

## Women in Labor History Timeline

- Women from the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts formed themselves into the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association (LFLRA). The women of Lowell, led by the intrepid Sarah Bagley, testified fearlessly before the Massachusetts legislature that new requirements forcing them to tend more machines at accelerated rates were endangering their physical well-being.
- 1844**
- Newly freed black women, working as laundresses in Jackson, Mississippi, form a union and strike for higher wages.
- 1866**
- Women shoe stitchers from six states form the first national women's labor organization, the Daughters of St. Crispin.
- 1869**
- Belva Ann Lockwood becomes the first woman lawyer to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 1879**
- Lucy Parsons (1853-1942), an Industrial Workers of the World leader, along with her husband Albert Parsons helped find the International Working People's Association (IWPA). Lucy Parsons was also an influential organizer for the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU).
- 1883**
- The Knights of Labor, the first large scale national labor federation, agrees to admit women. Leonora O'Reilly, a member of the Knights of Labor, organized a female chapter naming it the United Garment Workers of America. She later joined the Women's Trade Union League and was influential during the "Great Uprising" among garment workers in 1909-10.
- 1888**
- The National Consumers' League, founded in 1899, sought to improve working conditions for women.
- 1899**
- International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) is formed by the amalgamation of seven local unions. At the turn of the century most of the workers in the garment industry were Jewish women immigrants.
- 1900**
- The Women's Trade Union League, founded in 1903, becomes the first national association dedicated to organizing women workers. WTUL proved remarkably successful in uniting women from all classes to work toward better, fairer working conditions.
- 1903**
- Mary Harris Jones, nicknamed "Mother Jones," led a 125-mile march of child workers to bring the evils of child labor to the attention of the President and the national press.
- 1903**
- Wobblies, the International Workers of the World was founded with the help of San Antonio labor organizer Lucy Gonzales Parsons.
- 1905**
- In the United States, the establishment of the U.S. Children's Bureau marks the beginning of modern programs designed to protect children and strengthen families and the beginning of public recognition of children's special needs.
- 1912**
- Alice Paul and Lucy Burns established the National Women's Party to work for women's suffrage. They believed that winning the right to vote marked only the beginning of women's struggle for equality. In the early 1920s the National
- 1916**

- Women's Party aimed to pass an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution that would make illegal all forms of discrimination based on sex. While mobilizing for World War I, the U.S. Government recognized the need for a cohesive group to coordinate identification of women's available skills and experience. A Women's War Council, financed through a federal grant, was established by the War Department to organize the resources of professional women. The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs was founded on July 15, 1919. Throughout the years, three major issues shaped BPW's legislative agenda: elimination of sex discrimination in employment, the principle of equal pay, and the need for a comprehensive equal rights amendment.
- 1919**
- 1920** The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, giving women the right to vote.
- 1920** Congress established the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, the only federal agency mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process. The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor promotes the passage of legislation to protect working women.
- 1920** The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was founded by Roger Baldwin, Crystal Eastman, Albert DeSilver and others in 1920.
- 1922** The Nineteenth Amendment is declared constitutional by a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court.
- 1923** The U.S. Congress introduced the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) but the issue failed to gain significant support.
- 1925** Nellie Taylor Ross becomes the first woman to serve as governor of a state, in Wyoming. She was elected to succeed her deceased husband, William Bradford Ross, in the fall of 1924. Miriam Amanda "Ma" Ferguson is inaugurated governor of Texas days later.
- 1930** Rosina Tucker helped to organize the first Black labor union — the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In September 1938, the wives of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters established the International Ladies Auxiliary. Tucker became its first secretary-treasurer.
- 1932** Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas became the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate.
- 1933** Frances Perkins is appointed secretary of labor by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, making her the first woman member of a presidential cabinet.
- 1935** The National Council of Negro Women is formed to lobby against racism, sexism, and job discrimination.
- 1938** The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), also Federal Wage and Hour Law, establishes a national minimum wage for men and women alike. The law is also enacted to eliminate labor conditions injurious to the health and efficiency of workers, and unfair methods of competition based on these conditions, and set maximum working hours.

- 1938** Luisa Moreno, a Guatemalan immigrant, became the first Hispanic vice president of a major labor union: the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of American (UCAPAWA).
- Under the leadership of Luisa Moreno, El Congreso Nacional del Pueblo de Habla Hispana (The National Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples) was founded; it
- 1939** was the first national effort to bring together Hispanic workers from diverse ethnic backgrounds: Cubans and Spaniards from Florida, Puerto Ricans from New York and Mexican Americans from the Southwest.
- A massive government and industry media campaign persuades women to take jobs during world War II. Seven million women respond becoming industrial
- 1941** “Rosie the Riveters” and over 400,000 join the military.
- Maida Springer-Kemp, Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader, became the first African-American woman to represent labor abroad, when she was chosen
- 1945** for a labor exchange trip to England. From 1955 to 1965, she worked in Africa as an AFL-CIO international representative. In the 1970s, she was vice-president of the National Council of Negro Women.
- Immediately following World War II, the Women's Pay Act of 1945 - the first ever legislation to require equal pay - was introduced in the U.S. Congress. It would
- 1945** take another 18 years before an equal pay bill would make it to the President's desk to be signed into law.
- Eleanor Roosevelt serves as a member of the US delegation to the United
- 1945** Nations.
- The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is formed.
- 1946** The Salt of the Earth Strike was the first major strike conducted by women and children. From October 1950 until January 1952 the predominantly Mexican
- 1950** Mine-Mill Workers Union struck the mines in southern New Mexico.
- 1950** In 1950 The Women’s Trade Union League is dissolved.
- The Business and Professional Women Foundation was incorporated in 1956,
- 1956** creating a branch to provide research information, career development programs, and scholarships to disadvantaged women, workshops and other training opportunities.
- The United Nations adopts the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which
- 1959** affirmed the rights of children everywhere to receive adequate care from parents and the community.
- On the suggestion of Esther Peterson, director of the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor, President John F. Kennedy establishes the first national
- Commission on the Status of Women. In 1963 the commission issued a report
- 1961** detailing employment discrimination, unequal pay, legal inequality, and insufficient support services for working women. Nevertheless, the majority of the commission members opposed the ERA, primarily on the grounds that equal rights were already guaranteed in the Constitution.
- Eleanor Roosevelt chairs the First Presidential Commission on the Status of
- 1961** Women.

- 1963** The Commission on the Status of Women report led directly to the passage of the Equal Pay Act. The Equal Pay Act made it illegal to pay different wages to men and women who performed the same work. However, the new law had little effect on narrowing the wage gap between the sexes. Most female workers remained in jobs traditionally held by women, offering low wages and little prospect for advancement.
- 1965** The Voting Rights Act of 1965 finally bans restrictions on voting, such as literacy tests and other measures that discouraged African Americans from registering to vote.
- 1965** Dolores Huerta became the first female leader of the farm worker's union. She co-founded the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez and became its contract negotiator.
- 1965** Patsy Takemoto Mink, of Hawaii, is the first Asian-American woman elected to Congress. She served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 24 years.
- 1966** The National Organization for women (NOW) is founded by activist Betty Friedan to end sexual discrimination.
- 1968** Shirley Chisholm (D-NY) becomes the first African American woman U.S. Representative. Four years later, she becomes the first African-American person to run for President in the Democratic primaries.
- 1969** The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) declared protective legislation for women invalid.
- 1972** Ruth Bader Ginsburg founded the Women's Rights Project (WRP) of ACLU, which focuses on assisting and empowering poor women, women of color, and immigrant women, who historically have been deeply victimized by gender bias and continue to face pervasive barriers to equality today. Through litigation, community outreach, advocacy, and public education, WRP pushes for change and systemic reform of those institutions that perpetuate discrimination against women.
- 1972** The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) measure won congressional approval in 1972 as the 27th Amendment, 49 years after it was introduced.
- 1974** The Coalition of Labor Union Women is founded as America's only national organization for union women.
- 1981** Sandra Day O'Connor is appointed by President Reagan to the Supreme Court, making her its first woman justice.
- 1981** Following a nine-day strike by municipal employees in San Jose, CA, AFSCME members win \$1.5 million to correct pay disparities in the city.
- 1982** The ERA was defeated when only 35 states had passed the measure, three short of the 38 required for ratification.
- 1983** AFSCME's Women's Rights Department is established.
- 1984** Geraldine Anne **Ferraro** was the first female Vice Presidential candidate representing a major American political party. She ran with former Vice President and Presidential candidate Walter Mondale.

- 1985** Wilma Mankiller becomes the first woman chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.
- 1986** AFSCME wins a \$106.5 million settlement in its sex-based wage discrimination suit against Washington State. As a result, nearly 35,000 state workers in undervalued job classifications get pay increases.
- 1987** The US Congress declares March to be National Women's History Month.
- 1988** AFSCME Iowa Council 61 scores a \$1.3 million win for AFSCME state employees victimized by sex-based pay discrimination.
- 1989** Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, of Florida, becomes the first Latina elected to Congress. She serves in the US House of Representatives.
- 1991** On January 2, Sharon Pratt Dixon is sworn in as mayor of Washington, DC, becoming the first black woman to serve as mayor of a major city.
- 1992** In "The Year of the Woman" a record number of women run for public office, and win. 24 are newly elected to the House of Representatives and 6 to the Senate.
- 1992** Carol Moseley-Braun, of Illinois, becomes the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Senate.
- 1993** The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is signed by President Clinton, enacted to provide job-protected leave to employees who need time off to care for themselves or their families.
- 1994** The Violence Against women Act becomes law, changing the criminal justice system's response to violence against women.
- 1995** Linda Chavez-Thompson, an AFSCME International Vice President, is elected as the AFL-CIO's Executive vice President, becoming the first Latina elected to an executive office in the AFL-CIO.
- 1997** Madeleine Albright is sworn in as US Secretary of State. She is the first woman in this position as well as the highest-ranking woman in the United States.
- 2003** Nancy Pelosi becomes the first woman House Democratic Leader.
- 2005** Condoleezza Rice becomes the first African-American female Secretary of State.
- 2008** In a historic run for the presidency, Hillary Clinton is a leading contender for the Democratic ticket. Sarah Palin, Governor of Alaska, runs for the Vice Presidency on the Republican ticket.