



June 2018 Her Story ENewsletter Political Firsts

May 2018 was a month in which women achieved firsts in politics and government. Gina Haspel became the first female director of the Central Intelligence Agency, after her confirmation by the U.S. Senate. Stacey Abrams became the first African-American woman to win a major party nomination for Governor, when the Democrats in Georgia put her on their slate. Their accomplishments are significant; we cannot forget that the groundwork was laid by many other earlier women, including two profiled in this month's enewsletter: Jeannette Rankin and Sandra Day O'Connor. Both Rankin and O'Connor have been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

In 1916, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress, when she was elected to the House of Representatives from Montana. She was an active suffragist and helped secure the vote for women in Montana in 1914. Rankin ran for Congress in 1916. She was a committed pacifist, and one of the few members of Congress to vote against U.S. entry into World War I in 1917. She later lost re-election. Then, in 1940, Rankin ran on an isolationist platform and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, again representing Montana. She maintained her earlier peace convictions! In December 1941, she was the only member of Congress to vote against U.S. entry into World War II. During the Vietnam War, she led anti-war protests in Washington, D.C.



Jeannette Rankin

A witty woman, Rankin said upon her 1916 election, "I may be the first woman member of Congress, but I won't be the last." She also famously said, "We're half the people, we should be half the Congress."



Sandra Day O'Connor

In 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor became the first female justice appointed to the United States Supreme Court. After growing up in Arizona, O'Connor attended Stanford University, completing her law degree at Stanford in two years, instead of three, and finishing third in her class. Unable to find employment due to her gender, O'Connor instead began her law career working for free, as a legal secretary for San Mateo County in California. She eventually became a deputy county attorney - paid for her work.

In 1957, after time spent overseas, she and her husband settled in Arizona where she opened a private practice and later served as Assistant Attorney General for Arizona. After being appointed to fill a vacancy in the Arizona Senate, she was twice re-elected, before being elected a judge in Maricopa County. In 1979, she was appointed to the Arizona Supreme Court of Appeals. President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the United States Supreme Court only two years later and she was unanimously approved by the U.S. Senate. O'Connor served as an advocate for women, before retiring from the Court in 2006.

Jeannette Rankin and Sandra Day O'Connor are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Help us to tell women's stories!

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