, at times, influential insiders. Even during these first generations, however, there were exceptions to the rule, particularly in the careers of Clare Boothe Luce of Connecticut and Helen Gahagan Douglas of California. Both Luce and Douglas used the celebrity they had achieved before they came to Congress to act as national spokeswomen for their respective parties and legislative interests: Luce was a critic of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration's policies during wartime, and Douglas was an advocate for postwar liberal causes like civil rights.

By the third generation of women in Congress

---

*Jeannette Rankin of Montana, a suffragist and peace activist, and the first woman to serve in Congress, delivers her first full speech on the House Floor on August 7, 1917. Rankin addressed the need for federal intervention in copper mining during a period of unrest between labor unions and mining companies.*



(1955–1976), the trend for Congresswomen to work inside the institution was still prevalent. Among the more successful Congresswomen in this regard were Julia Hansen of Washington, who became the first woman to chair an Appropriations subcommittee and headed an influential internal reforms committee in the 1970s, and Leonor Sullivan of Missouri, a widow who succeeded her late husband, became the dean of House women, a committee chair, and a leading opponent of efforts to create a Congresswomen’s caucus.

Yet, changes were afoot because of an influx of Congresswomen who pushed an increasingly feminist agenda. Martha Griffiths of Michigan, first elected in 1954, was a transitional figure.

Griffiths was one of the first truly career-oriented Congresswomen, having been a state legislator and judge in Michigan before she was elected to the House. A forceful advocate for the causes she championed, particularly the sexual discrimination clause in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972, Griffiths attracted media publicity for these issues. Griffiths was also the first woman to secure a seat on the influential Ways and Means Committee.

Later Congresswomen in the third generation and fourth generation (1977–2006) for example, Bella Abzug of New York, Shirley Chisholm of New York, and Patricia Schroeder of Colorado, firmly embraced a style of advocacy that tended more toward the outsider approach. Serving as partisan advocates for women and for special causes like reproductive rights, antiwar and arms reduction agendas, and government transparency, these Members often took their cases to the court of public opinion rather than working to shape legislation behind the scenes. Though successful at publicizing key issues, the outsider approach had its drawbacks. For many women Members, it complicated the process of crafting legislation and moving it through to completion by undermining their ability to rally colleagues to their cause through more subtle tactics. An illustrative example (again, one of the earliest) is that of Helen Douglas, who had little patience for adapting to the institutional traditions on Capitol Hill and even less of an inclination to master legislative processes. “Helen could not have gotten a bill passed making

December 25th a holiday,” recalled Ed Lybeck, her campaign manager. But, Lybeck noted, because Congresswoman Douglas used her celebrity to bring public attention to key liberal issues, “she was a light in the window for liberals at a time when things were very dark.”<sup>5</sup>

Time will tell how women in the fourth generation and subsequent generations respond to these legislative roles, but their increasing numbers, their ability to drive a legislative agenda via their successful caucus, and their increased power on committees and in leadership positions suggest that women Members are in a better position than ever to navigate an “insider” route to influence.

Their choice to pursue an insider or outsider strategy, however, will be affected by their legislative agendas as much as by their personal styles. An insider strategy, for example, is often the most effective for routine legislative issues, such as modifying the tax code or securing appropriations for a district project, whereas an outsider strategy that mobilizes the media, interest groups, and public opinion

is often preferable when a Member seeks to introduce a new idea or an issue that is strongly resisted in Congress.

What the insider–outsider divide also suggests, if tangentially, is that for most of the history of women in Congress, women Members have not had a single-track legislative agenda. In fact, for most of the time they have been in Congress, women have purposefully eschewed (or been unable to sustain) a narrow focus on women’s issues. The ability to publicize and legislate on women’s issues was a relatively late (third generation) development—signaled by the creation of the Women’s Caucus in 1977—and it met with considerable resistance even among women Members. The success of the Women’s Caucus as a bipartisan mechanism for pushing health, education, and economic legislation important to women occurred at a time when women Members had attained committee assignments across a spectrum of jurisdictions and legislative interests. Thus, along with their new ability to promote legislation important to American women, female Members of Congress also had unprecedented ability to legislate on virtually every facet of American life, including international relations, military affairs, commerce and industry, technology, and education.

*Women Members of the 1920s were a curiosity both for their male colleagues and the national press, which devoted considerable attention to their arrival.*

Political scientists have often sought to determine the effects on Congress of legislative norms, the unwritten but widely accepted rules according to which Members conduct business. Which informal “folkways,” such as apprenticeship and issue specialization, existed? How did Members who resisted these traditions fare in relation to those who accepted them? Did these norms change over time, especially during the influx of new membership, as with the “Watergate Babies” in 1975 or the “Republican Revolutionaries” in 1995? And, more generally, has the institution of Congress been changed by individuals, or has individuals’ integration into the institution changed them?<sup>6</sup> These questions are open to considerable debate.

Most early women in Congress clearly and purposefully adapted to the institution. Many latter women Members chose instead to challenge institutional norms or to embrace their role as surrogate advocates for all women. Between Jeannette Rankin’s election in 1916 and the “Year of the Woman” in 1992, a revolution occurred in terms of Congresswomen’s collective work, educational experience, political status, economic clout, and independence from traditional familial roles. Experience engendered confidence. Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey described her initial foray into politics as following “the typical female pattern. I always wanted things in the most foolish, over-modest, hesitant way.” Her work as a state legislator and official changed her approach. “I finally learned that when a man wants more he says, ‘Listen, George, I want a bit of

the action,’” Fenwick observed. “Well, [women have] been taught: ‘You have to wait to be invited to dance.’”<sup>7</sup> Women’s attainment of rough equality with male colleagues in these areas enabled them to adapt to and navigate the institution of Congress. In this sense, it is impossible to separate the history of women in Congress from larger social and historical movements that shaped the course of U.S. history.

Irwin Gertzog has noted the development of three distinct legislative roles of women in Congress. Gertzog characterizes the “gentlewoman amateur” in the period roughly between 1917 and World War II as a woman whose route to political office depended more on her matrimonial connections than on her political savvy or qualifications. Early southern widows best exemplified this role. The “neutral professional” in the 1940s and 1950s had some pre-congressional political experience and a measure of legislative success but purposefully avoided women’s issues. This legislative role was exemplified by Representatives Norton, Chase Woodhouse of Connecticut, Cecil Harden of Indiana, and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, who later became a Senator. The modern “feminist colleague,” from the 1960s onward, insisted on equality with male colleagues, gained important committee assignments and leadership roles, and developed an agenda on women’s issues. Women like Representatives Griffiths and Patsy Mink of Hawaii, and other House Members who eventually moved on to the Senate, such as Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and Barbara Boxer of California, possessed these traits.<sup>8</sup>

These patterns are readily apparent among the generations of women Members featured in this book. For the pioneer generation of Congresswomen, who came into office between 1917 and 1934, a marital or other familial connection was the most common route to political office. A large percentage of them were widows who succeeded their late husbands, and most lacked experience in elective office. Only one, Kathryn O’Loughlin McCarthy of Kansas, had experience as a state legislator. McCarthy was also the only first-generation woman in Congress who was trained as a lawyer. Women Members of the 1920s were viewed as a curiosity by their male colleagues and the national press, which devoted considerable attention to their arrival in Washington. Most Congresswomen, however, were never really given the chance to integrate into the institution. Unable to serve on



Above: *Jeannette Rankin (right) on April 2, 1917, with Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, at the group’s headquarters in Washington, D.C. Later that historic day, Rankin was officially sworn into the 65th Congress.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

Above right: *A Jeannette Rankin campaign button.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE COLLECTION OF JOSEPH SHOEMAKER

powerful committees, they were relegated to panels tending to the routine upkeep of federal agencies or of Congress itself. Most women served on committees with oversight of issues considered as belonging to the women's sphere, such as education, nursing, and veterans' affairs. However, there were notable exceptions, such as Florence Kahn of California, who served on the Appropriations Committee; Mary Norton, who served on the Labor Committee; and Ruth Hanna McCormick, who served on the Naval Affairs Committee.

The second generation of women in Congress—elected from 1935 through 1954—served a long institutional apprenticeship. Once the initial interest in their participation in Congress subsided, women Members slowly made inroads. More of them had precongressional careers and experience in elective office, qualifying them for better committee assignments and more areas of legislative expertise. Powerful male colleagues offered a measure of support, particularly Speakers Sam Rayburn of Texas and Joe Martin of Massachusetts, who promoted women to key committee assignments. For the first time, women were assigned to prominent committees, such as Agriculture, Judiciary, and Armed Services in the House. In the Senate, Margaret Chase Smith won a position on the influential Armed Services Committee. Under the tutelage of senior Congresswomen, the second generation preferred to integrate into the institution and work its way up through the ranks by gaining seniority. Some were selected to leadership positions in the official organizations of Democrats and Republicans in both chambers; Representative Leonor Sullivan served as Secretary of the House Democratic Caucus in the 1950s and 1960s, and Margaret Chase Smith chaired the Senate Republican Conference from 1967 to 1973.

The third generation in Congress, first elected between 1955 and 1976, proved to be an important transition. Although the number of women in Congress had not significantly increased, women had achieved a modest share of influence both in terms of appointments to powerful committees, such as Ways and Means and Appropriations in the House, and in terms of initial strides toward breaking into leadership. More important, the years from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s marked a major sexual revolution in American society, as women demanded economic, political, and social equality with men. A new wave of feminists in Congress sought economic and constitutional equality through such legislative undertakings as the sex clause in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the



*Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia (seated) is greeted by prominent political women in Washington, D.C. Felton, the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, was appointed for a day in November 1922.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Equal Rights Amendment. These efforts were supported by women in Congress with near unanimity. For the first time in half a century, the number of women Members who came to Congress with experience in elective office exceeded the number who came to Congress by way of a marital or familial connection.

The fourth generation of women in Congress—those elected after 1977—enjoyed unprecedented growth and influence. More than half the women who have served in Congress were elected during this period. Women Members organized a special caucus solely devoted to developing legislation on women's issues and to educating the public and Congress about them. The numbers of women in Congress soared, essentially doubling in the 1992 elections, and continued to climb steadily into the early 21st century. In January 1977, 18 women served in the House; none served in the Senate. Early in the 109th Congress in 2005, there were 70 women serving in the House and 14 serving in the Senate. As the numbers of women Members increased, they became able to attain assignments on more-influential committees. Especially in the House, where incumbents have a long-standing advantage in re-election campaigns, women Members who were elected and decided to stay were better able to acquire more seniority and to chair or become Ranking Members on more committees and, particularly, subcommittees. They also began a rapid ascent into the ranks of congressional leadership in both parties and in both chambers.

Congresswomen's experiences have varied, depending on the peculiarities of the chamber in which they served.<sup>9</sup>



In addition to differences in membership and parliamentary procedure, opportunities to serve on committees, election requirements, and the availability of mentors and leadership patrons have affected women's congressional careers. The size of the House (435 Members) meant there were more (and larger) committees women could choose from to develop legislative expertise. In the Senate, the 100 Members had more committee assignments than their House counterparts, so women were more likely to receive at least one prominent assignment. This was true of the four women between 1930 and 1980 who served more than an abbreviated term (Hattie Caraway of Arkansas, on Commerce; Margaret Chase Smith, on Armed Services and Appropriations; Maurine Neuberger of Oregon, on Agriculture; and Nancy L. Kassebaum of Kansas, on Foreign Relations). Compared with their House colleagues, however, Senators tend to be generalists, rather than specialists.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the constitutional requirement that House Members be elected has benefited women by providing more opportunities. Particularly in the case of sudden deaths of sitting Representatives, special elections have proven disruptive because (depending on state law) they must occur on relatively short notice. Local party leaders have sometimes chosen widows because of their experience as political advisers to or surrogates for their husbands. Just as often, party leaders have nominated widows because their names made them electable and because their choice forestalled or prevented intraparty skirmishes. Conversely, interim Senators may be appointed by state governors, offering in many cases an opportunity for party continuity and a longer window before the election of a successor to a full, six-year term. Thus, in the Senate, choosing a widow was less desirable, except as a means of postponing a choice between competing factions (as with Dixie Bibb Graves of Alabama) or of boosting a governor's political fortunes with a bloc of voters (as with Rebecca Felton of Georgia). A number of early women Senators were appointees, but women in the House, including many who served long terms, clearly benefited more from special elections.

Finally, women in the House had more female predecessors and colleagues and, consequently, more mentors. Before 1992, 116 women had served in House history and only 18 had served in Senate history (11 of the latter served just long enough to finish the remainder of their predecessors' term). As recently as the first session of the 95th Congress (1977), there were no women serving in

the Senate; women in the Senate were a novelty until the 1990s. For much of the 20th century, only one or two women served simultaneously in the upper chamber— islands in a sea of male colleagues. There was virtually no female support. By contrast, from 1951 on, a minimum of 10 women served in the House—enough to provide, if not an issues caucus, then at least a network for advice and a forum for exchange and camaraderie. Moreover, long-serving deans in this group, among them Mary Norton, Frances Bolton, and Leonor Sullivan, tried to set an example for the junior Members. In addition, key leadership figures in both parties in the House displayed on a number of occasions a willingness to promote women to middle- and, at times, top-tier committee posts.

### SHARED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

Though each generation of women in Congress had distinctive traits, experiences shared by women Members united them across the decades. One enduring pattern, called the "widow's mandate," the "widow's succession," or the "matrimonial connection," has been an important route for women to attain congressional office—especially the women in the first three generations.<sup>11</sup> Between 1917 and 1976, 95 women served in the House and the Senate; a third (34) were widows who were elected or appointed to succeed their late husbands. At present, 46 widows (a fifth of the women who have served in Congress) have directly succeeded their husbands. When familial connections are considered (wives who succeeded living husbands or husbands who were nonincumbent candidates, wives appointed by husbands, or daughters of Members), the percentages are even more startling. Up to 1976, 46 percent of all women Members had benefited from a familial connection. By 2005, a familial connection was still prominent in the careers of more than a quarter (27 percent) of all women Members.

Yet, these statistics suggest that the incidence of the widow's mandate, while still high, has recently declined. Among the third and fourth generations, ever-greater numbers of Congresswomen have drawn on experience in elective office rather than on experience supporting or advising a male family member in political office. Moreover, the influence of the widow's mandate, real and perceived, has been magnified by several factors. First, an unusually high number of women who received party nominations to run for their husband's former seat won their general elections. From 1923 through 2005, 38 out

of an estimated 46 House widows who were nominated to run for their husband's seat won their elections.<sup>12</sup> That number is far higher than the number of women elected to the House who were neither incumbents nor widows. Through the 1992 election, for example, just 14 percent of these women won their elections.<sup>13</sup>

A chief commonality among widows in Congress has been the brevity of their service; half of the 46 congressional widows served one term or less. This trend was particularly prevalent among widows from the South (14 served one term or less) who were nominated by their parties to serve as temporary placeholders until a sustainable male successor could be chosen. There have been, of course, notable exceptions; it is these widows who readily adapted to the institution because of extensive experience with their husbands, and subsequently distinguished themselves, who created in the public mind an enduring image of the prototypical widow successor. For instance, the longest-serving woman in congressional history, Edith Nourse Rogers (1925–1960), was a widow, and several other widows exercised considerable influence in Congress for many years, in some cases more than their husbands, for example, Florence Prag Kahn (1925–1937),

Frances Bolton (1940–1969), Margaret Chase Smith (1940–1973), and Lindy Boggs of Louisiana (1973–1991). As a group, widows have tended to receive more press attention because of the tragic or unlikely circumstances of their entry into political office, thus reinforcing public perceptions about the power of the widow's mandate.<sup>14</sup>

Familial duties and social expectations concerning a woman's role in the family contributed to another shared experience among women in Congress. Congresswomen from the pioneer generation onward have striven to balance the demands of their private family life, and public perceptions about women's responsibility to fulfill those demands, with those of their public career. This added responsibility has not been incumbent on their male colleagues. The third and fourth generations of women to enter Congress, especially, were confronted with this challenge, since more of them entered political office with young children.

Motherhood was a two-edged sword, providing Congresswomen with unique burdens as well as with legislative insights. Representative Emily Douglas of Illinois understood well how family responsibilities could affect women's participation in politics. Douglas was elected to



*Florence Kahn of California (facing camera) and Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts in early 1927, using Congress's first cloakroom for women Members. A House Page (far left) delivers a book to Kahn.* IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

the House in 1944 as the mother of an 11-year-old daughter while her husband, Paul, who later became a U.S. Senator, was overseas in the military. “What everybody needs to make a good race is a good wife,” Congresswoman Douglas observed. “Now that’s where a woman is handicapped. When a man goes into politics and wins his wife is happy and proud to pull up stakes, corral her children, and move to the designated center of government. But a woman’s position is different, in that her husband often has a business, she has her home to maintain, and her children are established in school.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, Congresswomen also understood that motherhood and familial duties provided them with a unique perspective on legislation (e.g., personal knowledge of the cost of groceries and household products) that was not always prioritized by Congressmen. “I am sure I became a finer Congresswoman for being a mother,” Chase Woodhouse of Connecticut said. “It gave me a better understanding of people’s problems. Yes, there were conflicts. Yes, I was thought of as a peculiar creature. But the kids were my motivation. . . . They become in the end the reason for striving.”<sup>16</sup> Both Congresswoman Douglas’s and Congresswoman Woodhouse’s sentiments are echoed throughout this book.

In addition to their familial responsibilities, Congresswomen were challenged by widespread and enduring social expectations about the “natural” or “proper” role for women—as wives, mothers, and caregivers. The power of the traditional conception of a woman’s role is aptly illustrated by the career of Representative Coya Knutson of Minnesota. Elected to Congress in 1954, Knutson emerged as a promising advocate for education reform and agricultural issues. Her career was destroyed in 1958, however, when her abusive and jealous husband falsely accused her of abandoning the family. In 1950s America, that accusation was especially powerful. Most women Members of Congress were not confronted with such direct attacks, but many, especially those who were young or single, faced subtle discrimination on the campaign trail by male political opponents who stressed their roles as fathers and family men. Women faced doubters even within their own ranks. Shortly after Patricia Schroeder’s 1972 election to the House, one of her feminist women colleagues asked how she planned to raise her toddlers and simultaneously advance in her congressional career.

Finally, women in Congress have shared the experience of being a minority, whether they were “insiders” or

“outsiders,” whether they were one-term congressional widows or accomplished committee chairs, and whether or not they had familial duties in addition to their professional responsibilities. While the number of women in Congress has varied, women have always been in the minority. Women in Congress have not marched unobstructed toward equality; like all women in American society, Congresswomen have faced barriers and challenges to their overall advancement.

As many women Members have observed, Congress has been exceptionally resistant to changes in gender roles taking place in American society. Again, each generation of Congresswomen faced different hurdles. Early women in Congress lacked basic necessities. For instance, it was not until the 1960s that women Members secured nearby bathroom facilities and a lounge near the House Floor; women in the Senate did not have such facilities until the mid-1990s. Congresswomen had limited access to congressional gym and exercise facilities built for men, into the 1990s. Women chipped away at the reluctance of committee chairs and congressional leadership to assign them to key committees, breaking down many of those barriers in the 1950s and 1960s in the House and in the 1980s and 1990s in the Senate. But even as women gained legislative expertise and seniority, their participation in congressional leadership lagged for several decades. Then, with women’s entry into top party positions in the early 21st century, that barrier, too, seemed broken. Women now participate in unprecedented ways at every level of Congress. Nevertheless, history suggests new challenges lie ahead.

## THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF *WOMEN IN CONGRESS*

The history of this record of women in Congress is nearly three decades old and spans a period of remarkable political achievements by women. The present volume originated with the first edition of *Women in Congress* (H. Con. Res. 664, Report No. 94-1732, 94th Congress, 29 September 1976), compiled and published at the time of the U.S. Bicentennial. Proposed by Congresswoman Lindy Boggs, who chaired the Joint Committee on Arrangements for the Commemoration of the Bicentennial, the booklet profiled 95 women who had served in Congress (85 Representatives and 11 Senators; Margaret Chase Smith served in both chambers). The author, Susan J. Tolchin, was then the director of the Washington Institute for Women in Politics at Mount Vernon College. Each



Member was profiled in a 200- to 400-word biography, and basic information appeared in a header for each entry. The entries were arranged alphabetically in two sections, one for former Members and the other for current Members. A thumbnail picture accompanied each profile.

Of the Members, the author wrote in a brief introduction, “Few patterns emerged from this group: these women reflected the societies and the era in which they lived; they were a microcosm of prevailing ideologies and political styles.”<sup>17</sup> Written against the backdrop of the women’s rights movement and a surge of female participation in local government, the first edition of *Women in Congress* anticipated a not-too-distant day when women would “move toward equal representation within government.” Tolchin wrote, “Local and state offices act as the seedbed for higher office; we now find many more women running for Congress and the State House as a result of these great strides toward increased representation at lower levels.”<sup>18</sup> Though women would play a greater role in government, their ascent through the political ranks no doubt occurred more slowly than Tolchin and many other observers envisioned.

The second edition of *Women in Congress* (H. Con Res. 167, H. Doc. No. 101-238, 101/2) was authorized by the House and the Senate in 1989. By that point, 129 women had served in Congress—115 Representatives and 16 Senators (Barbara Mikulski and Margaret Chase Smith had served in both chambers). Again, Congresswoman Boggs was an important influence behind the project, introducing the printing resolution as chair of the Commission on the Bicentenary of the U.S. House of Representatives. Of the profiled Members, Boggs wrote, “The story of their lives illustrates an important dimension of the struggle for full participation by all citizens in the political process of our national government. Their congressional service was a prominent legacy of the long campaign for woman’s suffrage and for the acceptance of women in political institutions so long the exclusive domain of men. . . . Although most have supported some form of women’s rights, what unites their careers is not a uniform political stance but rather a common experience with the movement to open political office to women and offer them an equal voice in the federal government.”<sup>19</sup>

Compiled by the Office of the Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives (which was created in 1983 in preparation for the House Bicentennial), the second edition of *Women in Congress* had a format similar to that of the first edition. Published for the first time as a hardbound

book, the volume contained Member profiles that were slightly longer than those in the first edition (250 to 700 words), with basic biographical information incorporated into the narrative. In this edition, the profiles of former and current Members were merged into one section, which again was arranged alphabetically. Larger pictures accompanied the individual profiles.

## THE PRESENT EDITION

In early 2001, Representative Marcy Kaptur of Ohio introduced House Concurrent Resolution 66 for the printing of a revised edition of the book. The resolution, which passed the House on April 4, 2001, and was agreed to by the Senate on April 24, 2001, authorized the Library of Congress to compile “an updated version” of *Women in Congress, 1917–1990*. In late 2001, the Library of Congress transferred the project to the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. In July 2002, the Office of History and Preservation (OHP) was created under the Clerk, and OHP staff began working on the publication soon afterward.

In scope, structure, and concept, the third edition of *Women in Congress* differs substantially from its predecessors. In 1992, the year after the previous edition was published, 28 women were elected to Congress—more than the total number of women who were elected or appointed to Congress in any previous decade. From 1991 to 2005, nearly 100 women were elected to Congress—roughly 40 percent of all the women who have served in the history of the institution.<sup>20</sup> Also, congressional women became more diverse in the latter part of the 20th century. Patsy Mink, elected in 1964, was the first non-Caucasian woman elected to Congress and one of just three Asian-American Congresswomen. Only five African-American women had served in Congress before 1990; New York Representative Shirley Chisholm was the first in 1969. Between 1990 and 2004, 19 black women were elected to Congress, including Carol Moseley-Braun, the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Senate. The first Hispanic-American woman elected to Congress, in 1989, was Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Seven more Hispanic-American women were elected in the next 15 years. The current volume of *Women in Congress* profiles the 229 women who have served in Congress (145 former Members and 84 incumbents).

The structure of this edition reflects the dramatic growth, changing characteristics, and increased influence



*Ruth Hanna McCormick of Illinois, daughter of U.S. Senator Marcus Hanna of Ohio and wife of Senator Medill McCormick of Illinois, won election to the House of Representatives in 1928. Congresswoman McCormick drew on her experience as a suffrage lobbyist and National Republican Party official. This picture was taken in 1914, a year after McCormick and other activists completed a successful campaign in which the Illinois state legislature granted women the right to vote.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

of women Members. Unlike its predecessors, this volume is organized chronologically, to represent more accurately the effects of historical trends on women's entry into Congress. The individual profiles have been expanded, with more emphasis on congressional service. Contextual essays analyze political and institutional developments affecting women's participation in Congress. Appendices include women's committee assignments, leadership positions, and familial connections in Congress. An index is provided for easy reference. Photographs of each Member are included in the book. Like the first edition of *Women in Congress*, this edition contains separate sections for former and current Members.

Part I contains expanded profiles of former Members (averaging 1,500 words), with an emphasis on congressional service. The profiles of a few outstanding House and Senate careers exceed 2,000 words, and the profiles of widows who served brief terms—and for whom the record is fragmentary at best—range from 550 to 750 words. Each profile consists of a brief section on the Member's precon-

gressional career, followed where possible by a detailed analysis of the subject's first campaign for congressional office; subsequent re-election efforts; information about committee assignments, leadership, and major legislative initiatives; and a brief summary of the Member's postcongressional career.

The profiles of former Members are arranged chronologically, rather than alphabetically, allowing a fuller perspective of the era in which a Member served. Accordingly, this section is divided into four periods, with an introductory essay about the institutional developments, legislative agendas, and social changes that shaped each generation of Congresswomen.

The four successive generations of women in Congress are grouped into the following sections.

- *"I'm No Lady, I'm a Member of Congress": Women Pioneers on Capitol Hill, 1917–1934* (contextual essay and 20 Member profiles)
- *Onto the National Stage: Congresswomen in an Age of Crises, 1935–1954* (contextual essay and 36 Member profiles)
- *A Changing of the Guard: Traditionalists, Feminists, and the New Face of Women in Congress, 1955–1976* (contextual essay and 39 Member profiles)
- *Assembling, Amplifying, and Ascending: Recent Trends Among Women in Congress, 1977–2006* (contextual essay and 50 Member profiles)

Part II of *Women in Congress* contains biographical profiles of current Members, with information on pre-congressional careers, first House or Senate campaigns, committee and leadership positions, and legislative achievements. Because these Members' careers are still in progress, however, definitive accounts must await a later date. Accordingly, the profiles in Part II differ in tone and style from those for former Members, and they are about half as long (750 words). Moreover, the profiles of current Members are arranged alphabetically, rather than chronologically. This section includes profiles of the 75 women who have served in two or more Congresses. The nine freshman Members elected to the 109th Congress, who are embarking on their congressional careers, are covered separately in a résumé format in the book's first appendix.

Bibliographic information for the profiles of current

and former Members is provided in a separate section, and where applicable, information about the location of Members' manuscript collections is included at the end of their individual profiles. Manuscript information has been drawn from House and Senate records used to compile and maintain the online *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress* at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. The editors have referenced, where applicable, Members' major manuscript collections and other repositories with significant holdings, i.e., the transcript of an oral history or extended correspondence. This information is intended to be a resource for the general reader and a starting point for the scholarly researcher.

The literature on women's history, which has grown into one of the most dynamic fields in the historical profession, has largely been created since the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> The



First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (left) and Representative Clare Boothe Luce of Connecticut were leading women within their respective political parties. Roosevelt promoted the political careers of women in government, including Congress, during her husband Franklin's four terms as U.S. President. Luce, a national celebrity before winning election to the House in 1942, was a prominent critic of the Roosevelt administration's wartime policies.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

editors consulted several useful general texts on women's history, including Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); William Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Sarah Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989); Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); and Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience, 2nd edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).

Though the field has flourished in recent years, it still is marked by significant historiographical gaps, including the underrepresentation of congressional women in the secondary literature. A few of the most famous women in Congress—Margaret Chase Smith, Clare Boothe Luce, Coya Knutson, and Ruth Hanna McCormick—have been the subjects of thorough biographical treatments. Most others have not, including prominent legislative figures such as Mary Norton, Edith Nourse Rogers, Florence Kahn, Katharine St. George, Martha Griffiths, Julia Butler Hansen, Edith Green, Leonor Sullivan, Patsy Mink, and Nancy Kassebaum. One aim of these profiles is to generate interest in future studies of these Congresswomen and in studies of other, lesser-known but significant individuals, including Alice Robertson, Ruth Pratt, Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy, Marguerite Stitt Church, Vera Buchanan, and Florence Dwyer.

Several sources were indispensable in the compilation of this book. Any inquiry into a Member's congressional career should begin with the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. Maintained by the House Office of History and Preservation and the Senate Historical Office, this publication is easily searchable and contains basic biographical information about Members, pertinent bibliographic references, and information about manuscript collections. It is updated daily with the latest available information.

In the early phase of research, the editors also consulted standard reference sources such as the *American National Biography*, the *Dictionary of American Biography*, and *Current Biography*. Various editions of the *Almanac of American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: National Journal, Inc.) and *Politics in America* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press) also were starting points in the research on many former and current women Members in the post-1977 period. For biographical sketches of women in Congress from 1917 to 1973, the editors used Hope



Chamberlin's *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973). However, this book lacks footnotes. Karen Foerstel's *Biographical Dictionary of Congressional Women* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), though spare, includes endnotes and contains information through the 1998 elections. Marcy Kaptur's *Women of Congress: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1996) is a useful study with extended profiles of roughly a dozen prominent House and Senate women. An invaluable study of changing patterns among Congresswomen is Irwin Gertzog's *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Integration, and Behavior* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995).

Since this edition of *Women in Congress* was revised and updated extensively, much of the information was researched using primary sources, particularly, published official congressional records and scholarly compilations of congressional statistics.

Congressional election results for the biennial elections from 1920 forward are available in the Clerk's "Congressional Elections," published by the Government Printing Office (GPO) or in PDF format at <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html>. Michael J. Dubin et al., *United States Congressional Elections, 1788–1997* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Publishing, Inc., 1998) contains results for both general and special elections. For information on district boundaries and reapportionment, the editors relied on Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789–1989* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989).

Committee assignments and information about jurisdiction may be found in two indispensable scholarly compilations: David T. Canon, Garrison Nelson, and Charles Stewart III, *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1789–1946*, 4 volumes (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2002) and Garrison Nelson, *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1947–1992*, 2 volumes (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1994). In addition, the editors consulted the *Congressional Directory*, a GPO publication that dates back into the 19th century. The directory is available at GPO from the 104th Congress forward. See <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cdirectory/index.html>.

Legislation, floor debates, roll call votes, bills, resolutions, and public laws back to the 1980s may be searched on the Library of Congress's THOMAS Web site at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. A useful print resource that discusses major acts of Congress is Steven V. Stathis's



*A campaign poster for Bella Abzug of New York. Abzug, who served three terms from 1971 to 1977, was one of the institution's most colorful individuals.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

*Landmark Legislation, 1774–2002: Major U.S. Acts and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2002). Floor debates about legislation can be found in the *Congressional Record* (1873 to the present), which is available at the THOMAS Web site from 1989 to the present; an index of the *Record* from 1983 to the present is available at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cri/index.html>. The editors also consulted the official proceedings in the *House Journal* and the *Senate Journal*. For House roll call votes back to the second session of the 101st Congress, visit the House Clerk's Web site at <http://clerk.house.gov/legisAct/votes.html>.

For print copies of the *Congressional Directory*, the *Congressional Record*, the *House Journal*, or the *Senate Journal*, consult your nearest federal depository library. A GPO locator for federal depository libraries may be accessed at

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html>.

Technology now permits research that even a decade ago would have been impossible. Using an online database, the editors were able to review key historical newspapers for the entire period of this book, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. News accounts and feature stories, particularly on the first generation of women in Congress, have done much to fill in the details about some of the more obscure women Members. Many of these newspaper citations appear in the notes.

Significant photo research was carried out for this edition of *Women in Congress*. Previous editions included only a head-and-shoulders image of each Member. Individual picture credits were not indicated in the 1976 edition, though a photo acknowledgment page was included at the end of the book. In the 1991 edition, a photo credit was included with each picture, but many images were credited to Members' offices that no longer exist or to the collection of the House Historian whose office closed in the mid-1990s.

In the current edition of *Women in Congress*, the editors strove to provide accurate information for all images that are accessible from public, private, and commercial repositories (with the expectation that researchers and the general public might wish to acquire photo reproductions). Among the major photo collections that were used for this project were the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.), the Still Pictures Branch of the National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD), the *Washington Star* Collection of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library's Washingtonian Division (Washington, D.C.), and the photo archives of the Associated Press. The editors also referenced a half-dozen Members' manuscript collections to locate images for publication in the book. For a small number of Member images, the Office of History and Preservation in the U.S. House of Representatives is cited. In addition, feature images illustrating legislative issues accompany the contextual essays. The images of the current Members were provided by their offices, which should serve as the point of contact for persons seeking an official image.

Finally, the new edition of *Women in Congress* includes historical tables and appendices for reference by specialists and the general reader. Nine appendices contain (a) brief profiles of the freshman Members of the 109th Congress; (b) a list of women Members by Congress

from the 65th Congress (1917–1919) to the 109th Congress (2005–2007); (c) a historical list of states and territories represented by women; (d) a list of House and Senate committees on which women have served; (e) a list of women who have chaired full committees; (f) a list of women who have chaired subcommittees; (g) a list of women who have served in party leadership; (h) a list of women of color in Congress; and (i) a list of the familial connections (marital, paternal, filial, etc.) of women Members. Research notes are included at the end of the individual profiles, the introduction, and the contextual essays, and a comprehensive index appears at the end of this book.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Colleagues in the history and archival fields offered valuable assistance throughout the production of this publication. A photo of Jeannette Rankin's first official floor speech was made available by the National Archives and Records Administration, with the help of Richard Hunt and Jessie Kratz from the Center for Legislative Archives. Peggy Appleman of the Washingtonian Division of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library provided cheerful and timely assistance locating images in files of the now-defunct *Washington Star* newspaper. The following institutions and repositories also helped secure images of women Members: Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration; Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library; Tennessee State Library & Archives; Ellis County (KS) Historical Society; Georgia State University Library; Special Collections & Archives, Auburn University; South Dakota State Archives; Louisiana State University Library; Oregon Historical Society; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division; National Archives and Records Administration Still Pictures Branch; the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library; the United States Postal Service; Texas Southern University, Barbara Jordan Archives; and the U.S. Senate Historical Office.

The *Women in Congress* project team also acknowledges the courteous and professional staffs of the U.S. House of Representatives Library; the Office of Publication Services (OPS) in the Office of the Clerk, especially OPS Chief Janice Wallace-Hamid and editors Marcie Kanakis and Chiedu Ozuzu; the U.S. Senate Library; the Office of the U.S. Senate Curator; and the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress. Special thanks are extended to the

following colleagues, who work daily in the thickets of congressional history and who graciously took time from their busy schedules to review the manuscript for this book and provide valuable comments: Richard Baker, Donald A. Ritchie, and Betty Koed of the Senate Historical Office and Donald R. Kennon of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

Finally, the project team thanks the supportive and collegial staff of the Office of History and Preservation. This publication would not have been possible without the conceptual framework developed by former OHP Chief Kenneth Kato. Early on, Ken saw the potential for expanding upon earlier editions of *Women in Congress*. His help as a writer and editor, insights as a political scientist, and constant encouragement sustained the project. The project team also thanks OHP colleagues Farar Elliott, House Curator and Chief of OHP; Robin Reeder, House Archivist; Andrew Dodge; Karen McKinstry; Felicia Wivchar; Catherine Wallace; Joe Wallace; and Toni Coverton.

Matthew Wasniewski

*Editor and OHP Publications Manager*

Kathleen Johnson, Erin M. Lloyd, Laura K. Turner

*Writers and Researchers*

## NOTES

- 1 See, for example, Nelson W. Polsby's article "Two Strategies of Influence: Choosing a Majority Leader, 1962," reprinted in Robert L. Peabody and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *New Perspectives on the House of Representatives*, 4th edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992): 260–290.
- 2 Peabody and Polsby, *New Perspectives on the House of Representatives*: 282.
- 3 See, for example, Jane Mansbridge, "The Many Faces of Representation," Working Paper, 1998, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; and Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes,'" *Journal of Politics* 61 (1999): 628–657.
- 4 Irwin Gertzog, *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Integration, and Behavior*, 2nd edition (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995): 254–257.
- 5 Ingrid Winther Scobie, *Center Stage: Helen Gabagan Douglas—A Life* (New York: Oxford, 1992): xv–xvi. See also Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978). Elsewhere Fenno has written, "Dramatic analogies are appropriate to politics because politicians, like actors, perform before audiences and are legitimized by their audiences"; see his "U.S. House Members and Their Constituencies: An Exploration," *American Political Science Review* 71, part 2 (September 1977): 898. See also Ralph Huitt and Robert L. Peabody, *Congress: Two Decades of Analysis* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969): 170.
- 6 For studies that have addressed aspects of the question of institutional versus individual change, see Donald R. Matthews's, *U.S. Senators and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), especially the chapter "Folkways of the U.S. Senate." See also Morris Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, 2nd edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) and Ross K. Baker, *House and Senate*, 3rd edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001). On the issue of changing norms and traditions, see Herbert F. Weisberg, Eric S. Heberlig, and Lisa M. Campoli, *Classics in Congressional Politics* (New York: Longman, 1999): especially 192–200; and Glenn R. Parker, *Studies of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1985): 75–80.
- 7 Judy Bacharach, "Millicent Fenwick," 23 February 1975, *Washington Post*: 137.
- 8 Gertzog, *Congressional Women*: 243–264, especially 251.
- 9 For a standard reference source on the differences between the structure and operations of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, see the aforementioned study by Baker, *House and Senate*.
- 10 Baker, *House and Senate*: 55, 68–70.
- 11 Irwin Gertzog is a leading analyst of the "matrimonial connection." See his discussion in Gertzog, *Congressional Women*: 17–36. See also his early analysis, Irwin Gertzog, "Changing Patterns of Female Recruitment to the U.S. House of Representatives," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* IV (no. 3, August 1979): 429–445.
- 12 Gertzog, *Congressional Women*: 34; Office of History and Preservation statistics 1995–2005. See Appendix I: "Marriage/Familial Connections of Women Representatives and Senators in Congress."
- 13 Gertzog, *Congressional Women*: 20–21.
- 14 Perceptions generated by media coverage of a widow Member's exceptional circumstances or achievements often masked the rather one-sided statistical realities. Most widows of Congressmen never even received their husbands' party nomination. For instance, in the House from 1916 to April 15, 2005, 422 Representatives died in office. All but Edith Nourse Rogers, Vera Daerr Buchanan, and Patsy T. Mink were male. Many were bachelors or widowers, but about 300 had wives who could have been tapped to replace them. Yet, roughly only one in six of these widows was nominated to succeed her husband. See Gertzog, *Congressional Women*: 19. Statistics through the 102nd Congress (1991–1993) are Gertzog's. An additional 18 individuals died in office from the 103rd through the 108th Congresses (1993 to January 1, 2005).
- 15 Martha Rhyne, "The Douglas Duo Raps Feminine Refusal to Accept Political Role," 25 February 1945, *Washington Post*: S1.
- 16 "A Pioneering Feminist Savors Grandmother Role," 10 May 1981, *New York Times*.
- 17 Susan Tolchin, *Women in Congress, 1917–1976* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976): iii.
- 18 Tolchin, *Women in Congress, 1917–1976*: iii.
- 19 Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, *Women in Congress, 1917–1990* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991): v.
- 20 Mildred Amer, "Women in the United States Congress, 1917–2004," CRS (1 July 2004).
- 21 See, for example, Linda Gordon's historiographical essay "U.S. Women's History" in *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

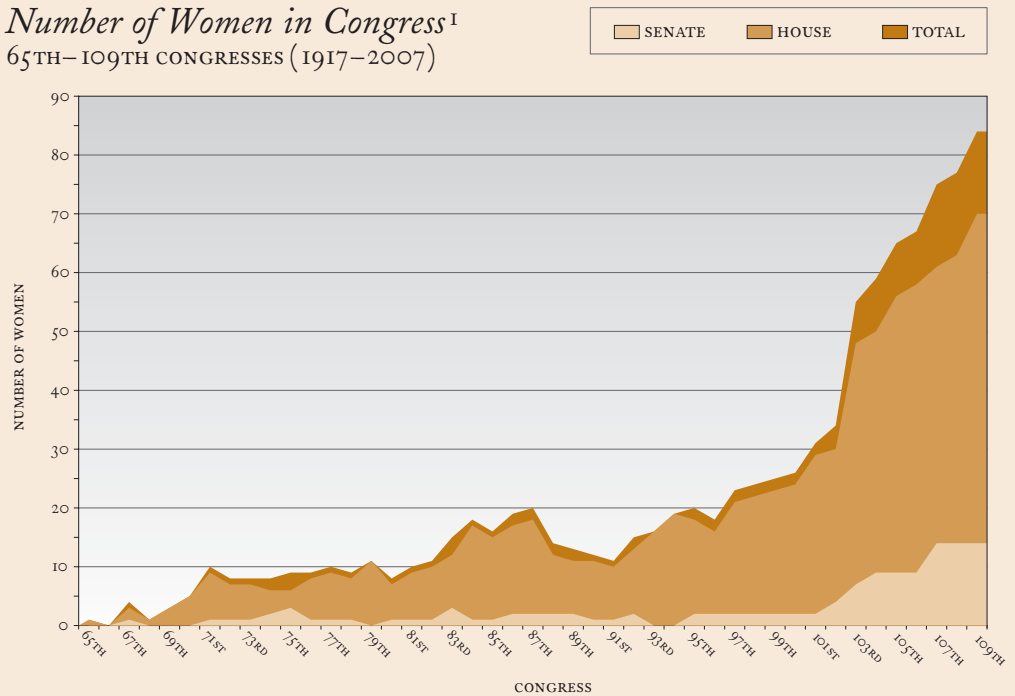


# VISUAL STATISTICS I

This section includes visual representations of various statistical breakdowns of women in Congress.

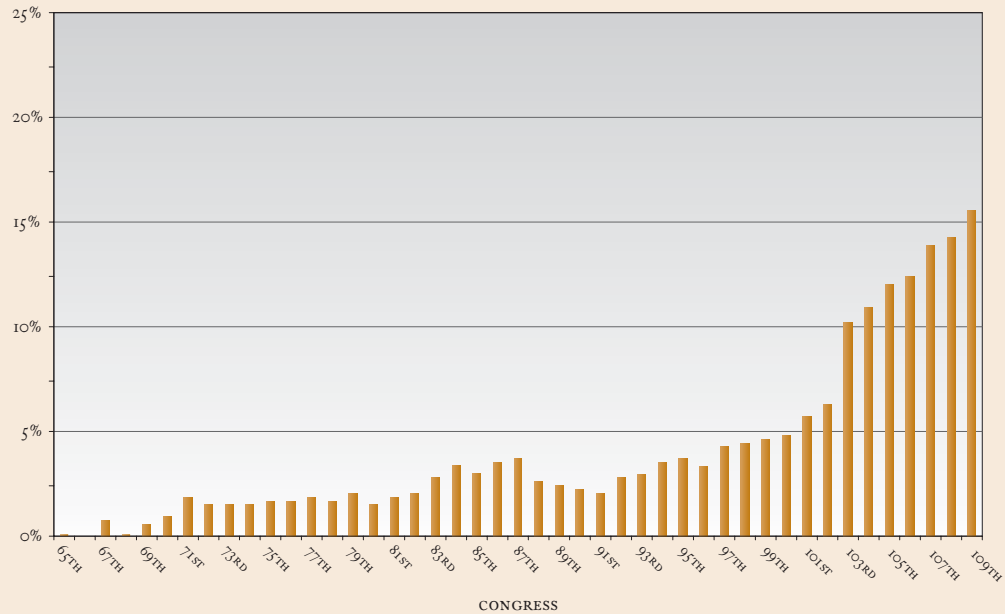
Additional sections of statistics represented visually appear after each contextual essay.

*Number of Women in Congress<sup>1</sup>*  
65TH–109TH CONGRESSES (1917–2007)



*Women as a Percentage of Congress<sup>2</sup>*  
65TH–109TH CONGRESSES (1917–2007)

Despite an exponential increase throughout the 1990s in the number of women in Congress, women have not exceeded 15.5 percent of the total congressional membership.

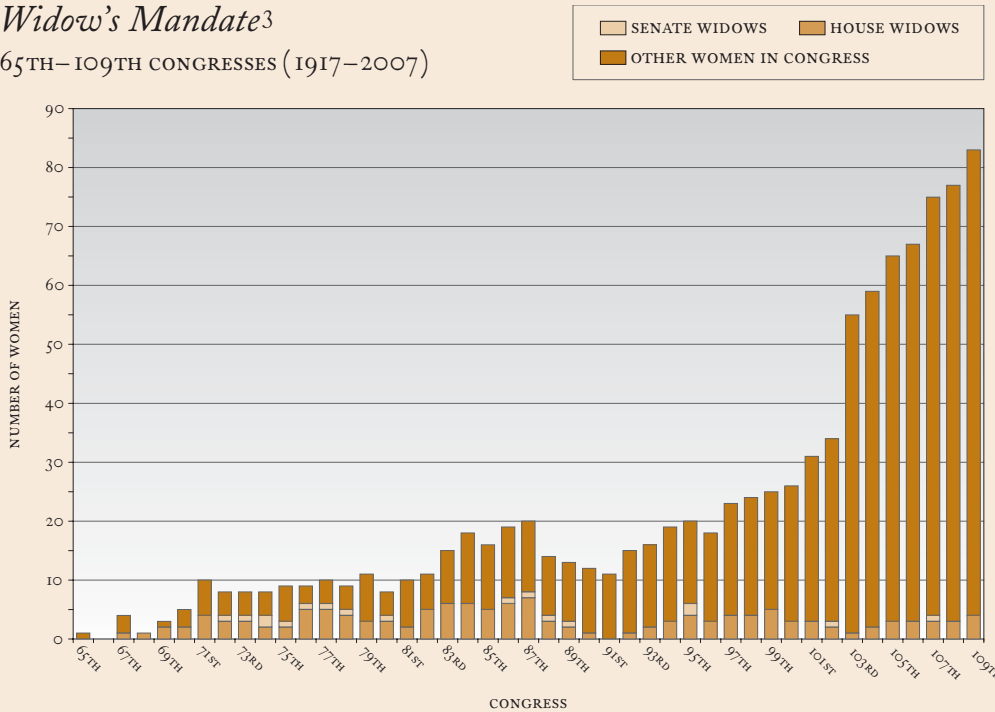


1. Source: Appendix B: Women Representatives and Senators by Congress (1917–2006).

2. Sources: Appendix B: Women Representatives and Senators by Congress (1917–2006); Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives; U.S. Senate Historical Office.

### Widow's Mandate<sup>3</sup>

65TH–109TH CONGRESSES (1917–2007)

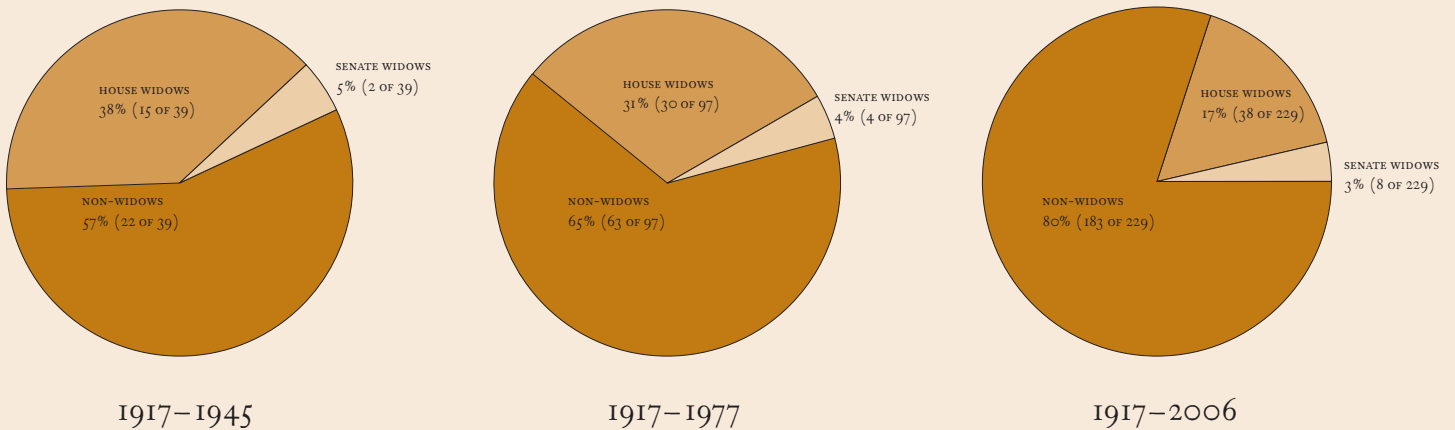


A Congress-by-Congress overview comparing the incidence of women succeeding their late husbands in the House and Senate, with the incidence of women being elected or appointed without a marital connection.

### Widows in Congress<sup>4</sup>

AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL WOMEN WHO SERVED IN CONGRESS

A series of graphs depicting the declining, but still common, occurrence of women succeeding their late husbands in Congress.



3. Source: Appendix I: Marriage/Familial Connections of Women Representatives and Senators in Congress.

4. Source: Appendix I: Marriage/Familial Connections of Women Representatives and Senators in Congress.

