

Washington Women No Strangers to Public Office

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Washington state has a long tradition of voting women into public office. Washington was the fifth state to grant women the vote in 1910. Since then, women have served in many political positions in Washington. The political history of Washington is full of stories of important elected women.

Bertha Knight Landes was elected mayor of Seattle in 1926. She was the first woman to lead a major American city. She promised to clean up city government. Her term ended in 1928, but she remained a civic leader and role model for women.

Julia Butler Hansen was the state senator from Cathlamet from 1939 to 1960. Hansen led efforts to construct Interstate-5 and many other highways. "No one represented her people better than [Hansen]," said Washington Senator Warren Magnuson.

Ruby Chow was the first Asian American woman elected to the King County Council in 1973. Chow was the owner of Seattle's first upscale Chinese restaurant, Ruby Chow's. The popularity of Asian food in the Northwest took off because of Ruby Chow's in the 1960s. Chow became a tireless activist for the people of Seattle's International District. She served four terms on the county council.

In 1976, Dixy Lee Ray was the first woman governor of Washington. Born in Tacoma, Ray was a professor of marine biology at the University of Washington. Before her term in the governor's office, Ray was director of the Pacific Science Center.

Jennifer Dunn was the first woman to lead the Washington State Republican Party. In 1992, she was elected to the first of her six terms in Congress, representing the Seattle and Bellevue areas. One colleague said, "She worked tirelessly for Washington."



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