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## **Women in the West Virginia state legislature 1923-1997**


Jo Boggess Phillips

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**WOMEN  
IN THE  
WEST VIRGINIA STATE LEGISLATURE  
1923 - 1997**

**Thesis submitted to  
The Graduate School of  
Marshall University**

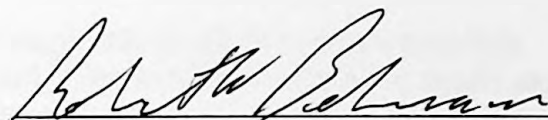
**In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
Political Science**

**by**

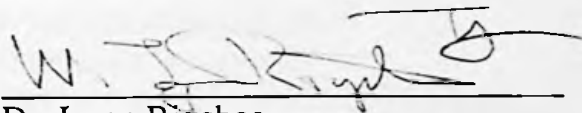
**Jo Boggess Phillips  
Marshall University  
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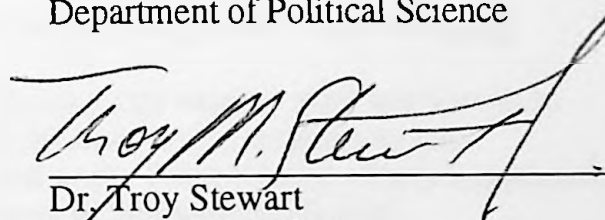
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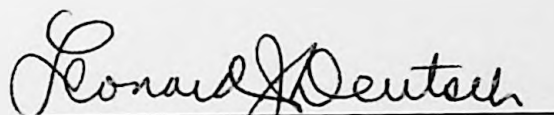
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to those individuals who gave me support and encouragement throughout the compilation of this thesis. My thanks to the following:

First, and foremost, I thank God...through whom all things are possible.

My family, especially my mom and dad. The sacrifices you have made are countless, and I cannot begin to thank you enough.

Michael Phillips, for his love, patience and understanding.

My thesis committee, especially my advisor Dr. Robert Behrman, and Dr. Troy Stewart and Dr. Lynn Rigsbee. Special thanks to Professor Joseph McCoy and Betty Cook.

Mary Crist, for her research assistance and constant support.

Angela Schleifer and Eddie St.Clair for their early support.

The staff of the Legislative Reference and Information Center, Mary Del Cont, Legislative Services, and the Performance Evaluation and Research Division, all with the West Virginia Legislature.

Dr. Christopher Z. Mooney and Dr. Robert Dilger with West Virginia University.

Finally, my sincere appreciation goes to every woman who has served in the West Virginia Legislature. Since 1923, the hard work, dedication and compassion of these women who have served in the West Virginia State Legislature has improved the quality of life for the citizens in this wonderful state.

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To my parents, Frank and Zelma Boggess



## Introduction

A total of 125 women legislators have served in the West Virginia State Legislature (see Appendix A). Although every state legislator, both male and female, has played a role in molding the destinies of the citizens of this state, the past 70 years have been an uphill climb for the women who have served in the West Virginia Legislature.

This thesis examines the careers of some of the pioneering women who broke the gender barrier and entered into the male dominated world of state politics and those who have followed their lead. This paper is by no means meant to be an exhaustive review of either their personal or political lives. Instead, it serves as a reminder of their efforts and, hopefully, will encourage others, within both the academic community and the general citizenry, to recognize these women's accomplishments in the face of adversity.

Information concerning the history of the West Virginia state legislature is scarce, and, to this author's knowledge, no detailed reports or published papers have been written on the women who have served there. As a result, much of the information reported here was obtained through newspaper articles. Fortunately, some of the women featured here are still alive and graciously agreed to share with the author their experiences in the state legislature. Their insight, candor, and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

**Part One**

**The Women Pioneers of the  
West Virginia Legislature  
1923-1969**

## Chapter One

### The Evolution of Women in the Political Arena

*“Some Day People Will Say, ‘How Did The Country Ever Get On Without Women In Politics?’”<sup>1</sup>*

Women’s formal involvement in West Virginia’s state politics began at a time when women’s abilities were greatly underestimated. Although some women legislators today assert that their gender is often not fully represented in the state legislature’s most important leadership positions, it is clear that women’s abilities are better recognized and more readily used than in the past. Their climb to equality as legislators is a colorful part of the state’s political history, and, according to a majority of the women legislators interviewed, is one that is still not completely over.

Prior to the 1920s, almost no women participated actively in politics. Those who did typically spoke out on controversial issues such as the antislavery movement, fought against gender discrimination on a state-by-state basis, and fought to establish their right to higher education and professional positions, among others (Burns, Peltason and Cronin, 1989: 180). Women's clubs were one of the first formally organized outlets for women’s political activities in West Virginia.

West Virginia’s first formal woman’s club was organized in 1892 (Conaway, 1914: iii). Women saw membership in a woman's club as an

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<sup>1</sup> Izetta Brown, Democratic primary candidate for the United States Senate (Kirkland, 17 July 1922b: 2).

opportunity to provide constructive public service for both their local communities and their state. In recognition of the growth of women's clubs in West Virginia, the national General Federation of Women's Clubs formed a state federation of women's clubs in West Virginia in 1904. Club women undertook projects such as establishing libraries, working for the inclusion of home economics in school curricula, conducting baby or tuberculosis clinics, buying milk for school children, and promoting visual and radio education (Conaway, 1914: iii).

The State Federation of Women's Clubs became involved in state politics in a formal way in 1906 when it created the position of chairman of legislation. At that time, the clubs made a concentrated effort to pass a juvenile court law, a child labor law and a public library law (authorizing municipalities to use taxes for the upkeep of libraries). The state federation also worked for the approval of a law providing for registration of births and deaths, a minimum wage law, a three day marriage law, a law to provide pre-marital health examinations, a law making parents equal guardians of their children, and the suffrage amendment (Conaway, 1914: 21-28). In recognition of their growing influence within the state, the national president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs attended the 1910 state women club's convention and urged them to use their influence to stir public opinion to advance social and educational standards in West Virginia.

### *The Women's Suffrage Movement*

It was not until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920 that women were acknowledged nationally as legitimate and full participants in the political arena. The women's suffrage movement was formally launched at the Seneca Falls Women's Right Convention of 1848. By the

turn of the century, the women's suffrage movement had spread throughout the country and was particularly strong in the western states. Wyoming, for example, granted women the right to vote while it was still a territory. It insisted that women retain that right to vote when it was formally admitted to the union as a state in 1890:

It is said that when members of Congress in Washington grumbled about this 'Petticoat Provision,' the Wyoming legislators replied that they would stay out of the Union 100 years rather than come in without women's suffrage. Congress admitted Wyoming to the Union, thereby accepting women's suffrage in that state (Burns, Peltason and Cronin, 1989: 97).

The women's suffrage movement had its formal start in West Virginia following the formation of the West Virginia Equal Suffrage Association in 1895 (Jones and Yost, 1922: 1).<sup>2</sup> By 1914, the suffrage question dominated the agenda at the annual meeting of the State Federation of Women's Clubs (Conaway, 1914: 21). The women's suffrage movement, however, faced a great deal of opposition and endured numerous defeats before finally securing women the right to vote in West Virginia. In 1904, for example, Wheeling voters were asked to approve a new city charter. They were also provided an opportunity to grant women the right to vote for Wheeling's municipal officials. Put before the voters on separate ballots, the women's suffrage amendment lost by 1,600 votes, with more votes cast on this issue than on the charter itself. In 1905, a State Senate resolution to submit to the state's voters a women's suffrage amendment to the state Constitution received only two votes. In 1906, a proposed state constitutional amendment to permit women to be appointed notaries public, clerks of county courts, probation

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<sup>2</sup>The state association became the League of Women Voters on September 30, 1920.

officers, and members of board of state institutions was defeated by the state's voters 45,044-44,168. In 1907, a resolution for a constitutional amendment for women's suffrage was introduced in both the House and the Senate, but it failed in the House 48-26 and in the Senate 13-10. In 1913, a similar resolution did receive the required two-thirds vote in the House 58-28, but failed to gain the required two-thirds vote in the Senate 16-14 (Jones and Yost, 1922: 2). In 1915, the West Virginia Legislature finally allowed the state's voters to determine whether women should have the right of suffrage. Senate Joint Resolution No. 5, adopted on February 28, 1915, passed in the Senate 26-3 and in the House 76-8 (West Virginia Acts of the Legislature, 1915: 599).

Despite a vigorous campaign effort by both male and female volunteers, the support of both major political parties and their respective candidates for governor, and the endorsement of numerous newspapers, West Virginia voters rejected the proposed amendment by a wide margin 63,540-161,607.<sup>3</sup> Only three of the state's 55 counties voted in favor of the proposed amendment: Brooke, Hancock and Wood (Harris, 1917: 696; Jones and Yost, 1922: 4).

The fight for women's suffrage within the state continued, but its focus shifted following Congress' approval on June 4, 1919 of the proposed national Constitutional Amendment prohibiting voting discrimination on the basis of gender. The proposed amendment required the ratification of 36 states to become effective.<sup>4</sup> Opposition was strongest in the southern states where ratification was mixed with the rights of blacks.<sup>5</sup> Many southerners opposed the amendment because it

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<sup>3</sup>This vote was the largest ever given against women's suffrage.

<sup>4</sup>Most western states had women's suffrage well before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

<sup>5</sup>Senator James Vardman, Democrat from Mississippi, opposed the Nineteenth Amendment and

extended voting rights to all women, including African-American women. It also increased the likelihood of federal officials coming into their states to oversee their election process to ensure that women would not be denied their voting rights. This, in turn, would call attention to how African-Americans were being prevented from voting in violation of the Fifteenth Amendment (Burns, Peltason and Cronin, 1989: 97).

West Virginia's Equal Suffrage Association formed a special Ratification Committee, chaired by Mrs. Ellis (Lenna) A. Yost, of Morgantown, to work for the Amendment's ratification by the state legislature. An advisory board of 150 of West Virginia's most influential men was formed and prominent women in the state were recruited to campaign for the amendment's ratification. Federal and state political leaders were also working toward the ratification.<sup>6</sup> However, there was opposition to the amendment from outside the state, including a committee from the Maryland Legislature and anti-suffrage leaders from all over the United States (Jones and Yost, 1992: 6).

The struggle to approve the amendment was a major political battle with neither side certain of victory. After canvassing the legislature in December, the Equal Suffrage Association thought that there were enough votes to ratify the Amendment and urged Governor John J. Cornwall (D) to call the legislature into a

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called for "repeal of the Fifteenth, the modification of the Fourteenth..., making this a government by white men, of white men, for all men." But opposition to women's suffrage was not limited to southerners. Senator William Borah, a noted liberal Republican from Idaho, also opposed it, again on racial grounds: "There are 100,000 Japanese and Chinese women (in the Pacific states), and I have no particular desire to bestow suffrage upon them," he stated (Grimes, 1979, quoted in Burns, Peltason and Cronin, 1989: 98).

<sup>6</sup> President Woodrow Wilson telegraphed members of the West Virginia Senate: "May I not urge upon you the importance to the whole country of the prompt ratification of the suffrage amendment and express the hope that you will find it possible to lend your aid to this end?" The state's congressional delegation and both the Democratic and Republican National Committees also

special, two-day session. The ratification resolution was introduced on the 27th, and debated and voted on the following day. As expected, the Amendment was approved by the House 47-40, but the Senate was deadlocked 14-14. State Senator Jesse A. Bloch (R-Ohio), who was in California at the time of the vote, telegraphed: "Just received notice of special session. Am in favor of ratification. Please arrange a pair for me"<sup>7</sup> (Jones and Yost, 1922: 695). The Senate rejected his request on a 14-14 vote. The Secretary of State, Houston G. Young (R), called Bloch to inform him that his request for a pair had been denied, that the Amendment had failed because of the tie vote, and that a motion in the House to reconsider the vote had been "laid on the table" and could be called up at any time. This, in turn, began Senator Bloch's race across the country for Charleston (Jones and Yost, 1922: 6).

The situation became tense while the Amendment's advocates waited for Bloch's arrival. Recognizing that Bloch would break the tie in the Senate, the Amendment's opponents contacted former state senator A. R. Montgomery (D-Logan) who had resigned his seat eight months earlier and moved to Illinois. An opponent of the Amendment, Montgomery arrived in Charleston before Bloch and demanded that Governor Cornwell return his letter of resignation and allow him to vote on the measure. Montgomery argued that there was no documentary evidence that he had given up his state residency. The Governor refused Montgomery's request. The former senator then appeared in the Senate and offered to vote, but the Senate president, Dr. Charles A. Sinsel (R-Taylor), one of the amendment

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urged the Legislature to ratify the amendment (Harris, 1922: 6).

<sup>7</sup>Members may "pair" on a vote by filing a signed statement with the Clerk. A pair consists of a member voting for the measure and a member voting against the measure thereby canceling out the two votes.



supporters, ruled that he was no longer a member of the Senate and could not vote. The ruling was then sustained by a tie vote and the case was referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections (Jones and Yost, 1922: 6).

Senator Bloch arrived in Charleston on March 10, 1920, and took his seat in the Senate. Before a packed audience in the galleries and the floor of the Senate, Montgomery's right to vote on the Amendment was debated. Former Senator Montgomery was not permitted to take his seat and the ratification vote was approved (16-13) (Jones and Yost, 1922).<sup>8</sup> West Virginia became the thirty-fourth state to ratify the Amendment allowing women the right to vote.<sup>9</sup> Seventeen days later, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the Amendment, thus meeting the required number of states needed to make the amendment effective.

#### *From Suffrage to Office Holding*

Prior to the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification, not a single women had ever served in the West Virginia state legislature. However, Article Four, Section Four of West Virginia's Constitution only allows citizens who are qualified to vote to serve in the legislature.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, winning the right to vote was the single most important event allowing women's participation in West Virginia politics.

During the 1922 election West Virginian women ran for a number of state and national political offices for the very first time. Miss Hattie Stein (R) became the first woman in West Virginia to run for a seat in the United States Congress;

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<sup>8</sup>One senator opposing the amendment changed his vote when he saw the resolution would pass.

<sup>9</sup>It is interesting to note that it was not until 1994 that West Virginia's state constitution was amended to remove language referring to "male voters," (House Joint Resolution 13, adopted March 11, 1994, Regular Session, West Virginia Legislature).

and Mrs. Izetta Jewel Brown (D), a widow of a former congressman, became the first West Virginia woman to run for the United States Senate. Both of them lost their respective primaries, but waged active campaigns ("Mrs. Brown May Try For Senate," 3 May 1922; "Sixty-five candidates seeking seat in House," 2 July 1922; "Making a Hot Campaign," 9 July 1922; "Congressmen Continue to Lead Opponents..." 1922). Brown addressed the issue of women running for public office in a letter she wrote to Stein:

...I greatly appreciate your courage -- for it does take courage for a woman to enter a political contest in this state. As you say, it is gratifying to know that the other side is presenting the highest type of man or woman as a candidate for public office. I have been reading with great interest of your campaign and am glad to see that you are standing for the highest standards in politics. I can close my letter with the same sentiment you have expressed so splendidly to me -- "with best wishes for the best for West Virginia," (Kirkland, 1922: July 16: 12).

The 1922 election was a banner year for women in West Virginia. Not only did women break the gender barrier by running for several political offices for the first time, they also won some of those elections. Four women, for example, were elected county Superintendents of Schools that year (in Kanawha, Cabell, Berkeley and Mason counties) (Kirkland, 11 November 1922). Moreover, two of the five women who ran in the primaries for seats in the West Virginia state legislature won their party's nomination. Mrs. Tom (Anna) Johnson Gates was one of six Democrats and Nina Blundon Wills was one of six Republican primary winners in Kanawha County. Mrs. Gates (D) then went on to win one of Kanawha County's six seats in the state legislature, making her West Virginia's first woman state

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<sup>10</sup>In November 1894, Colorado elected the first women legislators to the Colorado State House. By the time national women's suffrage was ratified in 1920, at least 69 women had served in 12 states (Cox, 1994).

legislator (Wills finished seventh) ("Ray tells of Qualifications of Candidates" 5 November 1922; Harris, 1924).

## Chapter Two

### The Women Pioneers of the West Virginia Legislature

Mrs. Tom (Anna) Johnson Gates was the first of seven women to serve in the Legislature during the 1920s (see Table 1). At this time, many women across the country were also starting to enter into political careers, often expanding on their activities with local political clubs and Parent Teacher Associations to run for the local school board, and then for the state legislature (Tristam, 1992). The first seven women to serve in the West Virginia Legislature were either appointed because their husbands had died or elected because they or their husband were well known through their political or social activities.<sup>11</sup>

Although the number of West Virginia women legislators increased somewhat over the next four decades (see Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5), the numbers remained fairly small, often with only one or two women serving in the state legislature at the same time. Between 1930 and 1960, more than 60 percent of the women were appointed to the legislature, typically to serve out the remainder of the legislative term of deceased relatives, usually their husbands or fathers. Mrs. Hazel Hyre (D-Jackson), for example, became the first woman to serve in the state Senate when she was appointed to fill her late husband's unexpired term in 1934 ("History of Women," 1994). It was not until 1966 that a woman (Betty Baker, D-Hardy) was elected to the state Senate (Tristam, 1992).

Prior to the 1960s, most of the women who served in the West Virginia state legislature did not have strong political aspirations, did not remain in the

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<sup>11</sup> Many of the women legislators were only identified by their husbands' names. Their first

legislature very long, and did not have a significant impact on state policy. The first part of this paper is about some of the exceptions. It is about some of the women who served in the state legislature and made a difference. It is about the pioneers who broke down barriers for women who wanted to serve in public office as members of the West Virginia Legislature.

### **Anna Johnson Gates: First Woman State Legislator In West Virginia**

Mrs. Tom (Anna) Johnson was West Virginia's first woman state legislator. A native of East Bank, Kanawha County, she was elected to represent Kanawha County in the House of Delegates in 1922. She had attended the Kanawha County public school system and the Montgomery Preparatory school. She was an active member of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs and Charleston's Business and Professional Women's Club. She had also been an experienced business woman, having served as Secretary to Charleston's Board of Affairs and manager of an apartment complex. She was also active in local politics, serving as the Chairman of the Women's Democratic Executive Committee of Kanawha County and election registrar ("Ray tells of Qualifications of Candidates" 5 November 1922:8; Harris, 1924:151).

In late August of 1921, several members of the Democratic party banded together at a Democratic convention and encouraged her to run for a seat in the West Virginia House of Delegates. She did not make up her mind until the final day to register for the primary ("Friends of Mrs. Gates Deny She Officiated as Registrar." 1 November 1922:13). Her opponents accused her of violating state election laws by continuing to hold her position as election registrar while also running for the

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names were not available in the resource guides this researcher used.

legislature. Her friends and allies argued that all the negative campaigning was just a “Republican smear tactic,” pointing out that she had resigned as election registrar the same day she filed for candidacy (“Friends of Mrs. Gates Deny She Officiated as Registrar.” 1 November 1922:13).

Gates received the fifth highest number of votes among the 18 candidates running for Kanawha county’s six legislative seats.<sup>12</sup> Following her election, the Charleston Gazette’s editors wrote: “Her vote in Tuesday’s election is a distinct personal compliment to Mrs. Gates, as well as to women in politics,” (“Picture caption” 9 November 1922:2).

Gates was an active legislator, sponsoring 13 pieces of legislation during the legislative session, five of which were enacted. Among those that did not immediately become law were proposals to establish public health clinics, making Thanksgiving and Christmas school holidays, improving women’s legal rights (allowing them the same rights and privileges as men to serve on a jury, hold office, hold property, have the freedom of contract, and have care and custody of children), and changing marriage license requirements (requiring syphilis testing for both the man and the woman) (*West Virginia House of Delegates Journal*, 1923:987,1002,1028,784).

Among her successful bills was one that provided financial relief for women in the event something happened to her husband. Known as “Mother’s Pensions” legislation, it was essentially a state welfare policy to provide income to any woman with children whose husband was unable to support the family financially. State legislation of this type was being approved across the nation at the time. She was

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<sup>12</sup>Six Democrats, six Republicans and six Socialists ran in the election; all six Democrats were elected (Harris 1924).

also successful in getting four other bills passed: providing the Kanawha County Board of Education the authority to establish, support and maintain a public library; creating a tax levy to pay for the construction of a bridge in Clendenin; changing the Charleston city charter to allow the city to expand its boundary; and protecting animals from inhumane treatment (*Acts of the Legislature*, 1923: 378,237,1466,1412,1481).

In addition to being the first woman elected to West Virginia's state legislature, Gates was also the first to serve in a leadership capacity. During her only term in the House of Delegates, she was appointed Chairperson of the Committee on Arts, Science and General Improvements. Although this committee was not considered one of the most important ones in the state legislature, her appointment as Chair was quite an achievement in the then male dominated world of state politics.

### **Minnie Buckingham Harper: Making National History**

Mrs. Minnie Buckingham Harper (R-McDowell) has the distinction of being the first African-American woman state legislator in the United States. She was appointed on January 10, 1928, to the House of Delegates by Governor Howard Gore (R) to fill a vacancy caused by the death of her husband, E. Howard Harper ("History of Women," 1994; Harris, 1928:221).

Some may find it surprising that West Virginia, a state that has never had a large number of African-Americans, would hold the honor of having the first African-American woman state legislator in the United States. During the early part of this century the southern half of the state, and McDowell County in particular, attracted a relatively large number of African-Americans from surrounding states

who were looking for work in the coal mines. Although the work was hazardous and hard, the pay was relatively good, especially given the limited career alternatives available for most African-American men (McGehee, 24 September 1994). By 1920, the state's African-American population had increased to almost 86,000 (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 7:365).

Harper did not have the opportunity to contribute to the Legislature because she was appointed during the final year of her husband's two year term. During this decade the structure of legislative sessions, the time when the Legislature would meet as a whole to produce legislation and develop a budget, did not allow for annual meetings. The structure, established with the constitution of 1872, allowed the Legislature to meet biennially in odd-numbered years for a total of 45 days (Davis and others, 1963: 90). From 1920 until 1928, the regular session was split, with members meeting for 15 days in January solely for the introduction of bills, unless a public emergency existed which required legislation. They then recessed until March and met for a period of 45 days to work on legislation (Davis and others, 1963: 91). Since Harper was appointed in 1928, there was no legislative session for her to attend.

### **Hazel Edna Hyre: "I Am Interested In It All."**

In 1934, Hazel Edna Hyre (D-Jackson) became the first woman to serve in the West Virginia state Senate. She was appointed by Governor Herman G. Kump (D) on March 12, 1934, to the Senate to fill the vacancy created by her husband's death. Her husband, Kenna K. Hyre, a leading attorney in Jackson County, had



died ("Senator Kenna K. Hyre Passes Away," 8 March 1934:1). She did not run in the state Senate elections held in 1936.

The local paper in Ripley described Hyre's first day in the Senate in great detail. She entered the Senate chamber for the first time while it was conducting business, and was escorted to the front of the chamber by her colleagues from Mason and Pleasants counties. Dressed in black, she was sworn in and assumed the seat previously occupied by her deceased husband. She flashed a smile when the Senators welcomed their first woman colleague with a "burst of applause." She said, "I regret, of course, the circumstances under which I am coming here, but I feel it is a great honor." The paper reported that politics and legislation were new to her. Asked if she was interested in any special kind of legislation, she replied, "I am interested in it all." ("Mrs. Kenna K. Hyre First Woman Member of Senate," 15 March 1934:1).

She was born on July 9, 1896, in Ten Mile and was active in the Ripley community as a member of the American Legion Auxiliary and Ripley Woman's Club. Along with holding the distinction of being the first woman to serve in the state Senate, Hyre was also the first female school teacher to serve in the legislature. She had previously worked as a school teacher in Mason County and resigned upon moving to Ripley with her husband (Lively, 1934:90).

#### **Nell W. Walker: "Pistol Nell"**

Nell Walker (D-Fayette) was elected to the House of Delegates in 1936 and has the distinction of being the longest serving female with 22 years of legislative service (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 46:147). She was the only woman elected to the Legislature during the 1940s (the others were appointed).

She was born on February 7, 1889 in Sewell, and West Virginia Institute of Technology and Columbia University. She was a Vice President and Assistant Cashier for The Winona National Bank in Fayette County (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 21: 251). Even though she was described as a "frail and gentle little woman," she acquired the nickname "Pistol Nell" after helping to disarm a robber at her bank ("History of Women," 1994). Allegedly, Walker had lived through three bank holdups. One of the robberies took place while she was the only person in the bank. During another robbery, the robber pointed a gun at a male bank official. Walker slid a pistol along the counter to the official who shot, wounded and captured the robber ("Funeral For Mrs. Nell Walker Set Saturday In Winona Home," 7 March 1962: 1A).

In addition to her years as a banker, Walker served as an ambulance driver with the Red Cross in France during World War I. She was also a member of the Democratic State Executive Committee as well as Associate Chairman of the Fayette County Democratic Executive Committee ("Funeral For Mrs. Nell Walker Set Saturday In Winona Home," 7 March 1962: 1A).

In 1955, after serving 18 years in the legislature, she was appointed state Banking Commissioner by Governor William C. Marland. She returned to the Legislature in 1958 and died while in office in 1962 (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 46:147).

As an indication of her colleagues' respect for her many years of service, the House of Delegates presented her a white orchid on her birthday in 1962, her last year in the legislature. Delegate Earl Vickers (D-Fayette) praised Walker at the presentation for "her devotion to service" and her "personal integrity," ("Del. Nell Walker Feted by House," 7 February 1962: 1A).

Although Walker was known as a loyal Democrat, her willingness to fight for what she believed in was evidenced during her final year in the legislature when she defied the Democratic leadership by opposing Governor Barron's (D) proposal to extend the recently increased consumer sales tax rates a second time. She argued that "the party had promised the increase would be allowed to expire and should keep its promise," ("Funeral For Mrs. Nell Walker Set Saturday In Winona Home," 7 March 1962: 1A). Known as a legislator who championed the coal miners of her southern West Virginia constituency. She also tried, but failed, to sidetrack the Barron administration's efforts to provide funding to transport coal by pipeline. She also tried to reduce the number of attaches employed by the House for the 1962 session. Though she fought for what she believed in, she was known to usually support the Democratic gubernatorial administrations which were in power all but four years of her legislative career. ("Funeral For Mrs. Nell Walker Set Saturday In Winona Home," 7 March 1962: 1A).

**Elizabeth Simpson Drewry: "No Body Ever Succeeded Falling By The Wayside."**

Elizabeth Simpson Drewry (D-McDowell) became the second African-American woman to serve in the West Virginia state Legislature following her election in 1950. She is the only African-American woman to have been elected to the state Legislature.

Drewry was born in Motley, Virginia. Married as a teenager and a mother at the age of 14, she had been educated in McDowell County's public schools and attended Bluefield Colored Institute, now Bluefield State College. She then taught for 28 years at Northfork East Grade School. She was considered an outstanding

teacher and scored a record 99 on a statewide teacher's test (McGehee, 24 September 1994).

She reportedly decided to run for the House of Delegates after discovering the injustice in salaries between white and black teachers. Although she ran as a Democrat, in her younger years she had been a Republican. In an August 12, 1934 letter to her daughter Lucille, she wrote, "The outlook for the Republicans seems good. about 22,000 more Republicans voted than Democrats. We expect a sweep this fall . . . Now we only have to fight the Dems this fall," (Drewry collection 1934). Then, in a November 1935 letter to Lucille she wrote,

Well the election went wrong as usual. The whole state and country went Democratic. Republicans didn't get an office. Every Negro office holder in McDowell is gone. Replaced by whites. Fleming is the only Negro in McDowell in office. Well if it suits them I'll stick it out, someday. Roosevelt and this wild stuff can't last. There will be a stopping to all this by an by its all a shame. and favors to a few. (In reference to the Roosevelt wage tax and pensions which wouldn't be paid until 1942) (Drewry collection).

Drewry's allegiance to the Republican party during the 1930s was normal for African-Americans at that time. They knew that it was Lincoln's Republican party that had freed the slaves. President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, which provided jobs for African-Americans as well as whites, and Eleanor Roosevelt's calls for anti-lynching legislation and other policies benefiting African-Americans, caused many African-Americans to switch their party allegiance to the Democratic party. In January 1936, Drewry announced her intention to switch parties in a letter to her daughter, but also indicated that she was still going to vote for some of the Republican candidates because she did not have full confidence in the New Deal programs, and was not pleased about how the Democratic party officials were distributing government jobs within the county:

I am going to get them. I am registering Democrat and vote for which ever I please in November elections . . . I'm just registering and saying nothing about the voting. These Dems are birds they had better cater for votes this new deal is dying on their hands. The sooner the better the jobs are only for a privilege few (Drewry collection 1936).

Still not too sure of her new party, in October 1936 she said, "The Dems are certainly making their supporters go in their pockets. I wouldn't pay \$40 for the whole party," (Drewry collections; McGehee, 24 September 1994:7). She did however, work hard for the party. She worked as a precinct poll worker in 1921, did house-to-house canvassing numerous times, attained membership on the powerful county Democratic Executive Committee and was elected to the Northfork Town Council. Of her political work she said, ". . . every political worker must push the party program. You have got to play the political game with the boys," (McGehee, 24 September 1994:9).

She ran for a seat in the House of Delegates twice before finally winning in 1950. She was subsequently re-elected six times, serving from 1951 to 1964. However, there is evidence to suggest that she might have also won the 1948 election. After an apparent victory, a recount of the votes resulted in a 36 vote victory for another Democratic candidate. She alleged fraud and took her argument first to the lower court, which ruled against her, and then to the state Supreme Court, which upheld the lower court's decision. With that experience deeply etched in her memory, she campaigned hard in 1950 and defeated a white male candidate in a majority white district (McGehee, 24 September 1994).

McDowell County's African-American community was very supportive of her candidacy. For example, C. F. Hopson, M.D., wrote the following to her on October 27, 1950:

The entire office force joins me in wishing you success in the coming election, as we feel that it will mean much to the Negroes of the State of West Virginia to be represented by a fine woman as you in the Legislature, (Drewry collection, 1950).

The letter included a \$50 campaign contribution.

Elizabeth Drewry's first year in office was marked by controversy and intrigue. In 1951, she accused I.J.K. Wells, the State Superintendent of Negro Education, of promising her \$1,000 or a trip to Europe if she would help kill a bill in committee. Drewry immediately reported the bribe to the Sergeant at Arms and the local press. Practically overnight, she became a national heroine for refusing to take the bribe and exposing the offer ("History of Women," 1994).

Drewry was an active legislator in her first year in the legislature, introducing several major bills, including the Fair Employment Practices bill and a bill to provide compensation to the victims of silicosis ("History of Women," 1994). She knew the importance of watching all the legislation that went through in a session. She told a civics class: "You have to be on your toes and watch your bills -- many bills are detrimental to the people if allowed to go through. Watch your bills and think fast," (Drewry collection).

In 1955, she sponsored a resolution to submit an amendment for the voter's approval to allow women to serve on juries. Up until that time paupers, vagabonds, idiots, lunatics, habitual drunkards, persons convicted of infamous crimes and women were excluded from jury duty. An argument made against allowing women to serve on juries was the lack of female restrooms in county courthouses ("History of Women," 1994). On November 6, 1956, thirty-six years after women were given the right to vote, the state's voters ratified the amendment, giving West Virginia's women the right to sit on a juries (327,113-202,002) (*West*

*Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 74). West Virginia was the last state to provide this right to women ("History of Women," 1994).

Drewry remained a strong advocate for teachers and school funding throughout her legislative career, and by the 1960s had fully embraced the Democratic party's ideals. In a speech on September 18, 1960, she declared:

"We have known for ages that the Republican party is the party of the rich and big monopolies so the Negro may not expect any thing in his favor from them. So why do people support them? The time has come for the working men and women to stand by the party that stands by them."(Drewry Collection, 1960).

While campaigning for her eighth consecutive term in the House of Delegates in 1964, Drewry became so ill that she was forced to resign her seat in the Legislature. She died September 24, 1979 at the age of 86 (McGehee, 24 September 1994).

### **Betty Head Baker: "I'm Just One Of The Boys."**

Betty H. Baker (D-Hardy) was appointed to the Senate on January 11, 1965, to fill a vacancy caused by the death of her husband, Donald Baker, a member of the House of Delegates who had just won the seat. After deciding that she could do a good job and that she enjoyed being a Senator, she ran in the special election in 1966 to fill the remainder of the seat's four-year term. She was opposed, but won the general election, thereby becoming the first woman ever elected to the West Virginia state Senate (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 50; Tristram, 1992).

Baker was born on September 18, 1919, in Thomas. After graduating from the local public school system, she enrolled at West Virginia University. An exceptionally gifted student, she was selected to become a member of Phi Beta

Kappa. She also held the distinction of being the first woman to serve as the President of West Virginia University's student body. She was elected Vice-President but the President entered the service and she assumed his duties. After graduation, she worked as Deputy County Clerk of Grant County Court in Petersburg, and then became what she termed a "domestic engineer." She noted that: "Back then, when you had four children your main duty was to stay home and rear children," (Baker, 1996).

She ran for the remainder of her husband's unexpired term. Her four children had reached their teenage years, and her cousin, also a widow, volunteered to help take care of her children while she campaigned and served in the Senate. Her campaign was helped by the support and advice of Ralph J. Bean, former President of the state Senate (D-Hardy). She was also able to fund most of her campaign costs herself, accepting only a \$1,000 donation from a group of friends.

Baker felt her Senate colleagues were not too sure of her at the beginning of her term. She recalled the first time she walked into a meeting of the Senate's Democratic party caucus, all the men got to their feet. She said to them, "Look boys, I'll be here the whole session and this is silly. You don't have to stand for me, I'm just one of the boys," (Baker, 1996).

Baker did not sponsor many bills in the Senate. During her first year in the Senate Baker purposely "sat with her ears open and her mouth shut" which in turn gave her a learning experience (Baker, 1996). She did, however, earn the respect of her fellow Senators by studying the content of bills, and working hard in committee. She felt she had the respect of fellow senators because she was a fairly intelligent person and knew what was going on. "I did a good job and came away with the respect of my colleagues," she said. Coming from a county that was



primarily agricultural, Baker was appointed Chair of the Agriculture Committee during her third year in the Senate.<sup>13</sup>

One of the more memorable times Baker could recall was her feeling the first time she voted. Not that it was exciting to cast her vote, but since they did not have machines to use to register her vote, each senator had to register his/her vote by a voice roll call vote. Baker's concern was over her name being the first one called on each vote. "I had been to session before when my husband served, so I knew all about the roll call votes. The first time they called for a vote and my name was called first, I about fell out of my seat." This was difficult at times since the legislation was not always clear cut or she had not made up her mind on a bill.

Baker was grateful to have a close friendship with three of her colleagues with whom she could discuss issues and legislation. These colleagues included Clarence Martin of Berkeley, William Brotherton of Kanawha and the Minority Leader of the Senate John Kerrigan, who she characterized as "intelligent and people of great integrity," (Baker, 1996). She would talk with them about legislation coming up for a vote. "They always explained the bills and said how they would vote, but not once did they ever tell me how I should vote." She remembers times when she was told to vote along party lines but she always voted the way she felt. "I have always been extremely independent."

Baker had a recurring role she had in the Senate to foster more expeditious floor debate. One of her colleagues had a tendency to get "windy" at times, speaking endlessly. Whenever this occurred, the other members of the Senate would "look at her." She would then stand, and the offending Senator, being a true

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<sup>13</sup> Being appointed chairman of a committee signifies a legislator has some influence with legislative leadership.

gentleman, would yield the floor to her. She would move the previous question, which would immediately bring the bill up for a vote, thus ending debate efforts (Baker, 1996).

Baker's proudest legislative accomplishment was her efforts to get the junior drivers licensing bill passed. Sponsored by a Senator whose 16 year old son had been killed in a car wreck, it placed restrictions on those first getting their driver's license at 16 years of age. Baker remembered that the Senate Republican Minority Leader said upon its passage, "Never underestimate the power of a woman."

Baker ran for reelection once her term was up in 1968, but lost in the general election by 134 votes. She was disappointed, but recognized that Republican gubernatorial candidate Arch Moore's victory that year also swept a large number of Republicans into office. As she put it: "Those of us in the county told the state Democratic party that we needed their help with the election. But because we had always been a Democratic district, they were not concerned and ignored our request," (Baker 1996).

She contends that had the Democrats paid attention to the district, the gubernatorial election would have probably gone the other way since the district was a big factor in Moore's election. She explained her loss by saying "I got stepped on by an elephant."

Baker maintains that her years in the Legislature were a good experience overall. She believes that one of the highlights of her life was being the only female in the Senate at the time. She was elected as a delegate to the infamous Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968. Her friends in the Senate and House put her on a

slate and she was elected to go to the convention, coming in with second highest vote in the state.

**Beatrice “Jackie” Neubert Withrow: “A Rose Among The Thorns.”**

Jackie Neubert Withrow (D-Raleigh) was born in Mabscott and attended Beckley public schools. After graduation, she became very active in the Raleigh County Democratic party, serving as President of the Raleigh County Young Democrats and a member of the Raleigh County Democratic Woman’s Club.

A real estate agent, she was very involved with several business, government, and civic organizations, including the Raleigh County Park Board, Business and Professional Woman’s Club of Beckley, Beckley Child Care Auxiliary, and her church.

She decided to run for the House of Delegates in 1960 after visiting several state mental hospitals. While a member of the local General Federation of Women’s Club, she had been among a group who would join with the Raleigh County Association for Mental Health at Christmas time and take gifts to Huntington State Hospital, one of the biggest hospitals dealing with mental disorders at that time. She felt that the people in the state hospitals and institutions had no one to speak for them and believed the only way to help them was through politics (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 45: 234; Higginbotham, 8 February 1974; Withrow, 1996). She explains:

We would go through the wards, some of them, they wouldn’t allow us to go through all of them. It made me feel so bad. Those people didn’t have anyone to speak for them. Now the help was fine -- naturally it was understaffed. So I came back and I gave a report along with the president of the Raleigh County Association for Mental Health. And then we would report to other clubs, and it bothered me...it absolutely bothered me. We went, the group of us, to visit the House of Delegates and the Senate in Charleston. And

we sat there --- and not one time did anyone say anything about these people that could not speak for themselves. And that bothered me even more. So I came home, and I talked with my husband, a dear man, and I talked with my parents, and I talked with my minister, and they suggested . . . "Well if you want to do anything, why don't you run for the Legislature?" So we pondered it, and I talked around to several people, and remind you now, that a woman had never run for public office in Raleigh County. And I thought, well, it would be an adventure, and it would be something, and my parents were very politically minded. And my mother worked in the elections. We were brought up that way. So I thought, well, why not? (Withrow, 1996).

Withrow was the only woman among the 25 candidates entered the Raleigh County House of Delegates' Democratic primary (Withrow, 1996). Since only the top four vote getters would win the party's nomination, she knew she had a lot of work to do. At the outset of her campaign, she recalled that her mother, Willie Lee (Flanagan) Neubert, gave her some sound political advice:

My mother had told me an old Confucius saying 'He who slings mud loses ground.' So I kept that in the back of my mind. And the way I got people to remember me when they asked me how I felt about running with all of the men I said, "You remember this, there's a rose among the thorns and that's Jackie Withrow, (Withrow, 1996).

Withrow waged a vigorous campaign. She and her family members attended countless political functions, knocked on hundreds of doors, and she talked to hundreds of people. While on the campaign trail she encountered many men who questioned why a woman would want to go into politics. She recalled one particular morning when she set out to campaign and came upon a man fixing his roof.

He had a ladder there up against the house. So I just climbed right on up the ladder and I said "I'm Mrs. W. W. Jackie Withrow running for the House of Delegates." And he said, "Huh? You're a woman." I said, "Now isn't that nice, your mother was a woman." So I climbed right on that roof with him and we sat there and

chatted. And he said, "Now Jackie, would you just leave me some of your cards?" So you see that's the way you do it. You never act ugly to them [men]. You talk with them, (Withrow, 1996).

Withrow's husband was one of her most active supporters and designed one of her campaign trademarks -- a large wooden donkey with a rope tail. Mounted on top of her car, the donkey would have a different outfit for the different seasons during the election year. Her husband use to joke, "I just don't know what to do with that Jackie, she's showing her ass all over town."

Her campaign got a boost from the people who had come to know her through her activities in numerous civic associations, especially the woman's clubs. She finished second in the primary and second in the general election to win one of Raleigh County's four House seats. She was reelected eight times. She is especially proud that she never accepted any campaign contributions from any organizations or persons other than her immediate family in any of her campaigns. When an organization sent her a check, she sent it back -- with a thank you note. She recalled:

My parents taught me that when you go to represent the people you don't want to have somebody come up to you and say well I gave you some money you vote the way I want you to. ...I wanted to go down there as free as a bird and represent the cause that I went for, (Withrow, 1996).

Withrow indicated that she enjoyed a good working relationship with her male colleagues in the House. She felt the men treated her with great respect, and considered her one of the House's experts on health care and mental health care issues. That respect is reflected in her being named Chair of the House Health and Welfare Committee, one of the House's more important policymaking committees. She recalled that the Committee worked very hard throughout the legislative year

and between sessions, visiting every mental health facility and every juvenile correctional center in the state during the summer months: "Our committees were working committees. We didn't have time to sit around in the House and talk and gossip . . . we worked," (Withrow, 1996).

Her hard work was rewarded and propelled her to break through one of the biggest barriers for women legislators. Withrow was the first woman in the history of the Legislature to serve on the powerful Finance Committee, which controls the state budget. In addition, her duties on the Finance Committee coincided with her position as chair of the House Health and Welfare Committee as she would oversee the health and welfare budget.

Withrow was a very active and respected legislator. She takes the most pride in her work to pass legislation revising the state's mental health care facilities and requiring PKU tests (for mental retardation in children), for cosponsoring the first bill to provide compensation to coal miners suffering from black lung disease, and for carrying on a crusade started years earlier by Elizabeth Drewry (Withrow, 1996).

Drewry had tried unsuccessfully for years to get legislation passed to protect the black bear, West Virginia's state animal. Withrow and Delegate Ethel "Midge" Crandall (D-Fayette) cosponsored legislation to protect the black bear. They faced strong opposition from bear hunters as well as from farmers who argued that the bears had to be shot because they were killing their farm animals. Withrow and Crandall countered with pictures to prove that most of the farm animals were being killed by wolves, not black bears. On the day the bill was to be voted on by the full House, Withrow and Crandall walked into the House chambers and noticed a little stuffed black bear on the Speaker's podium. They also noticed a few others on

other desks in the chamber. Before the bill was voted on, Crandall addressed the House and then Withrow spoke on behalf of the bill. She recalled:

We didn't know what was going to happen. Right before the Speaker called for the vote, Delegate Tommy Miles threw this bear in the air and Delegate Ned Watson shot it with a cap pistol. All of this was on the television. I picked up the stuffed bear and said 'You come to mamma!' Everyone laughed. The bill passed with only one vote against it, (Withrow, 1996).

While serving in the 1970s, Withrow said she would like to see more women in politics. She stated, "The state legislature is no longer a man's world. I was brought up to believe men and women were created equal. I have no problems," (Higginbotham, 8 February 1974). Her overarching thought on guiding government, "Place yourself and government in the hands of God, the Supreme Being -- He has the final say anyway."

Withrow decided not to run for reelection in 1980. She felt it was time for her to leave and she wanted to travel and spend more time with her husband. She had spent 18 years serving as a member of the House of Delegates, earning her the distinction of being the second longest serving woman legislator in West Virginia.

## **Part Two**

### **The Decades of Increasing Political Opportunity**



## **Chapter Three**

### **The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s**

The 1970s, 80s and 90s would differ greatly from the first 50 years in which women served in the West Virginia Legislature. There has been little research done on the women of that era. However, as the number of women serving in legislatures increased, so did the literature on women in politics. The political opportunities began changing for women in West Virginia and this was in tune with what was happening across the nation.

What follows is a discussion of those changes through the decades. Following this discussion is a format similar to the first part of this thesis with a look at four women who stood out as legislative giants during the past three decades. Their achievements will become apparent through the in-depth look at their legislative careers.

#### **The 1970s**

The number of women who served in the West Virginia Legislature during the 1970s increased dramatically (see Table 6). With the women's movement sweeping the nation, women were beginning to become a larger part of policy-making as legislators rather than as secretaries taking dictation for male legislators. The numbers of women as students in college and in the workforce was also on the rise.

In 1975, an Associated Press survey of the 50 state legislatures indicated an increase in women members. This included a growth in the number of women in

the West Virginia House of Delegates which grew from 1965's two members, to eight members. The West Virginia Senate's record of one female member remained the same. Also, there were no women in major leadership posts in West Virginia, a trend which was true in the other 49 state legislatures ("Younger, Higher Paid: Legislature Mirrors National Trend," 8 July 1975).

In the 1970s, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick (1974: 29) answered the question, "what kinds of women run for state legislatures?" She claimed: all kinds. Beautiful and plain, young, old and middle aged, fat and thin, rich and poor, housewives, lawyers, secretaries, pragmatists and idealists. Her data showed that while no one pattern of experience was shared by all the women legislators of the 1970s, the biographies included the same key elements: a small town background, geographic stability, middle class, participant parents, higher education, and community service.

Nationwide, women state legislators of the 1970s possessed lower levels of education than men. They were also primarily employed in positions that were dominated by women, they had relatively little political experience prior to assuming their places in the state house and they were not particularly interested in gaining higher political office (Thomas, 1994:82). Women served on a broader array of committees during this decade. The committee on finance had several women serving as members. Sue Thomas (1994:83) explained that during the 1970s, women state legislators nationwide realized that women faced obstacles to success because of their gender. They understood that discrimination in the Legislature was a fact of life and a barrier to achieving success. They reacted to the barrier by avoiding it.

Thomas (1994: 83) contends that women legislators of the 1970s did not engage in active participation in the everyday world of Legislatures. They held themselves back from speaking in committees and on the floor of their chambers. They did not negotiate and bargain with their colleagues and they found such actions difficult to engage in. Women contributed to the political arena by working hard to take care of their constituents and to deal with community concerns.

In February 1975, *Charleston Daily Mail's* Women's Editor Wilma Higginbotham began a series of articles which focused on women lawmakers in the West Virginia Legislature. In her editor's note she stated, "This is. . . a series. . . about women lawmakers. . . who are seldom quoted in the press. They have some pretty firm convictions and work hard to fulfill their duties as legislators."

### **The 1980s**

The woman of the 1980s replaced the woman of the 1970s with the new title of "Superwoman." This was the woman who could have it all, the woman who could both "bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan." In 1984, women constituted 52 percent of all college students, and throughout the 1980s the number of women in the labor force and nontraditional jobs increased (Dodson, 1994: 9; Thomas, 1994: 41).

Nationally, women legislators of the 1980s made inroads in educational and occupational opportunities, gained a great deal of individual and collective political experience, and developed political ambition at ever-increasing rates. They accomplished all this with very little reduction in their responsibilities to children and home (Thomas, 1994: 82).

In the 1980s, the number of women serving in the West Virginia Legislature almost doubled and topped off at a total of 26 during 1989 (see Table 7.). Six women served in the Senate and 20 served in the House. Getting elected to the Legislature seemed to become a less difficult task as the number of women elected to office increased dramatically. The 1980 elections brought 16 women to the Legislature, two in the Senate and fourteen in the House. It is interesting to note, the Sixty-seventh session (1986-87) had seven districts in which women made up half or more of the membership. In four districts (mostly two-member districts), women made up half of the delegation. In three districts women made up more than half of the membership. These districts included Cabell County with four out of six delegates women, Greenbrier County with both delegates women, and Monongalia County with three of four delegates women (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 69: 332-333).

In 1984, House Clerk Donald Kopp stated that he believed women get encouragement to run when they come to Charleston as lobbyists or visitors and see female delegates at work. "They put forth an image that's appealing to other women," he said. "They see them on the floor, making speeches, handling themselves well and I think that's appealing to people from outside." (Baker, 16 October 1984).

In explaining the historic numbers of women in the Legislature during the 1980s, Senator Sondra Lucht explained it meant "an increased confidence in the wide range of abilities of women. Women have different experiences growing up. Research shows that women focus on people-oriented issues . . . which are basically economic," (Wilson, 19 February 1989: 7A).

Nationally, women legislators of the 1980s were found, more often than men, to sit on committees dealing with health and welfare. However, unlike the women of the 1970s, they were more likely to have selected the assignments rather than being placed upon them because of the stereotypical attitudes of others (Thomas, 1994: 83). In the 1970s, Delegate Jackie Withrow had been the first woman to serve on a Finance Committee. In the 1980s, a large proportion of women served on the finance committees of both houses, giving women a larger voice regarding the state budget.

Women legislators of the 1980s overcame the barrier of discrimination with regard to achieving effectiveness as legislators. They acknowledged obstacles to active participation in the everyday world of legislatures, but plowed through them and moved on to contribute in all areas of legislative life. They participated on equal levels with men in speaking on the floor and in committees, meeting with lobbyists and negotiating and bargaining with their colleagues (Thomas, 1994: 83).

### *The Women's Caucus*

An important development occurred in 1983 with the formation of the Women's Legislative Caucus. The group met informally every week during session. The caucus considered topics such as prenatal care and day care, and has been successful in getting legislation passed on these issues. The caucus serves as a support group for women legislators to help them stay well informed on issues and lobby for those issues that affect women in their state (Thaemert, 1994:30).

Marge Burke, the first chairman of the Women's Caucus, believed most male legislators respected female legislators but noted that "it always struck fear in their hearts when we called a women's caucus," (Burke, 1994). Patricia Hartman

also noted the male legislators reaction stating ". . . when a meeting of the caucus was announced on the floor, to be held in the Ladies Lounge, there was a murmur through the male legislators, a 'what are they up to now?' Naturally, we encouraged their unease," (Hartman, 1994).

An effort by the women's caucus received national attention in 1987. Nationally, the women lawmakers in West Virginia were portrayed as women who "showed the power of a women's legislative caucus when they joined together to save a prenatal care bill . . . which now stands as a monument to the collective energies of women within and outside the Legislature." Delegate Pat White said, "Any person with an ounce of sympathy would have to vote for indigent pregnant women and for children. This state has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country and it's because poor women can't afford prenatal care," (Kleeman, 1987: 199; Knap, 12 March 1987).

The women's caucus first employed a variety of pressure tactics to force reconsideration of the bill by a Senate committee after the chairman, Gerald Ash (D-Monongalia) sent the bill out with a negative recommendation. Several delegates accused the Senate health chair of being against programs which have a positive impact on women and children. Delegate White asserted that Ash's judgment was clouded by his involvement with the state hospital association. Ash said his motivation behind not recommending the bill was to protect hospitals and the people who would eventually have to pay for it (Kleeman, 1987: 202; Knap, 12 March 1987; Knap, 13 March 1987: 1A).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> After what *The Charleston Gazette's* editorial board called "a spirited revolt...that overthrew an unethical legislative 'fix,'" Gerald Ash resigned to take a position with the West Virginia Hospital Association ("Revolt at Last," 14 March 1987) ("Sen. Lucht appointed to Rules Committee," 18 August 1987).

One woman senator threatened to stop all legislative business with a filibuster, while women members of the House pushed through a resolution asking the Senate to reconsider the bill. Outside, advocacy groups organized a candlelight vigil in support of the bill. The bill finally passed, but the governor vetoed it, so the women organized once again to successfully get the veto overridden (Kleeman, 1987: 202).

In 1990, the Women's caucus had their first joint meeting with both delegates and senators. When asked if reporters could attend, cochair Marjorie Burke replied, "Absolutely not. We voted early on to close the caucus to everyone because some of the lobbyists wanted to attend," (Miller, 17 January 1990).

Bonnie Brown remembered using the strength of the women's caucus in 1992 to defeat a soft drink bill affecting public schools. She said, "Athletic people wanted the pop machines and junk food and it was a bill which would allow them to do it because they needed the revenue. We decided we were more interested in the nutrition for kids and so we, as a bloc, decided we would not support that," (Brown, 23 February 1995).

By 1996, the women's caucus agreed to work together more concentrating on three or four bills. The chair of the caucus predicted the caucus would better be able to work together because they had "... bumped each other, and rubbed off some of the rough edges and fought some battles, and I think now we feel comfortable with each other," (Leach, 6 March 1995, interview). The caucus needed to regain some momentum as it had been relatively inactive over the years. One woman legislator explained, "There was such animosity created by two of the women delegates . . . last year that I think it will take at least a year for them (male

delegates) to see us as just people," (Anonymous Female Legislator, 1995 interview).

The women legislators made some changes during 1996, such as discontinuing the tradition of giving the Speaker of the House a gift on Valentine's day. The tradition had also included giving presents to other members of leadership, while the women also received gifts. In the past, women would go up to the Speaker's podium and plant a kiss on the Speaker's cheek.<sup>15</sup> One woman legislator said, "We thought that was degrading. We want to be treated just like the guys, we want to be equal. When we got up to the Finance committee Bob Kiss [the chair] had gotten us each a rose and of course we were delighted. One of the delegates thanked him and said, 'We can come up and kiss you if you want us to.' I said, 'If you go up there I am going to break your legs, we are not doing that anymore,'" (Anonymous Female Legislator, 1995 interview).

The caucus had one or two serious meetings during the 1996 legislative session. She said, "We set up all these rules, we won't buy gifts, and we're not going to kiss the Speaker, and we are not going to collect money for the committees. Anytime you are on a committee and there is a gift to be bought, the women are usually the ones who have to collect the money, and go buy the gift," (Anonymous Female Legislator, 1995 interview). She added, "We made them "clean up" the Speaker's dinner so they didn't keep on telling all of those raunchy stag jokes which would embarrass some of the women," (Anonymous Female

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<sup>15</sup> In the House, female delegates wore red, presented Speaker Chuck Chambers with a gift, and took turns standing in line to kiss him. Republican delegates did the same for Minority Leader Bob Burke (Wood). Commenting on being kissed by the women, Chambers joked, "The chair does not want this to appear to be sexist. Any men can get in line." Delegate Steve Cook responded asking, "I have a number of bills bogged down in the process. I wonder, if I come up



Legislator, 1995 interview).

The caucus chair said, "We have ground rules that we won't get involved in the abortion issue and we will not get into gay and lesbian rights. We will try to find some middle of the road economic issues that we can all support," (Leach, 6 March 1995, interview).

### **The 1990s**

When 1992 was celebrated as the "Year of the Woman" it was a statement that women were continuing their march toward becoming an equal part of the political system. In West Virginia, the "Year of the Woman" began four years ahead of the national scene. The election of 1988, and the appointments in the months that followed placed a record number of women in the state Legislature. In 1989-90, during the Sixty-ninth Legislative session, a total of 29 female legislators served in the House and Senate; the highest number of female legislators ever to serve. The Senate and House were made up of seven female senators and 22 female delegates serving the state. While two women resigned during this session, three women were appointed (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 73:272, 296-98). Women maintained this record number of members during the Seventieth session (1991-92). The Seventy-first Legislature (1993-94) started the numbers descent from the peak with a membership consisting of 23 female legislators, and then falling to 20 female members during the Seventy-second Legislature (see Table 8.).

One authority, who compared women state legislators of the 70s and 80s, found women equally adamant about wanting to see more women in public office

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there, if I have to give you a kiss on the face?" Chambers replied, "Sir, if you come up here, I'll show you where you can kiss," ("Valentine's kisses abound during session," 15 February 1994).

(Thomas, 1994:83). These women believed they faced substantial barriers to participation within and success in the public sphere because of their gender, but believed those barriers could be overcome.<sup>16</sup> Over those decades, women legislators were consistently more liberal than their male counterparts and more supportive of women's issues and social welfare issues. Women of the 70s and

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<sup>16</sup> In the 1990s, a good example of how women handled the gender differences in the legislature was found in the humorous Senate Resolution No. 26. This resolution designated March 1, 1994, as Men's Day at the West Virginia State Legislature. The resolution was sponsored by all five female senators.

Whereas, For the past several years the Legislature has designated a specific day as "Women's Day at the Legislature"; and

Whereas, As Valentine's Day passes each year, much attention is paid to women legislators. They are presented flowers, candy and valentine cards from many individuals, including the Senate President and the Senate Clerk. It has been noted by women legislators that on this day male legislators seem rejected, disheartened and left out; and

Whereas, With the number of women legislators increasing with each election and with the number of women who serve the Legislature in positions of power and influence, they have come to feel equal to their male colleagues, especially with the creation of generic restroom facilities; and

Whereas, Women legislators have developed a superiority complex from receiving so much well deserved attention during the course of a legislative session. So much so, they are beginning to feel unequal to their male colleagues; and

Whereas, Since both males and females serve in the same legislative house, such unfair treatment of male legislators could, under new legislation, be probable cause for arrest in a domestic dispute; and

Whereas, Women legislators fully recognize that the word compromise is the key to cooperation in the legislative branch. Accordingly, women legislators would like to see a day designated for men during the legislative session so that they, too, can feel respected and so that the women legislators can now eliminate, to some degree, their superiority complex; therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate:*

That the Senate hereby designates March 1, 1994, as "Men's Day at the Legislature" in an endeavor to help make the male members of the West Virginia Legislature equal to their female colleagues on this day only; and, be it

*Further resolved,* That, for once, in kindness to our male Clerk, his chief desk clerk is hereby kindly asked to forward a copy of this resolution to male members of the West Virginia Senate and the Senate Clerk," (West Virginia State Senate, 1994: 7).

80s made progress in gaining and keeping positions in the public sphere; however, complete integration was not achieved (Thomas, 1994).

The election of 1990 was again a time when women maintained large numbers in the Legislature. The Senate lost one female member who resigned and had six women serving in that body. The House reached its highest number of female members with a total of 22 women (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 73: 296-97).

It was said that in West Virginia, there is no such thing as a typical woman's campaign, a typical candidate or a woman's typical experience in male-dominated government. "Women now, more than in the past, can use the fact that they are women to help their campaigns. Because they are outsiders, they are different, and many in the electorate are tired of business as usual," (Tristram, 1992: 1C).

After the 1990 elections, the Legislature's Clerks commented on the large influx of women into the Legislature. Senate Clerk Darrell Holmes commented that he believed women worked "much harder than their counterparts" when they campaigned. House Clerk Don Kopp said, "As a rule, the ladies who serve in the Legislature do a tremendous job. I think females, by hard work and dedication, have built a very good reputation," (Stadelman, 8 November 1990: 1B).

A study by Dolan and Ford (1994:19) concludes that women recently elected to state legislatures are significantly different from women who served in the past in a number of ways. Today's female legislators are younger, better educated, come to the Legislature from more professional occupations, and they realize different legislative careers once in office.

Each legislative session brings some new female faces to the West Virginia Legislature, even though the total number of women who serve is declining. In the 1995-96 session of the legislature, there was a drop in the number of women from the previous legislative session by three. After the 1996 election, 20 women held a seat in the West Virginia Legislature, five in the Senate and 15 in the House. In the 1997-98 legislative session, the total number of women remained the same with a drop of one in the Senate and an addition of one in the House. In 1997, West Virginia was ranked forty-first in the nation with the number of women serving in the legislature (CAWP, 1997).

## Chapter Four

### Contemporary Women Legislators

The women legislators who began their service during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s were breaking barriers similar to their “pioneer” colleagues. In this part, four women who served in the past three decades will be discussed. Phyllis Rutledge, Judith Herndon, Jae Spears and Martha Wehrle are four women who would become pillars of legislative service spanning these three decades. While there are arguably more women who could also be described as outstanding women legislators, history will have to be the judge of those who are truly great.

**Phyllis Rutledge: "I don't think being a woman has ever been anything but a help to me."**

Phyllis Rutledge (D-Kanawha) was first elected to the legislature in 1968. Born in Charleston on March 11, 1932, she was educated in high school and trained in the field of insurance. An active member of the Democratic party, Rutledge was proud of the fact that she was the first woman "nobody" in Kanawha county to be elected and reelected. Before that, the first woman to serve in the legislature (Anna Gates), the daughter of a Charleston mayor (Eudora Andrews) and the daughter of a National Republican Committeeman (Elizabeth Hallanan) were elected but served only one term each (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

Rutledge was encouraged by her husband to run for office after she expressed her concern over the candidates from her district who were running. She

remembered, "By the time I ran, women were coming to the forefront about politics and a lot of issues. I got a lot of support by women," (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

However, Rutledge had some difficulties running for office as a female. She stated that she was not invited to speak to public organizations as often as male candidates. She also recalled a story which involved the campaign cards she handed out which read, "Every House needs a woman." One day she got one of the cards back in the mail and it said, "Why in the hell then don't you stay home and take care of yours," (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

Once elected however, Phyllis Rutledge contends she was always treated as "one of the boys" during her years in the Legislature. In her early years in the legislature, she was sent on her first legislative trip funded with the taxpayers' money. When she came back she had written the Speaker a summary of the meetings she attended and explained what went on. Rutledge explained, "He [the Speaker] said, 'What is this?' And I said, 'This is a report.' And he said, 'What kind of report?' And I said, 'A report on what happened at the meetings.' He called his secretary in and said, 'Look what Phyllis did.' He thought it was absolutely hilarious. I said 'If the state is going to pay to send me to on these trips I'm going to learn everything I can.' And he said, 'That's fine, that's what I want you to do.' That was unusual to him and had probably never happened before," (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

Like most legislators, Rutledge served on various committees during her 12 years in the House of Delegates. She remembered being put on the Education Committee during her first term and "hating it" because it was not an area

of great interest to her. She told the Speaker of the House that when she got reelected, she wanted on Finance. According to Rutledge, he said, "Well, I have the token women on finance, I'm not going to put another woman on finance." She said, "Mr. Speaker, that makes me very angry. My gray matter is the same as the men. If I don't get on finance I'll let you know about it every day how unhappy I am." And he asked, "Is that a threat?" And I said, "No sir, it's a promise." She was appointed to the Finance Committee the following year (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

Women did begin to speak up in committees and on the floor during the 1970s. When asked what two legislative accomplishments she was most proud of during her years as a legislator, Rutledge answered, "I was not afraid to ask questions. I think that opened up the doors for legislators, particularly women legislators, to not be afraid to ask those hard questions." She also stated that she thought that now, women are more inclined to ask questions than men. She said, "Women don't have the fear that men do that they might ask a "silly" question," (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

She served in a number of minor leadership roles during her service in the 1970s. She served as chairman of the Joint Committee on Enrolled Bills and as vice chairman of Industry and Labor (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 55: 340,350; Seiler, 28 December 1972).

Rutledge took a break from the legislature when in 1974 she was elected to the position of Circuit Clerk in Kanawha County. She served in that capacity from 1975 to 1986. She reentered life as a legislator during the election of 1988.

In 1993, Rutledge was one of three women chosen as powerful legislators in the Statehouse.<sup>17</sup> It was said of Rutledge, "You can't tell how effective she is until you hear her on the floor or in the finance committee room talking in her folksy, no-nonsense way about her fiscal conservatism," (Cunningham, 10 February 1993: 1A).

Rutledge was appointed Speaker Pro Tempore for the 1993-94 session. While one other woman had had this position previously (Marjorie Burke), Rutledge became the first woman to preside over any chamber of the Legislature. This first occurred when the death of the Speaker's father required his absence and thus, her taking over the chair position. It also occurred in 1994 during the debate over the legislative pay raise. This issue was the only leadership issue she did not go along with during the session. She said, "I was not against the legislative pay raise, I think the legislators needed more money. I was opposed to giving it in a lump sum like that when we have state employees that don't make much more than that. I found it objectionable to do it in that manner. He [Speaker Chambers] knew my position. He put me in the chair and he came off the floor. He gave a speech so I couldn't say anything. And I said to him when I came out, 'How long have you been planning to do that.' And he said 'Two or three days,'" (Rutledge, 25 February 1995, interview).

Rutledge did not run for reelection in 1994. However, she maintains an active role in politics as a lobbyist for several organizations.

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<sup>17</sup> An informal survey of thirty current and former lawmakers, lobbyists, and state officials selected these individuals (Cunningham, 10 February 1993: 1A).



**Judith Herndon: "A legislative giant."**

While women were a minority in the West Virginia Legislature, Republican women had an even heavier cross to bear in order to make an impact on the legislative process. Judith Herndon (R-Ohio) was one such Republican legislator. She was born June 5, 1941, in Wheeling, and received her bachelor's degree from Duke University and her law degree at Northwestern University (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 55: 323). A former price economist for the U.S. Department of Labor, Herndon was appointed by Governor Arch Moore to fill a vacancy in the House of Delegates in 1970 created by the resignation of J. F. Companion (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 54: 257). She distinguished herself as an expert of the legislative process through her five years in the House and seven years in the Senate.

Judith Herndon said her early days as a lawmaker were frustrating because many of the legislators and secretarial pool personnel thought she was a secretary or page. By 1974, fellow lawmakers finally were giving her ideas the same consideration they gave those of her male colleagues. Miss Herndon stated, "They know I don't speak just to talk and I think I speak more from the floor than any other woman when there's an issue to be discussed," (Higginbotham, 7 February 1974: 13A).

The 1970s were a time when women were beginning to have a subtle impact on the state's policies. Some were trying to change policy through the legislation they introduced. Herndon introduced a bill that would allow a woman to take either her maiden name or that of her former husband after divorce. Under the existing law, a judge would make such a decision. The bill failed to be passed out of

committee. Her male colleagues said there was no need for the measure because judges never deny such requests by women. Senator Odell Huffman (D-Mercer) said that the present laws were full of injustices toward men and he would support Herndon's bill when she included in it some measures that dealt with those injustices (Gadd, 15 January 1980).

Regarding women in politics, Herndon remarked that while not enough women participate, this was changing as more women were becoming interested in politics. She blamed public attitudes that accept the role of women as helpers in campaigns for male politicians yet hesitate to accept women as candidates. She added that women, themselves, have been the first to put down politically-oriented women who wished to participate in the processes of government. "In the past, women often have been interested for personal reasons and guided by social concepts of what is feminine and what is not feminine. They've considered politics not very lady-like and are afraid to get in to the nitty-gritty of a real campaign and the kind of tactics that might be thrown at them," Herndon contended (Higginbotham, 7 February 1974: 13A).

She observed that more women were becoming interested in politics because they have decided that not enough women are participating in the system. She also believed women were looking at the mess that had been made of the political system and had decided it was time women took a hand in trying to do something about it (Higginbotham, 7 February 1974: 13A).

Ahead of her time, Judith Herndon worked to pass a lobbyist reform bill in 1976, saying "I don't mind a lobbyist buying my lunch . . . but if a lobbyist buys lunch to influence me, then under this bill he has to say he tried, and it would show

that I let him." Because of Watergate and its climate of political corruption, Senator Herndon believed legislation was needed to bring influence money out into the open, noting that if it was not required, it would not be done. The bill would have established an ethics commission, and would have required expenses of more than \$100 to be reported. Herndon contended that much of the lobbying did not take place in the capitol building, and that some lobbyists met in a downtown hotel and supplied legislators with "six cases of booze and some girls on the side." (Smith, 18 February 1976: 6B). It was not until the late 1980s that lobbyist reform legislation was passed.

In 1978, when *The Charleston Gazette* did a survey to determine the best and worst members of the Legislature, Senator Judy Herndon was ranked the fifth best legislator in the Senate.<sup>18</sup> She was described as "the only woman senator, whose greatest strength is effectiveness in debate, one of the most intelligent senators, unsurpassed in understanding of Senate rules, does homework and a beautiful job cleaning up bills in the background," (Morgan, 11 January 1978: 1E).

The biggest achievement of her legislative career occurred in 1979 when Herndon was appointed to the Senate Rules Committee. She became the first woman to serve on the rules committee of either house and had broken down "one of the last all-male preserves. . . ." The Rules committee wields a great deal of power in determining whether or not legislation will be passed, especially during the last weeks of the session, by determining what bills will be taken up by the full body. Senator Herndon said, "It's a natural inclination, after you've been in the

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<sup>18</sup>*The Charleston Gazette* asked 25 persons, including state officials, lobbyists and independent citizens, all "intimately informed about the legislative leadership" to rank the ten best and ten worst members of the Legislature.

Legislature for a while, to want to be in a leadership position . . . . It shows I can work well with these men. They must think that or they wouldn't have put me on rules," ("Happenings at the Capitol," 12 January 1979).

It was not unusual to see Herndon working on a book of crossword puzzles while listening to debate on the Senate floor or in a committee room. Being able to concentrate on two things at once, she caught many state officials off guard by hitting them with tough questions in Finance committee budget hearings. She was considered an expert on the Senate rules and often used them to the chagrin of the Democrats, including then Senate President William Brotherton ("Cancer claims Senator Herndon," 21 November 1980).

Herndon was outspoken in her double minority role as a Republican and a woman. She was a leading advocate of women's rights and successfully fought for new legislation to update the state's sexual assault laws and statutes providing protection for abused wives. She was also fiscally conservative and a leader in tax reform (Welling, 20 November 1980).

The beginning of the 1980s saw the untimely death of Senator Judith Herndon. She lost her battle to cancer on November 19, 1980. Then Governor John D. Rockefeller IV eulogized Herndon, proclaiming her "a passionate advocate of that in which she believed . . . . possessed a sense of humor that kept things and people in perspective . . . . West Virginia has lost one of its most outstanding legislators," (Welling, 20 November 1980). Described as "a legislative giant," she served a decade in the West Virginia Legislature and was respected by fellow legislators on both sides of the aisle. One fellow legislator said, "When she spoke on the Senate floor, she had the undivided attention of all senators." ("Cancer

claims Senator Herndon," 21 November 1980). Today a scholarship program which allows undergraduate students to serve as interns during the legislative sessions is named in her honor, the "Judith A. Herndon Legislative Fellows Program."

**Jae Spears: "I'm not interested in headlines, but am interested in trying to get the thing done."**

In 1974, Jae Spears (D-Randolph) was elected to the House of Delegates (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 59: 326). Born in Kentucky, Spears was educated at the University of Kentucky, and was an active member of the County Democratic Women's club. She was also a housewife and the mother of four children.

Spears explained she was encouraged to run for the Legislature by her "Archie Bunker eat your heart out" type husband. During her first term of office, when it was an especially busy time for the Legislature, she was not able to make it home for three weekends. When she made it home, she was greeted by a yellow ribbon tied around a tree by her husband to welcome her (Robinson, 1975: 11A). Spears served in the House until 1980 when she was elected to the state Senate (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 300).

Regarding the role of women in the legislature, Spears said she felt that women are, in general, "more attuned to the problems that the everyday person experiences. We've been able to deal with technicalities that exist in legislation but bring a feel for concerns you have, raising a family, making a living, dealing with school systems." She also noted the disadvantage for women is that they often "do

not have the opportunity to discuss issues in an informal setting, after hours, as the men often do." However, she contended that women have the advantage of knowing hard work, long hours and low pay, which conditions them for being legislators (Wilson, 19 February 1989: 7A).

In 1983, Senator Jae Spears was away from legislative work because of a serious illness. Going against her doctor's wishes, Spears drove 145 miles to the Capitol to resume her position as chair of the state Tax Study Subcommittee II on Local Tax Structure, among other legislative duties. She said she was worried that if she did not get back to work, she would not be able to speak adequately on the issues when the Legislature started. She joked about her drive to get to work, referring to a comment written by a columnist for *The Charleston Gazette*. She said, "There is nothing like a comment from Fanny Seiler to spur you into action," (Adams, 9 December 1983).<sup>19</sup>

An example of the jocularly which existed between genders occurred in 1990, at a Senate Finance committee. The meeting was the arena for sexist comments which in an unusual turn from normality, were directed toward a male. Members were discussing the topic of seat belts in pickup trucks when Senator Jae Spears said she realized that pickup trucks were "a male status symbol." Senator George Warner (R-Monongalia) noted that Spears' comments could be construed as sexist and said "the more I know about women, the more I like my truck." Spears, knowing that Warner was divorced, said, "Apparently, you don't know how to handle one very well." Warner later told a reporter that Spears had no reason to

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<sup>19</sup> Fanny Seiler is a columnist for *The Charleston Gazette* whose coverage of political happenings in the state has a large public readership.

suggest that he did not know how to handle a pickup truck," ("Within Earshot," 19 January 1990: 1C).

Spears served as chair of several committees during her years in the Senate. In 1981, Spears served as chairman of the Military Affairs Committee and vice chair of Agriculture and Local Government (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 306, 316). She served again as chair of the Senate Military Affairs Committee during the Sixty-sixth (1983-84) Legislature and received the 1984 Veterans Council Award for her leadership toward veterans programs in West Virginia ("Spears Receives Veterans' Award" 2 December 1984). She was also appointed the Senate Majority Whip in 1983, making her the first, and to date the only woman to hold a majority party leadership position in the State Senate (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 67: 311). In 1985 she was appointed to the Senate Rules Committee (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 69: 326).

Also in 1985, Senator Jae Spears became the first woman to chair the Finance Committee in either house of the West Virginia Legislature. She got the position after giving Dan Tonkovich (D-Marshall) the final vote he needed to become Senate President (Wilson, 19 February 1989: 7A). This was the first time a woman had been appointed as the chair of a major legislative committee.

Spears said, "They have not even allowed a woman to be vice-chairman in either house when it came to the money -- it was sort of a gentlemen's agreement. I think that after 10 years here, people know that when I need to get things done, I get things done. I won't take a back seat to anyone," ("Chairwoman welcomes challenge of new job," 11 January 1985). Spears had served on the Senate Finance Committee for four years and said she had decided early in her legislative

service that she wanted input into the tax structure and budgeting process--two major jobs of finance committees -- because, "where the money is, is where the action is." When asked about how she felt about two former finance chairmen being appointed to the committee she remarked that she would not be intimidated by their presence and welcomed their expertise. She stated, "I have the ability to run my own committee and make my own decisions," ("Chairwoman welcomes challenge of new job," 11 January 1985). Spears also served on the Senate Rules committee during the Sixty-seventh session, while Sondra Lucht maintained her position as vice chair of Agriculture (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 69: 322-326).

Spears served as chair of the Finance Committee for only one session. In 1987 she was moved from chair of Finance to chair of the Government Organization Committee (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 71: 340-343). While she had been awarded the Finance Chair position by giving then Senate President Tonkovich the vote he needed to get the Senate's top post, he did not need her vote when he was reelected in 1986. He replaced her with Senator Earl Ray Tomblin (D-Logan) who had been the vice chairman under Spears. Tonkovich called Spears a hardworking and dedicated senator, stating, "It's my intent to put people where they have an ability and an interest and where they think they can best serve the people." He acknowledged that there had been complaints that Spears did not have a firm grip on the committee and the House Finance committee had become the stronger of the two in the Legislature (Gallagher, 6 March 1986: 9A; Knap, 15 August 1986: 1A).



While she served as chairman, Spears frequently complained that some male committee members were disruptive and she lacked the proper support a chairman might expect. For example, Spears said a staff member overheard talk by "six to eight" male senators just after she was named chair. The men said they would make it so rough on her "I would give it up in ten days. But I said I would never give it up. They would have to take it from me," (Gallagher, 6 March 1986: 9A).

Several senators said Spears never got the proper backing a finance chair should expect from the Senate President. Spears was frequently criticized in the media and by others around the Statehouse for running a committee that was in disarray (Gallagher, 6 March 1986: 9A).

An example of this occurred in March of 1985, when events which led to the cancellation of a Finance hearing were the topic of a news article portraying Senator Spears as a tardy chairwoman. A hearing was to be held to consider testimony of the Health Director Clark Hansbarger; however, Mr. Hansbarger was late and Senator Spears arrived later due to an Oil and Gas Association meeting she was attending to explain a Senate tax reform package.<sup>20</sup> Senator Darrell Holmes (D-Kanawha) criticized Spears' actions stating he was unhappy with the way the committee was operating and that "You don't schedule a hearing with a major government agency and then go to another appointment." The meeting was scheduled for 9:00 A.M., Director Hansbarger did not arrive until 9:25 A.M., and

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<sup>20</sup>Director Hansbarger had defended the Executive version of the Health budget earlier in the week before the House Finance committee despite Governor Moore's elimination of \$16 million worth of court-ordered improvements that were in the Health Department's budget request. Kanawha Circuit Judge Andrew MacQueen warned Hansbarger he could be held in contempt if he did not seek from the Legislature "essential legislative action to properly fund programs" in his agency. Judge MacQueen had sent his court stenographer to record Hansbarger's testimony at the Senate Finance Committee meeting for possible use in a contempt proceeding (Knap, 8 March 1985).

Spears did not arrive until 10:00 A.M. The meeting was called to order at 10:15 A.M. and Senator Spears stated that there would not be enough time for Hansbarger to give his presentation but members could ask questions before the 11:00 A.M. floor session. Senator Fred Parker (D-Monroe) moved for adjournment and on a voice vote, the motion was approved. Spears explained that the meeting problems were a combination of Hansbarger being late and only a handful of the seventeen senators on the committee present (Knap, 8 March 1985).

In 1988, Jae Spears mentioned that reporters were critical of her during her term as chair of the Finance committee. She was accused of not knowing how to handle the state's finances, and an editorial in the *Sunday Gazette-Mail* called her an "airhead." The press also criticized her on the way she worked out the budget. She worked to get consensus among the House, the Senate and the Governor on the budget during a time when there was frequent feuding. "The reporters wanted more fight and spirit and I said, 'I'm not interested in headlines, but am interested in trying to get the thing done.' We did a good job, considering the problems," (Kissel, 23 February 1986; Gallagher, 6 March 1986: 9A).

Spears was defeated in the 1992 primary election (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 74:512). She was, however, one of the longest serving women in the Legislature with 18 years of combined service in the House and Senate.

### **Martha Wehrle: "Mother of the House"**

In 1974, Martha Wehrle (D-Kanawha) was elected to the House of Delegates. Born in Charleston, November 30, 1925, Wehrle received her

bachelor's degree from Vassar College and her Master's degree from Harvard University (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 59: 332).

Martha Wehrle grew up with a father who was a Republican and a mother who was a Democrat. The only daughter, she decided she would stick with her mother and become a Democrat, while her brothers announced they would become Republicans. However, Wehrle did not register to vote until she was away at college. Her father sent her the voter's registration card. The area which determined your political party was already filled out in ink . . . Republican. Ten years later, after she had been married to a staunch Democrat for a decade, she changed her voter's registration card. It was an anniversary gift to her husband (Wehrle, 8 March 1995, interview).

Wehrle said she was hesitant when she first decided to run for the House of Delegates because she was a woman and she had five young children at home. She admits that campaigning interfered with her role of being a homemaker because campaigning took up many of her evenings. That is when she wanted to stay at home with her family. However, she stated, "It's a remarkable thing to run for office and even more remarkable to serve. It's great that people give their life to public service. But I would like to see a lot more people run for four years or eight years, then quit," (Grimes, 17 April, 1984: 1A).

Wehrle was been appointed as chair of the House Constitutional Revision Committee in 1981 (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 347- 375). Fellow members credited Wehrle with expertly handling the sensitive issue of school prayer in 1984 while she chaired this committee. She questioned the constitutionality of the proposed constitutional amendment but did not want to

confuse the morality side of the issue. She felt she was criticized because she would not let the bill out of committee, and although she did not think it was the thing to do, she finally gave in. She felt that legislating morality was an extremely difficult task (Grimes, 17 April, 1984: 1A).

In 1983, another barrier for women legislators fell when Martha Wehrle was appointed as the first woman to serve on the House Rules Committee. When asked about the gender issue with her appointment, Wehrle said being a woman would not be a major factor in directing women's legislation. "Women issues are people issues. There are a lot of men as strongly interested in women's issues," (Gallagher, 23 January 1983; *West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 67: 370).

Delegate Martha Wehrle was referred to by her male colleagues as the "Mother of the House," (Grimes, 17 April, 1984: 1A). She was seen as an effective legislator who "doesn't have to be brash, hard-nosed and prone to making deals behind the scenes. At the time, House Education Chairman Lyle Sattes (D-Kanawha) said, "It's kind of funny, Martha and I have different philosophies. She's much more conservative. But you always felt good discussing things with her. She made her point but never took it personally. Sometimes she'd win you over when you didn't even realize it. It's people like her who make the legislative system work," (Grimes, 17 April, 1984: 1A).

Martha Wehrle was ranked among the top fifteen legislators in the House (Morgan, 11 January 1978: 1E).<sup>21</sup> Interviewed that year, Martha Wehrle noted a slight disadvantage for her as a woman legislator, stating that her dedication to her home life "precludes her from after-hours politicking during the session when much

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<sup>21</sup> "The Gazette asked 25 persons including state officials, lobbyists, and independent citizens, all intimately informed about the legislative membership."

of the decision making takes place," (Greenfield, 13 November 1978: 1A). But she also noted the key to being a good lawmaker was communication. She said, "You have to keep the lines of communication open with constituents. You have to keep people involved and informed about their laws," (Greenfield, 13 November 1978: 2A).

For example, in 1979 Wehrle was credited for bringing the problem of illegal dumps to the attention of her colleagues. Kanawha County and areas around the state were having serious problems with unauthorized dumps. An elderly woman who lived near a dump site turned to Wehrle for help. Wehrle went through all the channels with the end result being Kanawha County officials offering to put up "No Dumping" signs. The Legislature did not even send the issue to an interim committee to be studied. Wehrle said, "What we need is more pride in our state and in our people." (Byrd, 30 July 1979; "Dumping Is Big Problem," 31 July 1979).

Wehrle remembered working very hard with Pat Hartman to get the first domestic violence legislation passed. She also remembered working with Marge Burke to organize child support bills and "the men would just laugh at us." (Wehrle, 8 March 1995, interview).

Upon serving her final term in the House in 1984, Wehrle said her five terms in the Legislature were enough because she would not be advancing within the House. She stated, "I knew I wasn't going to be speaker, and I'm not qualified to be chairman of the finance or judiciary committees." (Grimes, 17 April, 1984: 1A).

Wehrle made the transition from House to Senate when she was appointed in August of 1989 to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Darrell Holmes, who became the Clerk of the Senate. Wehrle was appointed at a time when many state officials were resigning due to some connection with corruption. *The Charleston Gazette* said of Wehrle, "West Virginia could quit worrying about sleaze and scandals if all its elected officers had as much integrity as Wehrle." ("Why not Wehrle," 31 August 1989).

She served as chair of a special Senate Ethics committee and also of the Pensions committee during her time in the Senate (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 73: 279-292). Although she missed some of the legislative session activities due to health reasons, she was perhaps one of the most respected, hard working members of the state Senate. Wehrle chose not to seek reelection in the 1994 Senate elections.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The lives and accomplishments of the women who have served in the West Virginia Legislature are fascinating. The trail they had to blaze in order to reach the point where they could participate equally with men in the political arena was a long one. In fact, many would argue that women still have a long way to go before they are treated equally and are able to reach the level of power that men have held in the legislature.

The 11 legislators that this thesis focused on should serve as a reminder that women have played an active and important role in our state's political history. Each of these women broke barriers that allowed women legislators who have followed to have more acceptance and attain a similar level of achievement.

These women included:

Anna Johnson Gates (D-Kanawha), West Virginia's first woman state legislator;

Minnie Buckingham Harper (R-McDowell), the first African-American woman state legislator in West Virginia and the United States.

Elizabeth Simpson Drewry (D-McDowell), the only African-American woman to be elected to the state Legislature;

Hazel Edna Hyre (D-Jackson), the first woman to serve in the state Senate;

Betty H. Baker (D-Hardy), the first woman elected to serve in the state Senate;

Nell Walker (D-Fayette), the longest serving female legislator with 22 years of membership in the House of Delegates;

“Jackie” Neubert Withrow (D-Raleigh), the first woman to serve on the Finance Committee of either chamber in the state Legislature;

Phyllis Rutledge (D-Kanawha), the first woman to preside over any chamber of the state Legislature;

Judith Herndon (R-Ohio), the first woman to serve on the Rules committee of either chamber of the state Legislature;

Jae Spears (D-Randolph), the only woman to chair the Finance Committee in either chamber of the state legislature; and

Martha Wehrle (D-Kanawha), the first woman to serve on the Rules Committee in the House of Delegates.

These women deserve to be remembered, not just for what they did and for the fact that they were the first to do it, but because their stories are representative of the efforts undertaken by thousands of West Virginia women over the years who have served in public office, participated in politics, or worked with a civic or educational organization to help improve the lives of West Virginia’s people. It will be interesting to see what the future will bring for female legislators in West Virginia, and what they will bring to West Virginia's future.



TABLE 1.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1920s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Mrs. Tom (Anna) Gates	D-Kanawha	H	1923
Mrs. Thomas J. Davis <sup>22</sup>	R-Fayette	H	1925
Dr. Harriet B. Jones <sup>23</sup>	R-Marshall	H	1925
Mrs. E. E. (Hannah) Cooke <sup>24</sup>	D-Jefferson	H	1926*
Mrs. Fannie Anshutz Hall <sup>25</sup>	D-Wetzel	H	1926*
Mrs. Minnie Buckingham Harper	R-McDowell	H	1928*
Mrs. Frances Irving Radenbaugh <sup>26</sup>	R-Wood	H	1929

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<sup>22</sup>Davis gained popularity because of the political activities of her husband. She was described as "the first woman to be elected from Fayette to any legislative office; her popularity is well known by the fact that her deceased husband was Sheriff of that county for four years and Mayor of the city of Montgomery for twelve years, and Mrs. Davis was an active worker with him during all those years," (Harper, 1926:176).

<sup>23</sup>Jones was the first professional woman to serve in the Legislature being the first female physician and surgeon in West Virginia. She also had been identified with the movement for women's suffrage in West Virginia since the late 1800s (Harper, 1922: 1; Harris, 1926: 190).

<sup>24</sup>Cooke was partner in the firm of Washington Alexander and Cooke, Insurance and Surety Bonds (Harris, 1926:173)

<sup>25</sup>Hall's term was the first public position she ever held, "her previous life having been devoted entirely to domestic duties involved in the care of a family and a well-ordered home of culture and refinement," (Harris, 1926:185).

<sup>26</sup>Radenbaugh was the first female attorney to serve in the Legislature. She had become an attorney through a correspondence course from the University of Chicago and through Vanwinkle and Ambler, a Parkersburg, West Virginia law firm (Hodges, 1929:217).

TABLE 2.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1930s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Mrs. Lucille Scott Strite <sup>27</sup>	D-Morgan	H	1931*
Mrs. Perle Theressa Harman	R-McDowell	H	1933
Mrs. Samuel W. Price <sup>28</sup>	D-Fayette	H	1933
Mrs. Floyd Seiver Suddarth	D-Taylor	H	1933
Mrs. Hazel E. Hyre	D-Jackson	S	1934*
Mrs. Allie D. Proctor	D-Fayette	H	1936*
Mrs. Nell Walker	D-Fayette	H	1937
Mrs. John C. Dice <sup>29</sup>	D-Greenbrier	S	1939*
Mrs. Virginia Reay Kurtz	R-Lewis	H	1939*

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<sup>27</sup>Strite was appointed to fill the term of her father after he died in office. Appointed at the age of 23, Strite was the second youngest woman ever to serve in the Legislature (Hodges, 1931:645).

<sup>28</sup>In 1935, Mrs. Samuel Price became the first woman to be reelected to the Legislature (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 19:223).

<sup>29</sup>In 1939, Dice became the second woman to serve in the West Virginia Senate when she was appointed by Governor Homer D. Holt to succeed W. N. Jasper who died in office.

TABLE 3.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1940s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Mrs. Margaret Potts Williams <sup>30</sup>	D-Jefferson	H	1941*
Mrs. Winifred Davis Woods	R-Ritchie	H	1941*
Mrs. Louise Goudy Potts	R-Taylor	H	1943*
Mrs. Grace Miller Hathaway	R-Calhoun	H	1945*
Mrs. Katie B. Johnson <sup>31</sup>	D-Braxton	H	1945*
Mrs. Mary Van Sickler	D-Greenbrier	H	1945*
Frances Evans <sup>32</sup>	D-Logan	H	1949*

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<sup>30</sup>Williams was a very active member in the state's Democratic party (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 26:100).

<sup>31</sup>Johnson had served as Recorder for the town of Sutton and was a member of the Braxton County Executive Committee of her party (Comstock, 1974:175).

<sup>32</sup>Evans became the first woman from Logan county to serve in the Legislature when she was appointed in 1949. She had been the assistant clerk of the House of Delegates from 1933 to 1947, and secretary to the Speaker of the House in 1949, prior to her appointment (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 33:217).

TABLE 4.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1950s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Elizabeth Simpson Drewry	D-McDowell	H	1951
Mrs. Helen Holt <sup>33</sup>	R-Lewis	H	1955*
Elizabeth V. Hallanan <sup>34</sup>	R-Kanawha	H	1957
Mrs. E. Wyatt (Jessica) Payne <sup>35</sup>	R-Cabell	H	1957
Mrs. Mary O. Marchand <sup>36</sup>	D-Monongalia	S	1958*
Eudora C. Andrews <sup>37</sup>	D-Kanawha	H	1959
Mae S. Belcher <sup>38</sup>	D-Wyoming	H	1959
Mildred Flannery <sup>39</sup>	D-Logan	H	1958*
Opaldene Mills	D-McDowell	H	1958*
Callie Tsapis <sup>40</sup>	D-Hancock	H	1959

<sup>33</sup>Holt was a member of several women's clubs and active with the Republican party (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 39:228).

<sup>34</sup>A lawyer and daughter of a prominent member of the state Republican party, Hallanan served as a member of the West Virginia Board of Education from 1955-57. She resigned from the House during July, 1957, and was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Public Institutions. In 1959, she became the first woman judge of a court of record in West Virginia after becoming a judge of the first full-time Juvenile Court in the state (Holmes, 1991).

<sup>35</sup>Payne was elected in 1956 with an extensive background in lecturing and writing having lectured in forty-eight states on "Americanism." She developed her own philosophy of education for beginners with the establishment as owner and teacher of a private school in Huntington, "The Work and Play House." Payne was also very active in women's organizations (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 41).

<sup>36</sup>Marchand was appointed by Governor Cecil Underwood to fill the vacancy created by the death of her husband. She was the third woman to serve as a state Senator (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 42).

<sup>37</sup>Andrews was the daughter of a former mayor of Charleston (Rutledge, 25 February 1995).

<sup>38</sup>Belcher was assistant Wyoming County School Superintendent for 14 years (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 43).

<sup>39</sup>Flannery was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of her husband, then Speaker of the House W. E. Flannery (Holmes, 1993).

<sup>40</sup>Tsapis was a lawyer and assistant prosecuting attorney for Hancock county (*West Virginia Blue*

TABLE 5.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1960s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Jackie Withrow	D-Raleigh	H	1961
Pearle Yoho	D-Marshall	H	1961*
Ethel Crandall <sup>41</sup>	D-Fayette	H	1963
Betty C. Baker	D-Cabell	H	1964*
Freda N. Paul <sup>42</sup>	D-Cabell	H	1965
Betty H. Baker	D-Hardy	S	1965*
Maxie Mathis	D-Wayne	H	1965*
Evelyn Schupbach	D-Wetzel	H	1965*
Lucille Thornhill	D-Mercer	H	1965*
Jody G. Smirl <sup>43</sup>	R-Cabell	H	1967
Helen B. Bolling	D-Harrison	H	1968*
Erma Maple <sup>44</sup>	D-Brooke	H	1968
Phyllis Rutledge	D-Kanawha	H	1969
Shirley Pickett	D-McDowell	H	1969*

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*Book*, Volume 43).

<sup>41</sup>Crandall, a former school teacher and owner and operator of the W. O. Crandall Hardware Company, served after being elected to the House (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 48).

<sup>42</sup>Paul was an educator and inventor of educational devices and teachers' aids for classroom instruction (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 51).

<sup>43</sup>Smirl was 33 years of age and active with the young Republicans when she was elected to the House (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 51).

<sup>44</sup>Maple was elected in 1968, but died in 1969 before she could serve (Holmes, 1993).

TABLE 6.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1970s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Louise Leonard	R-Jefferson	S	1971
Judith Herndon	R-Ohio	H	1970*
Phyllis Given <sup>45</sup>	D-Kanawha	H	1971
Mary Martha Merritt <sup>46</sup>	D-Raleigh	H	1971
Barbara Boiarsky <sup>47</sup>	D-Kanawha	H	1971*
Michele Presterera Craig <sup>48</sup>	D-Cabell	H	1973
Betsy J. Edgar	D-Pocahontas	H	1972*
Lucille Gillispie	R-Kanawha	H	1973
Jean S. Holt	R-Kanawha	H	1973
Sarah Lee Neal	D-Greenbrier	H	1973
Julie Pitsenberger	D-Randolph	H	1975
Pamela Sue Shuman <sup>49</sup>	D-Brooke	H	1974*

<sup>45</sup>Given ran unsuccessfully for Secretary of State in 1976 (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 69: 349).

<sup>46</sup>In 1973, Merritt was named Woman Legislator of the Year by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University (Higginbotham, 5 February 1974).

<sup>47</sup>In 1971, Barbara Boiarsky became the second woman to be appointed to a seat held by the Speaker of the House. Boiarsky's husband Ivan died suddenly, one day before the end of the regular sixty-day session ("House Speaker Seat Taken By Mrs. Boiarsky," 28 April 1971).

<sup>48</sup>Delegate Michele Presterera Craig was first elected in 1972. Her father, Michael Raymond Presterera had just been elected to the House in 1970 when he died in the plane crash which took the lives of members of the Marshall University football team, coaches and fans. Former Delegate Freda Paul was appointed to fill Mr. Presterera's term from 1971 to 1972 (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 57: 24-25; Hughey, 5 May 1977: 16A).

<sup>49</sup>In 1974, during the Sixty-first Legislative session, Pamela Sue Shuman was appointed to the House of Delegates. She was 22 years old at the time of her appointment, making her the youngest woman to ever serve in the West Virginia Legislature (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 58:70).

Jae Spears	D-Randolph	H	1975
Martha Wehrle	D-Kanawha	H	1975
Thais Blatnik	D-Ohio	H	1977
Betty D. Crookshanks	D-Greenbrier	H	1977
Patricia O. Hartman	D-Cabell	H	1977
Helaine Rotgin	D-Kanawha	H	1977
Carolyn M. Snyder <sup>50</sup>	D-Jefferson	H	1977
Bianca M. James	D-Jefferson	H	1977*
Marjorie H. Burke	D-Gilmer	H	1978*
Charlotte Lane	R-Kanawha	H	1979
Evelyn Richards	R-Cabell	H	1979
Phyllis Presley	D-Raleigh	H	1979*

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<sup>50</sup>In 1977, Carolyn Snyder resigned to take a job with then Governor Jay Rockefeller's administration (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 62: 287; "Kanawha Delegates Will Receive New Committee Posts" 18 November 1977).

TABLE 7.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1980s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Jean Scott Chace <sup>51</sup>	D-Lewis	S	1981
June Bledsoe	D-Kanawha	H	1981
Sue A. Davis <sup>52</sup>	D-Cabell	H	1981
Ruth S. Goldsmith <sup>53</sup>	R-Kanawha	H	1981
Elizabeth M. Martin	D-Monongalia	H	1981
Sandy Rogers	R-Wood	H	1981
Jane Theiling	D-Kanawha	H	1981
Sondra Moore Lucht <sup>54</sup>	D-Berkeley	S	1983
Bonnie Brown	D-Kanawha	H	1983
Shelby Leary	D-Monongalia	H	1983
Joan McCallister	D-Putnam	H	1983
Sharon Spencer	D-Kanawha	H	1983
Katherine Holt	D-Summers	H	1984*
Linda Nelson Garrett	D-Webster	H	1985
Barbara Hatfield	D-Kanawha	H	1985
Patricia Bradley <sup>55</sup>	D-Hancock	H	1985

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<sup>51</sup>Chace, a thirty-five-year-old single mother of one, became the fourth woman to be elected to the State Senate. Chace's election victory went all the way to the Supreme Court in 1980 as a result of a legal battle with the man she ousted, who was then Senate Majority Whip (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 300; Gallagher, 23 January 1983).

<sup>52</sup>Davis was a twenty-six year old school teacher (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 324).

<sup>53</sup>Goldsmith was a housewife and an eleven year member of the South Charleston City Council (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 324).

<sup>54</sup>Lucht, the former state President of the National Organization for Women (NOW), became the ninth woman to serve in the State Senate.



Florence Merow	D-Monongalia	H	1985
Deborah Phillips	D-Putnam	H	1985
Charlotte J. Pritt	D-Kanawha	H	1985
Patricia Holmes White	D-Putnam	H	1985
Donna Boley <sup>56</sup>	R-Pleasants	S	1986*
Dee Caperton	D-Kanawha	H	1987
Twila S. Metheney	D-Monongalia	H	1987
Virginia J. Starcher	D-Jackson	H	1987
Juliet Walker Rundle	D-Wyoming	S	1989
Ramona Gail Cerra	D-Kanawha	H	1989
Mary Pearl Compton	D-Monroe	H	1989
Delores W. Cook	D-Boone	H	1989
Lydia Long	D-Mason	H	1989
Margaret "Peggy" Miller	R-Kanawha	H	1989
Barbara A. Warner	D-Harrison	H	1989
Jane Price Sharp	D-Pocahontas	H	1989*
Phyllis Cole	R-Grant	H	1989*
Tamara Pettit	D-Hancock	H	1989*

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<sup>55</sup>Delegate Patricia Bradley resigned her seat in 1989. At the time she was being investigated by the U. S. attorney's office but contended her resignation was due to her move from Weirton to Fairmont because of a romantic interest. Of her resignation she said, "I won't deny that I'm not thrilled about being in the Legislature. It's no big loss." Bradley later was convicted for filing a false income tax return because she had accepted \$375 in payment from a lobbyist. She ended up losing custody of her two children. She also ended up marrying former delegate James Pitrolo of Fairmont (Niiler, 9 October 1989; McCarthy, 26 July 1990: 1A).

<sup>56</sup>Boley was appointed to the State Senate in May of 1985. She was the third Republican female to serve in the upper house of the West Virginia Legislature (*West Virginia Blue Book*, Volume 65: 308).

TABLE 8.

Women Beginning Their Legislative Service in the 1990s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party/County</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Brenda Brum	D-Wood	H	1991
Ann Calvert	R-Kanawha	H	1991
Vicki V. Douglas	D-Berkeley	H	1991
Nancy Kessel	D-Kanawha	H	1991
Lucille S. Meadows	D-Fayette	H	1991
Pat Reed	D-Raleigh	H	1991
Barbara Sims	R-Wood	H	1991
Martha Yeager Walker	D-Kanawha	H	1991
Karen Facemyer	R-Jackson	H	1993
Margaret Leach	D-Cabell	H	1993
Emily Yeager	D-McDowell	H	1993*
Rebecca I. White	D-Lewis	S	1995
Sarah M. Minear	R-Tucker	S	1995
Kelly Given	R-Putnam	H	1995
Barbara Evans Fleischauer	D-Monongalia	H	1995
Elizabeth Osborne	D-Mercer	H	1995*
Susan Hubbard	D-Cabell	H	1995
Gloria Stewart	D-McDowell	H	1996*
Shelley Moore Capito	R-Kanawha	H	1997
Virginia Mahan	D-Summers	H	1997

## Appendix

### Alphabetical Listing of Women in the West Virginia Legislature, 1923-1997

<u>Name</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Years Served</u>
Andrews, Eudora C.	House	Kanawha	D	'59-60
Baker, Betty C.	House	Cabell	D	'64*
Baker, Betty H.	Senate	Hardy	D	'65*-68
Belcher, Mae S.	House	Wyoming	D	'59-60, 63-64
Blatnik, Thais	House	Ohio	D	'77-78, 81-86
"	Senate	"	"	'89-96
Bledsoe, June	House	Kanawha	D	'81-84
Boiarsky, Barbara	House	Kanawha	D	'71*-72
Boley, Donna	Senate	Pleasants	R	'86*-97
Bolling, Helen B.	House	Harrison	D	'68*
Bradley, Patricia Mastrantoni	House	Hancock	D	'85-89
Brown, Bonnie	House	Kanawha	D	'83-88, 91-94
Brum, Brenda	House	Wood	D	'91-94
Burke, Marjorie H.	House	Gilmer	D	'78*, 81-90
"	House	Braxton	D	'95
Calvert, Ann	House	Kanawha	R	'91-92, 95
Caperton, Dee	House	Kanawha	D	'87-88
Capito, Shelley Moore	House	Kanawha	R	'97
Cerra, Ramona Gail	House	Kanawha	D	'89-92
Chace, Jean Scott	Senate	Lewis	D	'81-84
Cole, Phyllis	House	Grant	R	'89*-90
Cook, Delores W.	House	Boone	D	'89-94
Cooke, Mrs. E. E.	House	Jefferson	D	'26*
Compton, Mary Pearl	House	Monroe	D	'89-97
Craig, Michele Prestera	House	Cabell	D	'73-78
Crandall, Ethel	House	Fayette	D	'63-64, 67-72
Crookshanks, Betty D.	House	Greenbrier	D	'77-88
Davis, Sue A.	House	Cabell	D	'81-86
Davis, Mrs. Thomas J.	House	Fayette	R	'25
Dice, Mrs. John C.	Senate	Greenbrier	D	'39*
Douglas, Vicki V.	House	Berkeley	D	'91-97
Drewery, Elizabeth Simpson	House	McDowell	D	'51-64
Edgar, Betsy J.	House	Pocahontas	D	'72*
Evans, Frances	House	Logan	D	'49*
Facemyer, Karen	House	Jackson	R	'93-97
Flannery, Mildred	House	Logan	D	'58*
Fleischauer, Barbara Evans	House	Monongalia	D	'95-97
Garrett, Linda Nelson	House	Webster	D	'85-88
Gates, Mrs. Tom (Anna)	House	Kanawha	D	'23
Gillispie, Lucille	House	Kanawha	R	'73-74
Given, Kelly	House	Putnam	R	'95-97
Given, Phyllis	House	Kanawha	D	'71-76
"	House	Cabell	D	'81-90
Goldsmith, Ruth S.	House	Kanawha	R	'81-82, 91-92

<u>Name</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Years Served</u>
Hall, Mrs. Fannie Anshutz	House	Wetzel	D	'26*
Hallanan, Elizabeth V.	House	Kanawha	R	'57
Harman, Mrs. Perle Theressa	House	McDowell	R	'33
Harper, Mrs. Minnie Buckingham	House	McDowell	R	'28*
Hartman, Patricia O.	House	Cabell	D	'77-84, 87-88
Hatfield, Barbara	House	Kanawha	D	'85-90
Hathaway, Mrs. Grace Miller	House	Calhoun	R	'45-46*
Herndon, Judith A.	House	Ohio	R	'70*-74
"	Senate	Ohio	R	'74-80
Holt, Mrs. Helen	House	Lewis	R	'55-56*
Holt, Jean S.	House	Kanawha	R	'73-74
Holt, Katherine	House	Summers	D	'84*
Hubbard, Susan	House	Cabell	D	'95-97
Hyre, Mrs. Hazel E.	Senate	Jackson	D	'34*
James, Bianca M.	House	Jefferson	D	'77*
Johnson, Mrs. Katie B.	House	Braxton	D	'45-46*
Jones, Dr. Harriet B.	House	Marshall	R	'25
Kessel, Nancy	House	Kanawha	D	'91-94
Kurtz, Mrs. Virginia Reay	House	Lewis	R	'39*
Lane, Charlotte	House	Kanawha	R	'79-80, '85, '91-92
Leach, Margarette	House	Cabell	D	'93-97
Leary, Shelby	House	Monongalia	D	'83-88
Leonard, Louise	Senate	Jefferson	R	'71-74
Long, Lydia	House	Mason	D	'89-90
Lucht, Sondra Moore	Senate	Berkeley	D	'83-94
Mahan, Virginia	House	Summers	D	'97
Maple, Erma	House	Brooke	D	'68
Marchand, Mrs. Mary O.	Senate	Monongalia	D	'58*
Martin, Elizabeth M.	House	Monongalia	D	'81-86
Mathis, Maxie	House	Wayne	D	'65*-66
McCallister, Joan	House	Putnam	D	'83-84
Meadows, Lucille S.	House	Fayette	D	'91-92
Merow, Florence	House	Monongalia	D	'85-86, '89-90
Merritt, Mary Martha	House	Raleigh	D	'71-72
Metheney, Twila S.	House	Monongalia	D	'87-89
Miller, Margaret "Peggy"	House	Kanawha	R	'89-97
Mills, Opaldene	House	McDowell	D	'58*
Minear, Sarah M.	Senate	Tucker	R	'95-97
Neal, Sarah Lee	House	Greenbrier	D	'73-88
Osborne, Elizabeth	House	Mercer	D	'95-97
Paul, Freda N.	House	Cabell	D	'65-68, 71*-72
Payne, Mrs. E. Wyatt (Jessica)	House	Cabell	R	'57-58
Pettit, Tamara	House	Hancock	D	'89*-97
Phillips, Deborah	House	Putnam	D	'85-94
Pickett, Shirley	House	McDowell	D	'69*-70
Pitsenberger, Julie	House	Randolph	D	'75-78
Potts, Mrs. Louise Goudy	House	Taylor	R	'43*
Presley, Phyllis	House	Raleigh	D	'79*-80
Price, Mrs. Samuel W.	House	Fayette	D	'33-35
Pritt, Charlotte J.	House	Kanawha	D	'85-88
"	Senate	"	"	'89-92

<u>Name</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Years Served</u>
Proctor, Mrs. Allie D.	House	Fayette	D	'36*
Radenbaugh, Mrs. Frances Irving	House	Wood	R	'29
Reed, Pat	House	Raleigh	D	'91-94
Richards, Evelyn	House	Cabell	R	'79-80, '85-86, '89-94
Rogers, Sandy	House	Wood	R	'81-87
Rotgin, Helaine	House	Kanawha	D	'77-78
Rundle, Juliet Walker	Senate	Wyoming	D	'89-90
Rutledge, Phyllis	House	Kanawha	D	'69-74, 89-94
Schupbach, Evelyn	House	Wetzel	D	'65*-68
Sharp, Jane Price	House	Pocahontas	D	'89*-90
Shuman, Pamela Sue	House	Brooke	D	'74*-82
Sims, Barbara	House	Wood	R	'91-92
Smirl, Jody G.	House	Cabell	R	'67-74, '85-86, '95-97
Snyder, Carolyn M.	House	Jefferson	D	'77
Spears, Jae	House	Randolph	D	'75-80
"	Senate	"	"	'81-92
Spencer, Sharon	House	Kanawha	D	'83-84, '87-94, '97
Starcher, Virginia J.	House	Jackson	D	'87-90
Strite, Mrs. Lucille Scott	House	Morgan	D	'31-32*
Suddarth, Mrs. Floyd Seiver	House	Taylor	D	'33
Theiling, Jane	House	Kanawha	D	'81-84
Thornhill, Lucille	House	Mercer	D	'65*-66, 69-70
Tsapis, Callie	House	Hancock	D	'59-64, 67-68
Van Sickler, Mrs. Mary	House	Greenbrier	D	'45-46*
Walker, Martha Yeager	House	Kanawha	D	'91-92
"	Senate	"	"	'93-97
Walker, Mrs. Nell	House	Fayette	D	'37-55, 59-62
Warner, Barbara A.	House	Harrison	D	'89-97
Wehrle, Martha G.	House	Kanawha	D	'75-84
"	Senate	"	"	'89*-94
White, Patricia Holmes	House	Putnam	D	'85-94
White, Rebecca I.	Senate	Lewis	D	'95-97
Williams, Mrs. Margaret Potts	House	Jefferson	D	'41*
Withrow, Jackie	House	Raleigh	D	'61-78
Woods, Mrs. Winifred Davis	House	Ritchie	R	'41*
Yeager, Emily	House	McDowell	D	'93*-97
Yoho, Pearle	House	Marshall	D	'61*-62

\*appointed by Governor to unexpired term

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