



3-2009

March 2009: Women in Congress

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Recommended Citation

Dacus Library, "March 2009: Women in Congress" (2009). *Dacus Docs News*. 41.
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Government Documents News

Women in Congress



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

Facts

- A total of 246 women (158 Democrats and 88 Republicans) have served in the U.S. Congress.
- Of these women, 211 have served in the House, 28 in the Senate, and 7 in both houses.
- Of the 218 women who have served in the House:
 - 38 were elected to fill vacancies caused by the death of their husbands
 - 16 of the 38 were elected to additional terms
 - 25 women were elected to fill other vacancies



Edith Nourse Rogers / United States Representative, 1925–1960 / Republican from Massachusetts served in the House for 35 years and holds the record for length of service by a woman in Congress.



Margaret Chase Smith / United States Representative, 1940–1949 / United States Senator, 1949–1973 / Republican from Maine was the first woman elected to the House and the Senate. She holds the record for Senate service by a woman with 24 years.

➤ Of the 35 women who have served in the Senate:

- 13 were first appointed to fill unexpired terms
- 5 were first elected to fill unexpired terms
- 9 were chosen to fill vacancies caused by the death of their husbands
- 1 to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of her father
- Of these 10, three were subsequently elected to additional terms
- A total of 27 African American women have served in Congress (one in the Senate, 26 in the House)
- 7 Hispanic women have been elected to the House; all are serving in the 110th Congress
- 4 Asian American women have served in the House.



The 110th U.S. Congress had 16 female senators: (front row) Claire McCaskill, Dianne Feinstein, Maria Cantwell, Lisa Murkowski, and Olympia Snowe; (back row) Blanche Lincoln, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Barbara Boxer, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Mary Landrieu, Debbie Stabenow, Susan Collins, Barbara Mikulski, Elizabeth Dole, Amy Klobuchar, and Patty Murray.

Serving South Carolina



Elizabeth H. Gasque
United States Representative, 1938–1939
Democrat from South Carolina

Elizabeth Hawley Gasque, the first woman U.S. Representative from South Carolina, filled a vacancy caused by the death of her husband, U.S. Representative Allard H. Gasque in 1938.



Clara G. McMillan
United States Representative, 1939–1941
Democrat from South Carolina

Clara G. McMillan also filled a vacancy caused by the death of her husband, Representative Thomas McMillan. South Carolina Democratic Party leaders chose her to run in the special election to fill her husband's coastal Carolina seat. She won election to the House with 79 percent of the vote.



Willa Lybrand Fulmer
United States Representative, 1944–1945
Democrat from South Carolina

Willa Fulmer worked as an aide to her husband, Congressman Hampton P. Fulmer, in the early 1930s. She earned \$266 dollars per month, which put her in the upper salary bracket for Capitol Hill staff at the time. In 1944, she filled her husband's seat after his death, long enough for party officials to successfully insert long-term successor, John J. Riley. Congress adjourned a month after she took her seat.



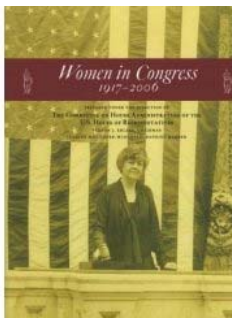
Corinne Boyd Riley
United States Representative, 1962–1963
Democrat from South Carolina

Corinne Riley won a special election to fill the last nine months of the term of her late husband, John J. Riley. She became the fourth widow to represent South Carolina. During her brief eight-month term, Riley supported authorizing the Federal Communications Commission to require that television sets be equipped with high-frequency channels, a proposal she hoped would benefit an educational television system operating in her district. “We in South Carolina have worked long and hard to preserve this valuable resource which we call our VHF channel in Columbia,” Riley noted in her brief and only floor speech as a Member.



Elizabeth Johnston Patterson
 United States Representative, 1987–1993
 Democrat from South Carolina

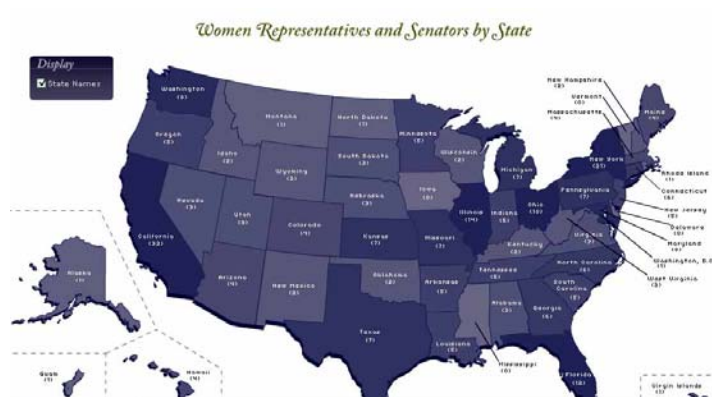
Her father, Olin Johnston, served in the state house of representatives before being elected governor in 1935. He resigned in his second term after winning election to the U.S. Senate. Patterson declared her candidacy for a South Carolina U.S. House seat in 1986, when four-term Republican Representative Carroll A. Campbell, Jr., declined re-nomination in order to run for governor. She served three terms and was defeated by Bob Inglis in 1992.



The previous information can be found in *Women in Congress 1917-2006*. Available in the Government Documents Department, Y 1.1/2:SERIAL 14903 and full-text on the Internet: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/hd108-223/index.html>

For Additional Information about Women in Congress and Women’s History Month see the following:

Web sites



[Interactive Map – Women Representatives and Senators by State](#)

Women In Congress / Office of the Clerk <http://womenincongress.house.gov/>
Includes historical essays, member profiles, and educational resources.

Women's History Month / Government Wide Portal <http://womenshistorymonth.gov/>

Women's History Month / Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/topics/womenshistory/>;

Women's History Month / National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/wom/>

Women's History Month / Facts for Features / U.S. Census Bureau http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/013129.html

Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/>
The leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation.

In Dacus Library



Women in Congress, 1917-2006 / Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/hd108-223/index.html>

Y 1.1/2:SERIAL 14903 U.S. Document and Internet

Against the tide : one woman's political struggle / Harriet Keyserling

F275.42.K49 .A3 1998 (Special Collections – Library Use Only)

Congressional women : their recruitment, treatment, and behavior / Irwin N. Gertzog

JK1319 .G47 1984 General Collection

When women lead : integrative leadership in State legislatures / Cindy Simon Rosenthal

HQ1236.5.U6 .R67 1998 General Collection

How women legislate / Sue Thomas

HQ1236.5.U6 T493 1994

The impact of women in congress / Debra L. Dodson
HQ1236.5.U6 .D63 2006 General Collection

Strangers In The Senate : Politics And The New Revolution Of Women In America / Boxer, Barbara, c1994
HQ1391.U5 B69 1994 General Collection

A woman's place : the freshmen women who changed the face of Congress / Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky ;
with Barbara Feinman ; foreword by Barbara Jordan
E885 .M367 1994 General Collection

Women in Congress, by Annabel Paxton
JK1030.A2 .P3 General Collection

Women on the Hill : challenging the culture of Congress / Clara Bingham
JK1059 103rd .B55 1997 General Collection

Women, partisanship, and the Congress / Jocelyn Jones Evans
HQ1391.U5 .J65 2005 General Collection

Women transforming Congress / edited by Cindy Simon Rosenthal
HQ1236.5.U6 .W6675 2002 General Collection

➤ **For individual biographies, search the Dacus Online Catalog for**
[Women Legislators United States Biography](#)



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on the second floor of Dacus Library.**

The government documents staff is available weekdays from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. We will be glad to assist you with printed documents or electronic government information. Drop by, e-mail, or give us a call.

Jackie McFadden
323-2322
mcfaddenj@winthrop.edu

Patti Stafford
323-2257
staffordp@winthrop.edu

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