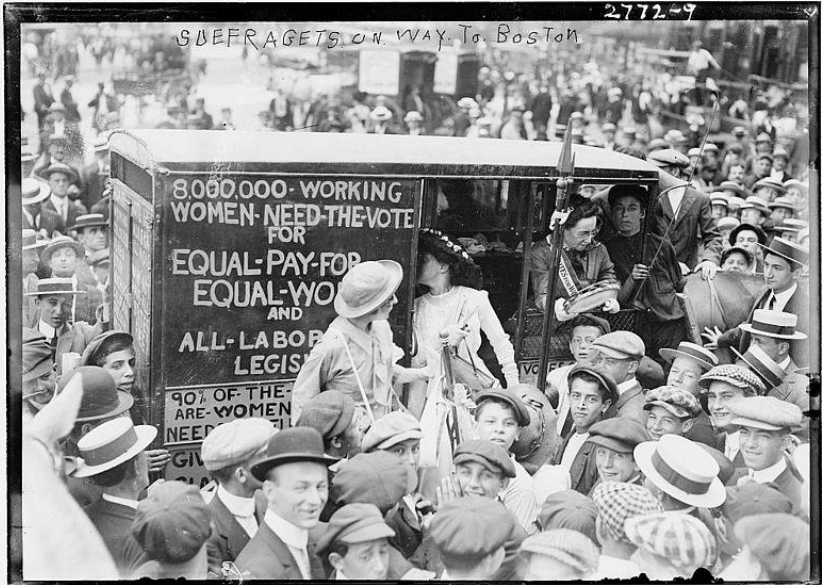


Making Strides

A Brief Overview of Important Female Leaders in
United States Politics



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Introduction

Since the United States became an independent nation, it has been ruled by men. Women were not even granted the right to vote until 1920 - 144 years after the United States became a free nation. Every single president in our nation's history has been male! While today it is not uncommon for women to be elected to be senators and congresswomen, there was a time when each woman was the very first to hold their government position. In this book, you will learn about many amazing women who made great strides towards equal representation for women in United States government.

Hillary Clinton

“Too many women in too many countries speak the same language - of silence.”

Hillary Rodham Clinton is a name known all around the world. Today, she is probably known best for her 2016 presidential **campaign** against Donald Trump. After graduating high school in 1965, she attended Wellesley College. She was even voted by her peers to be the first student speaker at the commencement (or graduation) ceremony. She then went on to Yale law school where she was one of just 27 women in her graduating class. After marrying her law school classmate, Bill Clinton, in 1975, Hillary Clinton became first lady of the state of Arkansas. She was also first lady during her husband’s two presidential terms in 1992 and 1996. In 2000, Hillary Clinton was elected to the US Senate. In 2008, she ran her first presidential campaign where she lost to Senator Barack Obama in the **primaries**. After his election, Barack Obama appointed her **Secretary of State** of the United States. Clinton has spent much time in her career fighting for proper healthcare for all, and is a powerful champion of women’s rights around the world.



Hilary Clinton at an Iowa Coffee Shop, April 2015

Madeleine Albright

“We should use our opinions to start discussions, not to end them.”

Madeleine Albright was one smart woman! After getting her bachelor’s degree at Wellesley College, she got a master’s and a doctorate degree at Cambridge University! In 1997, Madeleine Albright became the first woman to be **Secretary of State** under President Bill Clinton. Albright’s appointment for this position had unanimous support from the senate. Throughout her career, she has campaigned for **democracy** and human rights, promoted American trade, business, and environmental standards **abroad**. Albright also served as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations before serving as Secretary of State. Albright has spent much of her career focused on the relationships the United States has with other nations. She is fluent in English, Russian, Czech, French, and reads and writes Polish and Russian well.



Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the 2000 World Economic Forum in Switzerland

Jeanette Pickering Ranking

“I may be the first woman member of congress, but I won’t be the last!”

Jeanette Pickering Ranking was the first woman to be elected to congress. Ranking was elected in 1916, and again in 1940, as a congresswoman from Montana. After college, Jeanette Ranking became a professional **lobbyist** for the National American Women’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Her efforts helped women in Montana gain the right to vote. Ranking also helped to create a Committee on Women’s Suffrage, and was appointed to it. During her time in congress, Ranking was the only person to vote against American participation in World War I and World War II. Because of her strict anti-war stance, she also voted against going to war with Japan after the 1917 attack on Pearl Harbor. Ranking was a **suffragette**, meaning she helped push for women’s rights across the nation.



Jeanette Ranking before her death in 1973

Sandra Day O'Connor

“The power I exert on the court depends on the power of my arguments, not on my gender.”

Sandra Day O'Connor was the first woman to serve as a justice on the United States **Supreme Court**. She was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 and served until her retirement in 2006. Due to her high intelligence, O'Connor graduated high school two years early, started college at the age of sixteen, and finished law school in two years, instead of the usual three! However, despite all her accomplishments, it took O'Connor quite a long time to find a job as a lawyer since many people were **biased** towards female attorneys. After she got her legal career going, she succeeded greatly. Sandra Day O'Connor served as a deputy county attorney, the Assistant Attorney General of Arizona, an Arizona senator, and justice of the Superior Court of Maricopa County before her appointment to the Supreme Court. During her time on the Supreme Court, O'Connor acted as a **swing vote** for many important cases. After her retirement, she continued to **advocate** for American youth to get involved in government.



Sandra Day O'Connor getting sworn in as supreme court justice in 1981

Janet Reno

“Just remember, strength and courage. If you stand on principle, you’ll never lose.”

Janet Reno was the first woman to be the **Attorney General** of the United States. She was appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1993 and held the position until 2001. Janet Reno went to public school in Florida where she became a debate champion and also **valedictorian** of her high school. In 1956, she enrolled in Cornell University where she studied chemistry and was the president of the Women’s Self-Government Association. After college, she went to Harvard Law School, where she was one of 16 women in a class of over 500 students. Once Reno graduated from law school, she had trouble finding work as a lawyer, since she was female. However, in 1971 she became the staff director of the Judiciary Committee of the Florida House of Representatives. Next, she worked at the State Attorney’s Office in Dean County and shortly after that, she became a partner in a big law firm. Finally, she was appointed Attorney General where she helped to **reform** the juvenile court system.



Janet Reno in 1993

Summary

In this book, we learned about some truly incredible and intelligent women. They were brave and unafraid to venture into territory where many women had never gone before. Although they had different strengths and opinions, all of them fought sexism and prejudice to make sure that the voice of women was represented in the United States government. This was just a very brief snapshot of the lives of each of these women, and their accomplishments are far greater than the single paragraph written about them. Without the efforts of these and many other fearless women not mentioned in this book, the United States would be a very different nation today.

Glossary

Campaign: In politics, people campaign so that others will learn about them and hopefully vote for them.

Primaries: Primary means first so the primary presidential elections are the first set of elections that occur.

Secretary of State: In the USA, the Secretary of State is the head of the State Department and is in charge of all foreign affairs.

Democracy: A system of government where citizens vote for their leaders

Abroad: In another country, foreign

Lobbyist: A person who tries to influence legislators about certain special interests

Suffragette: A woman seeking the right to vote

Supreme Court: The highest judicial court in the United States

Biased: Unfairly prejudiced against something or someone

Swing Vote: A deciding vote. Oftentimes, people don't know which side of an issue swing voters will vote on.

Advocate: To recommend or support

Attorney General: The head of the US Department of Justice

Valedictorian: A student with the highest scholastic achievements of their class

Reform: To make changes in order to improve something

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Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 “Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.”

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2 “Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.”

CC.SS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.5 “Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.”

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7 “Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively, (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements in Web pages) and explain how the information contributed to an understanding of the text in which it appears”

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