

WOMEN'S HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

A Civics In Real Life Series

FEMALE FIRSTS

NANCY PELOSI



The [Speaker of the House](#) plays a powerful role in the U.S. Congress. They have a great deal of control over what happens in the House of Representatives and therefore their leadership significantly impacts the policy-making process of the government. Perhaps most importantly, the Speaker is second in line to the presidency. Since the country's founding, [55 individuals](#) have served as Speaker of the House. In 2007, [Nancy Pelosi](#) became the first and only woman to ever hold the Speaker title. She made history again when she was re-elected to the position in 2019, the only Speaker in 70 years to have won the office twice. Nancy Pelosi was born in Baltimore, Maryland, attended Trinity College in Washington D.C. and eventually settled in San Francisco with her husband and children. She grew up in a family dedicated to a life of politics with her father serving as a congressman from Maryland and later the mayor of Baltimore, and her mother an active member of the Democratic Party. In her [early years](#), Pelosi helped her father campaign and even attended the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. After moving with her family to San Francisco, Pelosi spent time volunteering with the Democratic Party, where she began to take on leadership roles. In 1981, Pelosi was elected chair of the California Democratic Party. She decided to run for office in 1987 and was elected to Congress during a [special election](#). She has continuously been elected to serve the same district, representing most of the San Francisco area, for the past 35 years. Known for her ability to work well with others, especially for finding ways to unite conflicting views within her own party in order to achieve legislative successes, Pelosi rose quickly to [leadership positions](#). She was elected House Minority Whip in 2002 and moved up to House Minority Leader in 2003. Pelosi was the first woman to hold each of these positions in either chamber of Congress. When she was chosen speaker in 2007 she stated: "This is a historic moment-for the Congress, and for the women of this country. It is a moment for which we have waited more than 200 years. Never losing faith, we waited through the many years of struggle to achieve our rights. But women weren't just waiting; women were working. Never losing faith, we worked to redeem the promise of America, that all men and women are created equal." During her tenure as Speaker, Nancy Pelosi guided the House through major legislative battles on topics from the [Iraq War](#) to the [Affordable Care Act](#). She also oversaw two [impeachment](#) votes during the Trump presidency. Pelosi's second tenure as Speaker came to an end after the midterm elections in November 2022 once the Republican Party [took control of the House](#). After the midterms, at 82 years old, Nancy Pelosi announced that after two decades of leadership, she would also step down as the leader of the Democratic Party. She still serves in her capacity as a representative from California. To commemorate her achievements, the House [passed a resolution](#) to name a room in the Capitol building named after her, an honor rarely bestowed. While Nancy Pelosi's historic tenure as Speaker and Democratic Party leader comes to an end, this "female first" hopes that by breaking the marble ceiling "the hour has come for a new generation."

Civics Challenge: Search & Learn

First Woman Elected To Your State Legislature:	
Years Served:	
Party:	
Leadership Positions:	
Has Your State Ever Had A Female Speaker of the House?	

