

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

A Civics In Real Life Series

FEMALE FIRSTS

PATTY MURRAY



On January 3, 2023, [Senator Patty Murray](#), D-WA, was sworn in as the first woman [president pro tempore](#) of the United States Senate, making her third in line of presidential succession. Once called, “just a mom in tennis shoes” she is no stranger to “female firsts”. First elected to the U.S. Senate in 1992, Murray served as the first female Chair of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee during the 112th Congress and served as the first female Chair of the Senate Budget Committee during the 113th Congress.

One of seven children, Murray was born and raised in [Washington state](#). Murray’s father, a WWII veteran and [Purple Heart recipient](#), was diagnosed with [multiple sclerosis](#) when she was a teenager. With her father unable to work and faced with rising medical bills, the family relied on government assistance programs, like food stamps and veteran benefits.

With a degree in physical education, Senator Murray never aspired to have a career in politics. Instead, she often used her rights as a citizen to advocate for change. For example, in college at [Washington State University](#), she successfully petitioned to have the dress code changed so that female students could wear jeans in the dining hall. Later in life, as a wife and mother, she helped organize 13,000 parents who worked together to save a preschool program in her area. Continuing to leverage the power of being a community advocate for local and state issues, Murray successfully ran for school board in 1985 and was elected a state senator in 1989. After serving 4 years in the Washington State Senate, Murray was inspired to run for the U.S. Senate. With her [election victory in 1992](#), she became the first female to represent the state of Washington in the United States Senate. In 2001, with the election of [Maria Cantwell](#) and the re-election of Murray, Washington state became one of only 8 states to ever have two female senators represent the state simultaneously.

During her time as a senator, she has focused on issues that pertain to the working families of Washington state. Other issues she is passionate about include the environment and education. Having faced her own obstacles and barriers in trying to make a difference for the people she represents, Patty Murray has said, “if someone tells you that you can’t make a difference, it’s because they’re afraid you will”.

Civics Challenge: Search & Learn

First woman elected to the U.S. Senate from your state:

Total number of women elected to the U.S. Congress from your state:

Total number of women in your state legislature:



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