

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## A Civics In Real Life Series

### FEMALE FIRSTS

### Geraldine A. Ferraro



Running for office takes grit, determination, and strength. It's no coincidence that Ferraro comes from the Italian word for iron, a word that embodies the fortitude of Geraldine Ferraro's political career. [Geraldine Anne Ferraro](#) was born August 26, 1935, in Newburgh, NY, to immigrant Italian parents. Ferraro faced several hardships in her early life. She lost her father and two brothers before she was nine years old. Her mother became the anchor of their family, working as a seamstress in the Bronx. The importance of education and success was something that was ingrained in Ferraro from birth. She went on to graduate from Marymount College in Manhattan. She became an English teacher in a public school by day and a law student by night. In 1960, she graduated with a juris doctorate from Fordham University. That same year, she married John Zaccaro, but she kept her maiden name to commemorate the hard work and determination her mother set forth. The iron work ethic just continued for Ferraro as she rose through the ranks of New York law. In 1970, she was elected as the President of the [Queens County Women's Bar Association](#). Four years later, she was appointed to be the Assistant District Attorney for the Queens Investigation Unit. 1978 launched her political journey when she was elected into the U.S. House of Representatives for New York's 9th District. She was reelected in 1980 and 1982. Her platforms included an emphasis on law and order, neighborhood preservation, and greater assistance programs for the elderly. In 1984, Ferraro became the first female to chair the Democratic platform committee. But her year of female firsts didn't stop there. That same year, Geraldine Ferraro became the first female to be nominated by a major national (Democratic) party for vice president. However, she and her running mate, [Walter Mondale](#), lost their race for the presidency to [Ronald Reagan](#) in the [1984 election](#). Ferraro may not have served as the first female vice president, but two other women have since gone on to earn the nomination for vice president. The first for the Republican Party was [Sarah Palin](#) in 2008. Then, in 2020, the first female elected as vice president was [Kamala Harris](#). Despite not winning the 1984 election, Ferraro still had a place in politics. [President Clinton](#) went on to name Ferraro the Ambassador of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1994. She also held a fellowship at Harvard Law, campaigned for other political candidates such as [Hillary Clinton](#), and made a few unsuccessful runs for U.S. Senate throughout the early 2000s. Ferraro was an iron pillar in female politics. Sadly, in 2011, she lost her battle to cancer. But she leaves behind strong memories of political tenacity and achievement. In her acceptance speech for the vice presidential nomination, Ferraro left us with this encouragement, "There are no doors we cannot unlock...we will place no limits on achievement."

### Civics Challenge: Search & Learn

First Female Lt. Governor Elected To Your State: *Note-it could be none	
Years Served:	
Party:	
Platform:	



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