

State of Wisconsin



2023 Senate Joint Resolution 17

ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION

Relating to: proclaiming March 2023 as Women’s History Month.

Whereas, American women of every race, class, and ethnic background have made historic contributions to our nation in countless recorded and unrecorded ways; and

Whereas, the Wisconsin Legislature granted property rights to married women in 1850; and

Whereas, in 1869, the first women graduated from the University of Wisconsin. This same year, the Wisconsin Legislature passed a law allowing women to run for school boards and other elective school offices, though they could not vote in school board elections until 1884; and

Whereas, in the campaign for Women’s Suffrage, Wisconsin produced notable suffragists such as Olympia Brown of Racine, Clara Bewick Colby of Madison, Carrie Chapman Catt of Ripon, Jessie Jack Hooper of Oshkosh, Ada James of Richland Center, and Belle Case La Follette of Baraboo; and

Whereas, Wisconsin is part of the original 36 states to ratify the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which provides, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex,” and holds the distinction of being the first state to ratify, on June 10, 1919, and formally certify its ratification papers in Washington, D.C.; and

Whereas, in July 1921, after decades of campaigning by women for voting and other rights, Wisconsin passed the nation’s first women’s equal rights law, declaring “Women shall have the same rights and privileges under the law as men,” including “holding office”—affirming women’s right to hold any public office; and

Whereas, a 1923 survey of Wisconsin cities and villages by the University of Wisconsin’s Municipal Information Bureau identified more than 400 women in public office, of whom approximately half sat on school and library boards and who also included Wisconsin’s first female mayor, county supervisor, sheriff, nine alderwomen, 12 village trustees, and dozens of clerks and treasurers; and

Whereas, in 1925, three women, Representatives Mildred Barber of Wausau, Hellen Brooks of Caloma, and Helen Thompson of Park Falls, were the first female assembly representatives to be elected to the Wisconsin Legislature; and

Whereas, Wisconsin amended its own constitution in 1934 to include women’s suffrage; and

Whereas, in 1983, the Wisconsin Women’s Council became a permanent state agency governed by a bipartisan board appointed by the governor and legislative leaders; and

Whereas, in 2023, a total of 41 women took their seats in the state assembly and senate, the most ever in Wisconsin history; and

Whereas, the role of American women continues to evolve, and their positive contributions to our culture, society, and government continue to grow and inspire future generations; and

Whereas, throughout the history of the United States, whether in their homes, in their workplaces, in schools, in the community, in the courts, or during wartime, women have fought for themselves, their families, and all people of the United States; and

Whereas, since the American Revolution, women have been vital to the mission of the Armed Forces, with nearly 2,000 Wisconsin women serving on active duty and over 30,000 women veterans from Wisconsin representing every branch of service; and

Whereas, American women have played and continue to play a critical economic, cultural, and social role in every sphere of life and constitute a significant portion of the labor force working inside and outside the home, with women now representing approximately half of the workforce of the United States and owning more than 10,000,000 businesses; and

Whereas, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, women are at the helm of about 18 percent of all employer firms located in Wisconsin; and

Whereas, the women of Wisconsin have been and continue to be leaders in the forefront of international affairs, social change efforts, education, journalism, literature, art, film, technology, math, science, athletics, and other fields including, but not limited to: Golda Meir, who grew up in Milwaukee, was the Prime Minister of Israel from 1969–1974; Nobel Peace Prize winner and Liberian president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who attended school in Madison, was the first female head of state of any African country; Vel Phillips, a woman of many firsts, was the first Black woman to graduate from the University of Wisconsin Law School, the first woman alder elected to the Common Council of Milwaukee, the first woman judge in Milwaukee County, the first African American to serve in Wisconsin’s judiciary, and the first woman elected as Wisconsin’s Secretary of State; Dickey Chapelle was the first female American war correspondent to parachute with American troops and the first killed covering combat; Electa “Wuhwehweheemeew” Quinney was Wisconsin’s first public schoolteacher; Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the “Little House” book series, hails from Pepin; Lorraine Hansbury, playwright for *A Raisin in the Sun* was the first Black woman to have a play produced on Broadway; Georgia O’Keeffe of Sun Prairie is a major American artist of the 20th century who developed a unique approach to abstract painting that reflected the landscapes around her; and Bonnie Blair is a world record–holding speed skater, a six–time Olympic medalist, and the most decorated woman in Winter Olympic history; and

Whereas, despite the advancements of women in the United States, much remains to be done to ensure that women realize their full potential as equal members of society in the United States; and

Whereas, National Women’s History Month recognizes and spreads awareness of the importance of women in the history of Wisconsin and the United States; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the senate, the assembly concurring, That the month of March 2023 shall be designated as Women’s History Month.

Representative Robin J. Vos
Speaker of the Assembly

Senator Chris Kapenga
President of the Senate

Date

Michael J. Queensland
Senate Chief Clerk