

TIMELINE: WOMEN'S HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



1789

U.S. Constitution is ratified. The terms "persons," "people" and "electors" allow for interpretation to include men and women, although women remain largely left out of the public sphere for years to come.

1839

Mississippi becomes first state to grant married women the right to hold property in their own names, independent of their husbands.

1843

Isabella Baumfree takes on the name **Sojourner Truth** and later goes on to become a famed abolitionist and women's rights activist. Her famous "**Ain't I a Woman**" speech in 1851 outlined her relationship with Blackness and womanhood.

1848

First women's rights convention is held in Seneca Falls, New York, to sign the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments. The document, modeled after the Declaration of Independence to demand equal rights for women, was signed by 68 women and 32 men.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

1849

Harriet Tubman escapes to Philadelphia and helps approximately 300 enslaved people escape to the North for freedom via the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safehouses that guides slaves in their escape.

1916

Jeannette Rankin of Montana becomes first woman elected to Congress.



1920

19th Amendment gives women the right to vote.

1921

Reproductive activist Margaret Sanger founds the **American Birth Control League**, which is now Planned Parenthood. Though its history is complex and tainted with the eugenicist beliefs of the time, it goes on to help many women have access to reproductive healthcare and education.

1925

Miriam Ferguson of Texas and Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming become first women elected as governors.

1932

Amelia Earhart becomes first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic.

Democrat Hattie Caraway of Arkansas becomes first woman elected to Senate.

1955

Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, a key moment in the Civil Rights Movement.

The first lesbian civil and political rights organization in the U.S., Daughters of Bilitis, is founded in San Francisco by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon.



1963

Congress passes **Equal Pay Act** to prohibit sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same establishment who perform jobs that require comparable skill, effort and responsibility under similar working conditions.

1964

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination on basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sex.

House Democrat Patsy Mink becomes the first Asian American woman and first woman of color elected to Congress. Later, she became the first Asian American woman to run for U.S. President.

1972

Title IX bans gender discrimination in federally funded education programs.

1973

In **Roe v. Wade**, the U.S. Supreme Court protects woman's right to terminate pregnancy.

1978

Pregnancy Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination "on basis of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions."

1980

President Jimmy Carter declares the first week in March as **Women's History Week**.

1981

Sandra Day O'Connor becomes first female Supreme Court Justice.

1983

Astronaut Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in space.

1984

In **Roberts v. United States Jaycees**, the U.S. Supreme Court prohibits public organizations from refusing membership to someone because of gender.

1987

Congress declares March as **National Women's History Month**.

1994

President Clinton signs the **Violence Against Women Act** (Title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act) to fund programs that protect victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, stalking and other gender-related violence.

1996

Peggy Bird (Kewa), Darlene Correa (Laguna Pueblo) and Gerne James (Navajo) found the **Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women** in New Mexico as crimes against indigenous women go underreported and neglected by law enforcement.

1997

Madeline Albright becomes first woman Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton.

Aida Alvarez becomes administrator of the Small Business Administration — the first Latina to hold a Cabinet-level position.

1999

Retired **U.S. Air Force Colonel Eileen Collins** becomes first woman to pilot and command a space shuttle.

Rapper **Lauryn Hill's The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill** wins the Grammy for Album of the Year. It is recognized as the first hip hop album to earn the distinction. Hill was also the first female solo artist to win five Grammys in one night, setting a record at the time.



2001

Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao becomes first Asian American woman appointed to a presidential Cabinet.

2006

Activist Tarana Burke founds the "Me Too" movement to help support women and girls of color in underrepresented areas who experience sexual abuse. In 2017, it becomes a worldwide, star-studded movement when Alyssa Milano tweets about it in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein sexual assault allegations.

2007

Democrat Nancy Pelosi becomes first woman Speaker of the House.

2008

Hillary Clinton becomes the only former first lady to run for President.



2009

President Obama signs the **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act** into law, intended to reduce the pay gap between men and women.

Sonia Sotomayor becomes first Latina Supreme Court justice.

2013

The U.S. military allows women to serve in combat positions.

2014

Ava DuVernay becomes the first African American woman nominated for best director at the Golden Globes for her film, *Selma*.

Actor and LGBTQ+ rights activist **Laverne Cox** becomes the first openly transgender woman nominated for a Primetime Emmy for her role in "Orange is the New Black."



2015

Two of the country's biggest accounting firms elect their first women CEOs: Cathy Engelbert at Deloitte and Lynne Doughtie at KPMG.

2016

Hillary Clinton becomes the first woman presidential nominee for a major political party and **Kamala Harris** becomes California's third female U.S. senator, the first Black person to do so.

Massachusetts passes a pay equity law (the first of its kind) forbidding employers in the state from asking about salary history on job interviews and requiring men and women be paid equally if they do "comparable work."

2017

The Women's March on Washington brings nearly 500,000 activists to D.C. to protest for women's rights. Sister protests take place across the country.

2018

Some of Hollywood's most notable women unveil Time's Up, an initiative to help working-class women fight back against sexual assault.

A record number of 117 women were ultimately sent to Congress this cycle — a significant jump from 2016 when 89 women were elected. Of these 117, 42 are women of color, including the group now known as "The Squad."

Former AT&T Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Cynthia Marshall becomes the CEO of the Dallas Mavericks and is the first Black woman CEO in the NBA.

2019

Kathy Warden becomes CEO of Northrop Grumman.



2020

Katie Sowers of the San Francisco 49ers becomes the first woman to coach at the Super Bowl. She is also the first openly gay NFL coach.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg dies at the age of 87. She is remembered for her role as the leader of the Court's liberal-leaning bloc, crucial in many decisions regarding women's rights, immigrant rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

2021

Kamala Harris is sworn in as the first woman, Black and South Asian American Vice President.



Rosalind Brewer becomes the CEO of Walgreens and **Thasunda Brown Duckett** the CEO of TIAA, making them the only Black woman leading Fortune 500 companies.

Delaware State Sen. **Sarah McBride** became the first openly transgender state senator and the highest ranking transgender elected official in the U.S.

2022

Ketanji Brown Jackson is sworn in as an Associate Supreme Court Justice on June 30, making her the first Black female Justice, the third Black Justice and the sixth woman to serve in the nation's highest court.



The Supreme Court overturns **Roe v. Wade** on June 24, ending 50 years of abortion protections for women. Companies like Accenture and Comcast NBCUniversal announce plans to cover travel costs for employees who need an abortion.

Maura Healey becomes the first woman and LGBTQ+ person to be elected governor of Massachusetts.

President Biden signs the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act into law at the end of the year, which will take effect in June 2023. The legislation requires employers with more than 15 employees to provide arrangements for employees and job applicants who are pregnant or have recently given birth and bans employers from discriminating against pregnant workers and job applicants.

2023

Michelle Yeoh, Angela Bassett and Jennifer Coolidge, all actresses over the age of 60, win Golden Globes for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture, Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture and Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Limited Series, respectively.