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Women's History Month Speech Resources: Fact Sheet

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Contents

Introduction	1
History	1
Legislation	1
Related CRS Products	2
Sample Speeches and Recognitions	2
Presidential Proclamations	2
Statistics.....	3
Historical Resources.....	3

Contacts

Author Information.....	4
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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.¹ 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.²

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.³

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

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.

² Elizabeth L. Maurer, "Women's History Month," National Women's History Museum, March 5, 2017, <https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/womens-history-month>.

³ "Women's History Month," Law Library, Library of Congress, <https://guides.loc.gov/womens-history-month-legal-resources/history-and-overview>.

P.L. 100-257

P.L. 101-6

P.L. 102-70

P.L. 103-22

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 Report RL30261, *Women in Congress, 1917-2022: Service Dates and Committee Assignments by Member, and Lists by State and Congress*, by Jennifer E. Manning and Ida A. Brudnick

CRS Report R43244, *Women in Congress: Statistics and Brief Overview*, by Jennifer E. Manning and Ida A. Brudnick

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

Representative Marcy Kaptur, "Celebrating Women's History Month," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 169, no. 55 (March 27, 2023), p. H1456.

Representative Frank J. Mrvan, "Celebrating Women's History Month," Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, vol. 168, no. 42 (March 9, 2022), p. E242.

Senator Dianne Feinstein, "National Women's History Month," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. 168, no. 40 (March 7, 2022), pp. S1013-S1014.

Senator Joni Ernst, "Women's History Month," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. 167, no. 48 (March 15, 2021), p. S1530.

Representative Barbara Lee, "Celebrating Women's History Month," Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, vol. 166, no. 47 (March 11, 2020), pp. E299-E300.

Representative Michael Waltz, "Women's History Month," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 165, no. 45 (March 13, 2019), p. H2688.

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

Presidential Proclamations—Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (2021-)

Presidential Proclamations—Donald J. Trump (2017-2020)

Presidential Proclamations—Barack H. Obama (2009-2016)

Presidential Proclamations—George W. Bush (2001-2008)

Presidential Proclamations—William J. Clinton (1993-2000)

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. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Overview of BLS Statistics on Women Workers* and articles from *TED: The Economics Daily*. Statistics on women's employment, unemployment, and other labor market data.

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

Library of Congress, "American Women History." Guides to resources at the Library of Congress focused on American women's history.

Library of Congress, "Women's History Month." A joint effort of multiple organizations and hosted by the Library of Congress. Contains online exhibits, teaching aids, and event calendars.

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

National Museum of American History, "Women's History." Resource guides, lesson plans, and programming related to women's history at the museum.

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.

National Park Service, "Women's Rights National Historical Park." The park collects and houses items specifically related to the 1848 First Women's Rights Convention.

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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