Women’s History Month Speech Resources: Fact Sheet

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Introduction

Women’s History Month commemorates the contributions of American women. P.L. 100-9 designated March as Women’s History Month on March 12, 1987. Since then, Presidents have issued annual proclamations promoting this observance.

This fact sheet is designed to assist congressional offices with work related to Women’s History Month. It provides links to sample congressional speeches and recognitions, presidential proclamations, statistical data, and selected historical resources.

History

Women’s History Month began in 1978 as a local celebration of Women’s History Week in Santa Rosa, California. The organizers selected the week of March 8 to correspond with International Women’s Day. As other communities adopted the celebration, women’s groups and historians began lobbying for national recognition. President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation declaring March 2-8, 1980, National Women’s History Week. Between 1981 and 1986, Congress passed legislation requesting the President designate a week in March as Women’s History Week. In 1987, Congress changed the week into a month when it passed P.L. 100-9. From 1988 to 1994, Congress continued to pass legislation requesting the President proclaim March as Women’s History Month. Each President since 1995 has issued this annual proclamation.

Each year, the National Women’s History Alliance, a nonprofit advocacy organization, chooses a theme for the month and honors women who exemplify that theme. The 2024 theme honors “women who advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion.” Previous years’ themes have honored women healers and caregivers, women who fight discrimination, and female labor and business leaders.

Legislation

Public laws designating Women’s History Week

P.L. 97-28
P.L. 98-3
P.L. 98-227
P.L. 99-3
P.L. 99-254

Public laws designating Women’s History Month

P.L. 100-9

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1 Patricia Foster Haines, “Celebrating Women's History: Local groups offer a variety of National Women's History Week programs,” History Notes, vol. 38, no. 3 (March 1983), pp. 28-31.
Multiple resolutions have also been introduced in the House and Senate recognizing National Women’s History Month over the years.

**Related CRS Products**

The Congressional Research Service has published several products that relate to women’s history.

- CRS Legal Sidebar Series LSB10896-LSB10901, *The Nineteenth Amendment and Women’s Suffrage Parts 1-6*, by Brandon J. Murrill
- CRS Report R44370, *Smithsonian Institution: Background, Issues for Congress, and Selected Legislation*, by R. Eric Petersen (see the section on new Smithsonian museums authorized in 2020)

**Sample Speeches and Recognitions**


**Presidential Proclamations**

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some recent Women’s History Month proclamations, from the *Compilation of Presidential Documents*, include

P.L. 100-257
P.L. 101-6
P.L. 102-70
P.L. 103-22
Presidential Proclamations—Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (2021- 
Presidential Proclamations—Donald J. Trump (2017-2020)
Presidential Proclamations—Barack H. Obama (2009-2016)

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the govinfo service on the Government Publishing Office website. Earlier remarks are available through The American Presidency Project, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Statistics

Many federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations maintain statistics on women, including

U.S. Census Bureau, Facts for Features: Women’s History Month: March 2023. Demographic information including earnings, occupations, and educational attainment.


U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Women’s Health. Data on women’s health status and insurance coverage.

Center for American Women and Politics (Rutgers), Current Numbers. Information on the current number of women in elective office in the United States.

Historical Resources

Numerous government resources provide information on women’s history, including


National Archives and Records Administration, “Women’s History.” Guide to materials across National Archives collections, including materials from the Presidential Libraries.


National Park Service, “Women’s History.” Collected resources on people and places related to women’s history, with an emphasis on the ratification of the 19th Amendment.


U.S. House of Representatives, “Women in Congress.” Current and historical information on women in Congress, including Member profiles, interactive map, and online exhibits.
U.S. Senate, “Women of the Senate.” Historical information on women in the Senate, including features on women Senators and Senate staff.

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