

Historical Quotations

THE WOMEN OF CONGRESS SPEAK THEIR MIND



Frances Payne Bolton
U.S. Representative, 1940–1969
Republican from Ohio

“A few of [the party leaders] opposed my nomination, but most of them thought it would be a graceful gesture which would do them no harm since they were sure I would get tired of politics in a few months, and flit on to something else.”

— REPRESENTATIVE FRANCES BOLTON
Women in Congress, page 191



Jeannette Rankin
U.S. Representative, 1940–1969
U.S. Representative, 1941–1943
Republican from Montana

“How shall we answer the challenge, gentlemen? How shall we explain to them the meaning of democracy if the same Congress that voted to make the world safe for democracy refuses to give this small measure of democracy to the women of our country?”

— REPRESENTATIVE JEANNETTE RANKIN
Women in Congress, page 39



Frances Payne Bolton
U.S. Representative, 1940–1969
Republican from Ohio

“I believe that woman’s place is in the home. But I believe that the modern mother considers the world her home. The community in which she lives and the children grow is her home and for that reason she should assure herself of the opportunity of getting good government.”

— REPRESENTATIVE RUTH BRYAN OWEN
Women in Congress, page 91

“We will no longer wait for political power to be shared with us, we will take it.”

— REPRESENTATIVE CARDISS COLLINS
Women in Congress, page 508

“Sometimes I’m really afraid that tourists are going to poke me with their umbrellas! And yet there’s no sound reason why women, if they have the time and ability, shouldn’t sit with men on city councils, in state legislatures, or in the House and Senate. . . . Women are essentially practical because they’ve always had to be. From the dawn of time it’s been our job to see that both ends meet. And women are much more realistic than men, particularly when it comes to public questions. Of course, having had the vote for such a short time is a distinct advantage, for we have no inheritance of political buncombe.”

— SENATOR HATTIE WYATT CARAWAY
Women in Congress, page 107

“Politics is a job that needs doing—by anyone who is interested enough to train for it and work at it. It’s like housekeeping; someone has to do it. Whether the job is done by men or women is not important—only whether the job is done well or badly.”

— REPRESENTATIVE HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS
Women in Congress, page 234

“I am not a feminist or anything else of that sort. I do not use my womanhood as a weapon or a tool. . . . What I want most is to be respected and thought of as a person rather than as a woman in this particular job. I would like to feel that I am respected for my ability, my honesty, my judgment, my imagination, and my vision.”

— REPRESENTATIVE COYA KNUTSON
Women in Congress, page 365



Cardiss Collins
U.S. Representative, 1973–1997
Democrat from Illinois



Hattie Wyatt Caraway
United States Senator, 1931–1945
Democrat from Arkansas



Helen Gahagan Douglas
U.S. Representative, 1945–1951
Democrat from California



Coya Knutson
U.S. Representative, 1955–1959
Democrat from Minnesota



Patricia S. Schroeder
U.S. Representative, 1973–1997
Democrat from Colorado



Barbara Jordan
U.S. Representative, 1973–1979
Democrat from Texas



Alice Mary Robertson
U.S. Representative, 1921–1923
Republican from Oklahoma



Gladys S. Pyle
United States Senator, 1938–1939
Republican from South Dakota

“The day I wore a pants suit onto the [House] floor you’d have thought I asked for a land base for China. I just want to do my job. Does it make any difference if I have a bow in my hair or not?”

— REPRESENTATIVE PAT SCHROEDER
Women in Congress, page 340

“I am neither a black politician nor a woman politician. Just a politician, a professional politician.”

— REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA JORDAN
Women in Congress, page 490

“There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of women just now, having hardly found themselves in politics, to criticize faults rather than to encourage virtues. They call themselves non-partisan and stand on the side as harsh critics instead of going right in at the very source of government in their own immediate communities to build up what is best.”

— REPRESENTATIVE ALICE ROBERTSON
Women in Congress, page 44

“Politics . . . is like sailing a boat. You have to learn to tack, going from one side of the river to the other. It takes a bit longer, but you can make good progress.”

— SENATOR GLADYS PYLE
Women in Congress, page 177

“Women of my generation who entered public office had a very different kind of experience that those who come in today . . . There was little women’s movement . . . and one had to work one’s way up the political ladder without too much assistance from either men or women. When I was one of four women in the Washington state house of representatives, in 1939, the other 95 members could not have cared less whether we were there or not.”

— REPRESENTATIVE JULIA BUTLER HANSEN
Women in Congress, page 396



Julia Butler Hansen
U.S. Representative, 1960–1974
Democrat from Washington