

WYOMING WOMEN

THEN, NOW AND THE FUTURE

November 10, 2019

A SPECIAL SECTION
COMMEMORATING
THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
IN THE EQUALITY STATE



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For Wyoming women, trailblazing is a way of life. So, it's no surprise Wyoming was the first to guarantee women the right to vote and hold office – a full 50 years before the rest of the nation. We're celebrating the 150th anniversary of women's suffrage by deeming 2019 the Year of Wyoming Women. We invite all who visit the Equality State to find inspiration in our women's stories and push their own boundaries.

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WYOMING WOMEN

THEN, NOW AND THE FUTURE

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The State of EQUALITY

Wyoming Women Get the Vote


Wyoming was the first U.S. territory to grant women suffrage in 1869. WyomingPBS, in partnership with Caldera Productions, takes a look back at this historical and groundbreaking decision.

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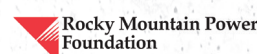

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Wyoming first to grant women right to vote, but it almost didn't happen



16th Street in Cheyenne, circa 1860s (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)



By Michael Kassell
Special to the Wyoming
Tribune Eagle

"I say rather than surrender that right, we would rather remain in a territorial condition throughout the endless cycles of time."

When Charles Holden of Uinta County uttered those words, the issue at hand was whether Wyoming would keep women's suffrage when it applied for statehood in 1890. No other state in the union had yet extended the right of women to vote at that time, and there was opposition in Congress to letting the small and somewhat obnoxious Wyoming territory be the first to do so.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of women's suffrage in Wyoming, our citizens know that Congress relented, and Wyoming became the first state where women enjoyed equality at the ballot box. It is something we proudly take for granted. Yet it almost didn't happen.

Women's right to vote had been an issue long before Wyoming was even a concept. Many might be shocked to

learn that New Jersey was actually the first state in which women were allowed to vote. From 1776 to 1807, a loophole in the law stated that all people who owned more than 50 English pounds of property could do so. Blacks and women who inherited their husband's wealth when widowed could vote in general elections.

Unfortunately, in 1807, politics grew acrimonious, and the major party at that time in New Jersey, the National Democrats, desired to take power away from their rivals, the Federalists. Since blacks and women both tended to vote Federalist, the National Democrats changed the law, and both segments were disenfranchised. It would take nearly six decades for blacks to get the right to vote again, and women wouldn't get the right again nationally for more than 110.

The fight to regain suffrage was going to be a difficult one. The real push for women's suffrage didn't gather steam again until the late 1840s, when dedicated women and men met at Seneca Falls, New York, to demand the right to vote in 1848.

The political and social environments of the nation were against them. Many people, including women themselves, thought that politics was a male

occupation and beneath the dignity of the fairer sex. Supporters tried time and again to convince the nation that suffrage was a good idea, and time and again failed to get legislatures or voters to agree. Nebraska made an attempt in 1855, and Kansas followed in 1859, to no avail.

It wasn't until the nation began to stretch out across the open wilderness of the frontier that new opportunities arose. With the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, new communities were being born across the continent, and new territories were being formed. Wyoming was one of the youngest, being established in 1868, and it was here that suffragists saw a chance to change the game.

One man who saw it was Republican Edward M. Lee, the newly appointed secretary for the territory. He had just come from Connecticut, where he had tried and failed to get a women's suffrage bill through the state legislature. Wyoming was going to be different, and he had a plan.

In 1869, the citizens of Wyoming were about to select their first territorial assembly. It was to be the job of this nascent body to create all the laws that would govern the territory. At this level, the rules were a little different



Edward M. Lee, first secretary of Wyoming Territory (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

than for states. For many states, for any laws to be passed, they had to be approved by two-thirds of the legislature. For federal territories, only a simple majority was needed.

Eager to take advantage of this fact, Lee did all he could to prime Wyoming voters to select candidates supportive of the concept of women's suffrage. To help, he invited fellow Connecticut

Anna Dickinson to speak in Cheyenne prior to the meeting of the lawmakers. Cheyenne's newspapers and their readers offered a split reception to her message. One thought the idea of women's suffrage was absurd, while the other maintained, "Her arguments were unanswerable, except upon the basis of prejudice."

It was for the assembly to decide. Fortunately for history, Lee had an unknown ally en route to the territorial capital.

William H. Bright was an unlikely revolutionary. A saloon keeper in Wyoming's second largest city, South Pass City, Bright had narrowly won the third seat representing the town in the assembly amid a field of seven candidates. He was apparently a likeable man, as, despite his low poll numbers, he was nominated to be president of Wyoming's upper house, the council.

When the Territorial Assembly, dominated by Democrats, convened in Cheyenne on Oct. 12, there was a flurry of motions and counter motions to get laws in place before the conclusion of the legislature Dec. 10. Slowly, but surely, law after law was passed, laying the foundations for Wyoming government.

On Nov. 12, Bright mentioned that he would propose a law giving women the right to vote. Some scoffed, but he finally presented his bill 15 days later on Nov. 27. There is speculation that Bright and Lee collaborated on the wording of the bill to make it palatable to the other council members.

When the council reviewed the bill, they did so with serious deliberation. The new law granting women the right to vote made sense. Many of the councilmen were fathers, who were concerned with the rough quality of Wyoming. It was a dangerous place, where miners and railroaders were relatively transient. Any young woman, like their daughters, who married these men were in danger of being left behind, penniless and destitute.

The law granted women not only the right to participate in government affairs, but also gave them the right to own their own property. It also proposed that any teacher that came to the territory, whether male or female, would be paid the same wage.

Other reasons made the bill popular. It would bring attention to the new territory, which would be good for business. It would also encourage, it was hoped, women to move to Wyoming, where men outnumbered women on the order of six to one. The council passed the bill approving women's

suffrage 6-2.

The lower of the legislative chambers, the House of Representatives, was a different story. Bright's bill was met with derision and jokes. One of the leaders of the opposition was South Pass City lawyer Benjamin Sheeks, who listed several reasons why women shouldn't be allowed to vote. Primarily, his points surmised that it was against the nature of women, public tradition and the Bible for women to step into participating in government.

Despite his arguments, which met general approval by the body, the House of Representatives also passed the bill, for a nefarious reason.

It was believed, by the many Democrats in the House, that the suffrage bill stood no chance whatsoever to become law. They saw the bill as a means to embarrass the Republican governor of the territory, John Campbell. They anticipated that he was conservative and would not allow Wyoming's revolutionary move on women's suffrage to tarnish his reputation or that of the national Republican party. They thought he would veto the bill, and they could use that against him in the next election. They thought they had him cornered.

They were wrong. To their shock and dismay, John Campbell signed the bill, and Wyoming became the first territory in U.S. history to purposefully grant women the right to participate in government.

With the passage of women's suffrage, the nation's attention was, indeed, focused on the tiny new territory. Some eastern newspapers were outraged, while others were gleefully supportive. The vast majority, however, took a "wait and see" attitude. What did it matter? Wyoming was a tiny territory in the middle of nowhere. If the people out west wanted this odd state of affairs, it should be left to them. None seemed to realize that there was more to come.

In February 1870, Gov. John Campbell left Wyoming for official business back in Washington. This left Secretary Edward Lee as acting territorial governor, and he was going to make the most of it. The bill allowed women the right to vote, but it also conferred upon them the duties of being fully vested in the government. They had to serve, too.

Just as he assumed his role, Lee was alerted that one of the federally appointed justices of the peace in South Pass City was stepping down in the middle of his term. The vacancy must



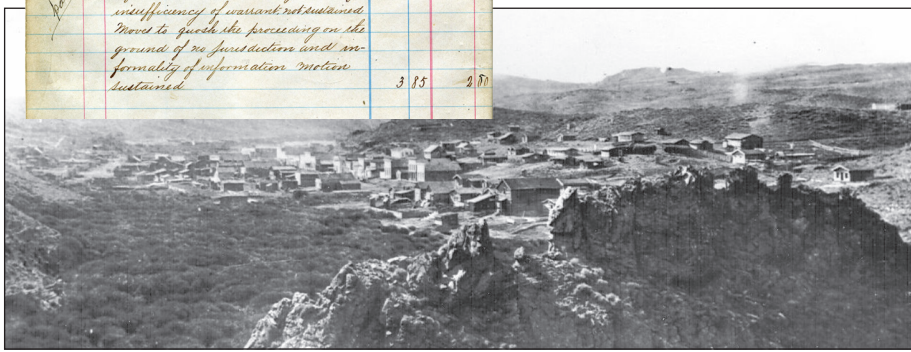
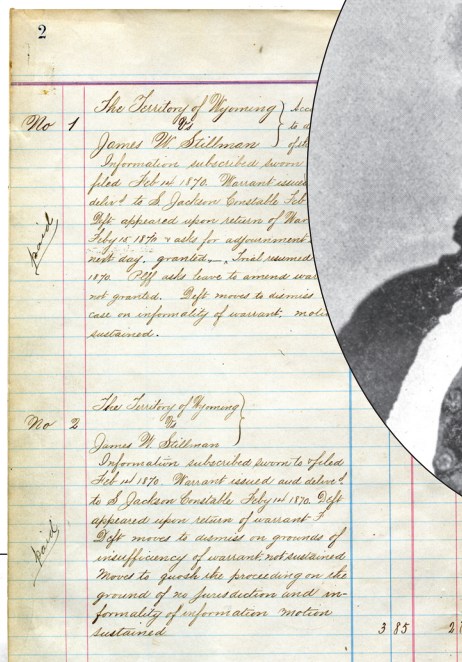
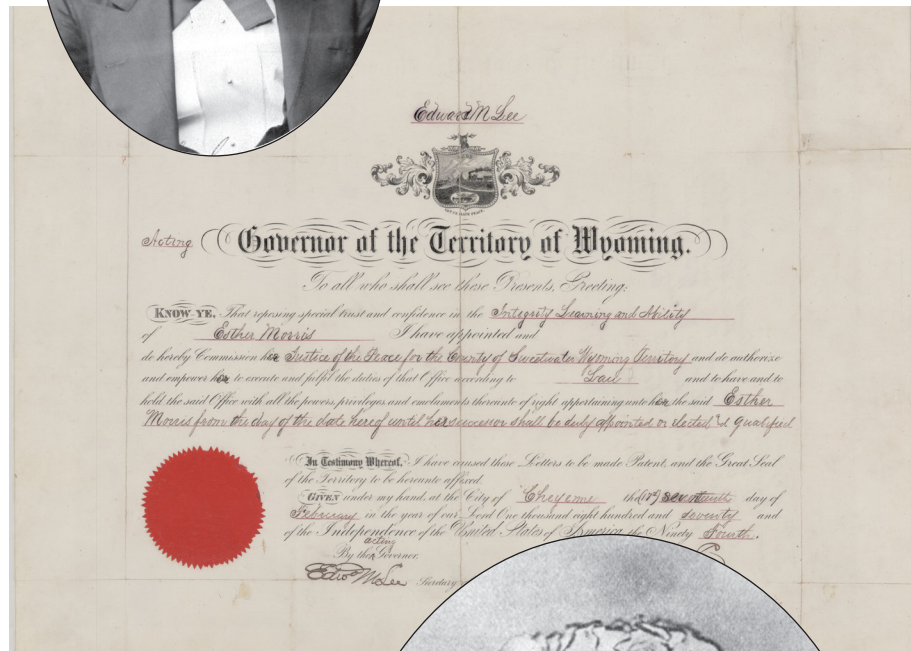
Top to bottom: Gov. John A. Campbell

Certificate of appointment for Esther Hobart Morris, the nation's first female justice of the peace.

Esther Hobart Morris

Docket of Justice of the Peace Esther Hobart Morris, South Pass City.

South Pass City, circa 1870 (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy photos)



150 years, continued from 5

be filled, and Lee moved to do so. With the support of two of the three Territorial Supreme Court justices, Lee appointed Esther Hobart Morris as the nation's first female justice of the peace. She was the first woman given an official government position in the country's history.

A strong and self-confident woman, Morris took the office despite her predecessor's vocal opposition. She served out the remainder of his 8½-month term admirably, hearing 27 cases, both civil and criminal, as well as setting up grand and petit juries, depositing a ballot and canvassing votes after an election. Her performance was under a national microscope as a test of a woman's suitability to handle official roles. She handled it well, and became a sensation with suffragists everywhere in the country.

Unfortunately, when her term came to its conclusion, she found few supporters in the dying town of South Pass to win a chance to continue. Even so, Esther Hobart Morris remained in demand at suffragist conventions around the nation, and she gladly attended with dignity and humor, becoming Wyoming's greatest suffrage advocate.

While Esther Hobart Morris was serving her term as justice, the Wyoming Territorial Supreme Court moved again to bring women fully into government. This time it was in the jury box. Beginning in March 1870, women began being selected for jury duty. The first trials where women sat as peers to men were in Laramie.

Again, the reaction from around the country was less than supportive. The courtroom had long been seen as the domain of men. Women were considered too delicate to handle the brutal details of murder trials, and too aloof to comprehend the details of civil cases. When one of the women jurors

fell ill during a trial, papers eagerly pointed to her malady as proof of women's unsuitability for the halls of justice.

But there was more than women's ability to handle the rough details of the law at stake. Jury duty was previously something men looked forward to. If they were sequestered during the trial, they would be housed and fed, at the court's expense, at a hotel. There they could gamble, drink, swear and party as they wished. If women were allowed on juries, however, this was to come to a crashing end.

First, many had the objection that married women couldn't possibly be housed in a hotel with strange men. Second, women tended to be temperance advocates who were against drinking, smoking and swearing. Third, no man, should he count himself a gentleman, would do any of these things in a woman's presence. Women on juries took the fun out of it.

All arguments aside, the issue of women's suitability for sitting on juries came to a head in March 1871, during the trial of John Boyer. Boyer was accused of killing two men after an argument on the Six Mile Ranch near Fort Laramie the year before. In the jury were five women, including the foreman, Amalia Post. Pleas of self-defense were held unsubstantiated, and the jury found Boyer guilty. He was sentenced to death and was executed the following month, the first man to suffer that fate in Wyoming Territory.

The Territorial Supreme Court was satisfied by the performance of women on juries, but they endured the same fate as Esther Morris. With a change in the court makeup, women's service on juries came to an end in 1871, not to be reinstated again until 1950.

With service as justices and on juries fulfilled satisfactorily, the only

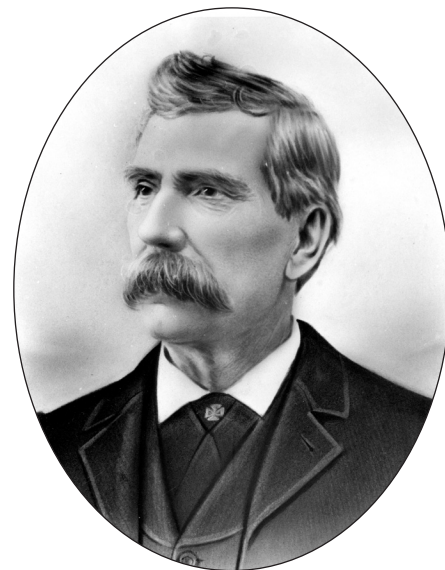
thing left for women to prove was their suitability to handle the ballot box. On Sept. 2, 1870, women had their first chance. Louisa Ann Swain of Laramie was the first documented woman to cast her vote in Wyoming.

Many detractors thought that women wouldn't be interested in voting, and, again, they were wrong. A thousand women turned out to vote. Observers noticed that the polling places across the territory were relatively quiet and peaceful in comparison to previous elections. There was no swearing, and no reports of fighting. Again, supporters proposed, the presence of women had begun to civilize the territory.

One group that was profoundly upset by the women's turnout for the elections were the territory's Democrats. When the ballots were counted, it was found that almost all of the women who voted had voted Republican. The Democrats were scandalized! Hadn't they been the ones to propose and then pass the legislation granting women's suffrage? The women, obviously, had understood what the Democrats had done in attempting to embarrass the governor, and they gave credit where credit was due.

The Democrats decided to assault this "abomination" of their own making. As the territorial assembly convened again in January 1871, Democrats proposed a new bill to repeal women's suffrage. The bill passed both the Council and the House of Representatives. The only thing standing in the way of the annihilation of this new revolution was Gov. John Campbell.

As Campbell pondered what to do, rumors spread that he had been approached on the night he received the bill by two unknown men. They allegedly pledged to pay him \$2,000 to sign the bill. Campbell explained his posi-



William H. Bright, author of the bill to give women in Wyoming Territory the right to vote. (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

tion to papers shortly thereafter:

"It is simple justice to say that the women entering, for the first time in the history of the country, upon these new and untried duties, have conducted themselves in every respect with as much tact, sound judgement and good sense, as men."

Campbell stood by his previous decision and secured his veto to the legislation. It was now back to the Council. That body could only override the veto by two-thirds majority. After much deliberation, the Council votes were counted. Women's suffrage in Wyoming Territory was saved by one vote. The Council conceded defeat, and women's suffrage was never again severely challenged in Wyoming.

Michael Kassel is associate director and curator at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum and an adjunct instructor of history at Laramie County Community College. Email: mike.kassel@oldwestmuseum.org.



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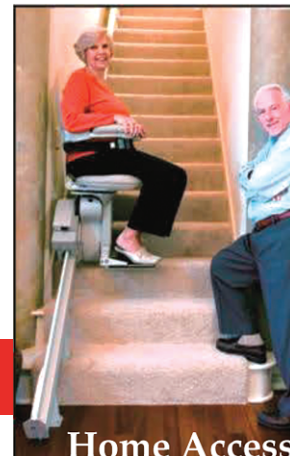


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The forces behind the suffrage movement in Wyoming

By Margaret Austin
Wyoming Tribune Eagle

Esther Hobart Morris

After the Wyoming Territorial Legislature granted women suffrage in December 1869, James W. Stillman protested by resigning from his role as a justice of the peace. By doing so, he unknowingly set the stage for Esther Hobart Morris to become the first woman to hold the office in the United States.

In 1870, she was appointed by the Sweetwater County Board at the age of 55. Standing 6 feet tall, Morris commanded her courtroom and spoke in a way that was more "candid than diplomatic," according to the American Journal of Legal History.

Morris served as a trailblazer for women holding public office in America, and was living proof of the tangible effects women's suffrage had in Wyoming. By holding the position, she became a symbol of the suffrage movement across the country.

As a working woman in the late 1800s, she lacked both legal experience and formal education. Her approach was to judge legal issues "on the broad principles of justice and right without regard to technicalities or quibbles of law." By the end of her eight-and-a-half-month tenure, Morris had a solid grasp on sophisticated legal proceedings.

When Stillman learned his role



Esther Hobart Morris
(Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

would be filled by Morris, he refused to provide his official docket. Carrying out her first legal proceeding and setting the stage for how she handled the role, Morris issued a warrant for Stillman to appear in court.

But any hard feelings Morris might have carried had no effect on her court proceedings. When Stillman's lawyer ultimately argued that she couldn't preside over the case because of a conflict of interest, Morris agreed and dismissed the case.

Wyoming v. Stillman was the first ruling by a woman and helped estab-



Theresa Jenkins
(Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

lish Morris' dedication to justice.

During that time, Morris was the only woman in such a position of power in the U.S. Justices of the peace held more power than modern-day judges because the court covered every type of case. She presided over everything from assault cases to debt disputes.

In 1876, Morris settled down in Cheyenne after a couple years of traveling. Through the 1870s and 1890s, she also attended national suffrage conventions across the country, from San Francisco to Philadelphia.

A grand celebration overtook Cheyenne when Wyoming became a state in 1890. Morris attended the festivities as an honored guest. She presented the state flag to the governor at the time, saying, "On behalf of the women of Wyoming, and in grateful recognition of the high privilege of citizenship that has been conferred upon us, I have the honor to present to the state of Wyoming this beautiful flag."

Theresa Jenkins

Theresa Jenkins, one of Wyoming's most powerful forces for women's suffrage, was appalled by the number of saloons she saw in Cheyenne when she arrived in 1877. To promote refinement in her new city, Jenkins created a reading room at her local church so young people had an alternative to drinking.

Jenkins would go on to use the same type of grassroots methods to make herself a key player in the suffrage and temperance movements in Wyoming. Though Jenkins arrived after women were allowed the right to vote, she took it upon herself to further the cause through rousing speeches, rallies and door-to-door canvassing, according to the Wyoming State Historical Society.

Previously a teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, Jenkins had the education and ability to get involved in the political scene. As one of the most vocal

See *Women of Wyoming's history*, page 8



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Amalia Post (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)



Nellie Tayloe Ross (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

Women of Wyoming's history, continued from 7
suffragettes, Jenkins became known
for her rousing speeches and ability to
move a crowd.

Jenkins was on the campaign trail in
1889, rallying for pro-suffrage dele-
gates for the state constitutional con-
vention. As with Esther Hobart
Morris, such work drew criticism
from high-ranking men of the time.
One of the best scientists of the time
wrote an article that said men were
better suited for office because they
were "free from the disabilities im-
posed by maternity."

In Jenkins' scathing rebuttal, she
said women should be able to vote be-
cause they can reform man, which
man will not do himself.

"Not the use of the ballot simply to
make our own importance greater, but
the ballot as it could be used to raise
politics out of its filthiness, corruption
and ignorance, and to bring in the
reign of purity, patriotism and intelli-
gence," Jenkins wrote.

Jenkins was dedicated to righteous-
ness, and she used the avenues of the
suffrage and temperance movements
to further that cause.

Because of her work, she was in-
vited to be the keynote speaker at the
statehood celebration. Alongside
Morris, Jenkins stood as a testament
to the effects of suffrage.

The speech was burned into her

memory from so much practice. She
would rehearse, making her husband
move farther and farther away as she
read to ensure that her words carried
for everyone to hear.

The Cheyenne Daily Sun wrote, "(T)
he lady in clear, forceful tones which
penetrated to the very outskirts of the
crowd, began and delivered without
notes or manuscript an address which
in ability, logic and eloquence has
rarely if ever been equaled by any
woman of the land. She was grandly
equal to the occasion."

A couple years later, Jenkins was the
first woman in the country to be
elected to the Republican National
Convention. She would go on to travel
the country, attending suffrage events
and working with other suffragists to
pass laws nationally.

In 1919, Congress passed the
amendment and needed 36 states to
ratify it. Carrie Chapman Catt, the
president of the National American
Woman's Suffrage Association, per-
sonally asked Jenkins to plead the 19th
Amendment's case to Wyoming's gov-
ernor, which required a special ses-
sion of the Legislature.

The governor replied, "Mrs. Jen-
kins, if for no other reason than that
you have asked me to do this, I would
call this session, for I know that if you
did not think it the right thing for me to
do, you would not have asked it."

Chapman Catt later named Theresa

Jenkins, Esther Hobart Morris and
Grace Raymond Hebard "as the three
women of Wyoming who had meant
more than all others for the state of
Wyoming in the cause of suffrage."
According to Jenkins' daughter, that
praise was one of Jenkins' "greatest
honors."

Amalia Post

Newly divorced and far from her
family, Amalia Post molded a career
for herself in 1860s Denver. Across the
country from her childhood home in
Michigan, she raised chickens and
loaned money with interest.

Like many women of the time, Ama-
lia Post grew up thinking women were
supposed to be the center of the house-
hold. Her real life, however, contra-
dicted that notion. Although she
learned to navigate the world of com-
merce and support herself financially,
Post showed no signs of interest re-
lated to women's suffrage.

By the draw of a hat, she ended up in
the midst of a movement, however.
After moving to Cheyenne to be with
her husband, she was selected as the
foreman of the first female jury in the
U.S.

When women in Wyoming were
granted suffrage, the question of jury
duty was brought up. If juries were se-
lected from voter rolls, then women

ought to participate. And so Post was
selected as the foreman of the jury for
a murder trial in Cheyenne.

Men of the time thought that women
didn't have the capacity to justly rule
on cases involving such high emotions.
Some historians say allowing women
on juries was an attempt to discredit
suffrage or that it was a joke.

Nevertheless, Post, along with other
female jurors, sat in the courtroom to
hear pleas. In the end, they sentenced
the murderer to be hung. In reality, the
women of the time reportedly dished
out higher fines and stricter rulings.

Women being able to serve on juries
was short-lived, though. A judicial
opinion in 1871 took away the jury
duty requirement for women.

Post, however, went on to become a
national suffragist. Like many activist
leaders of the time, Post got involved
with the National Woman Suffrage
Association. She traveled to Washing-
ton, D.C., where she met with women
like Susan B. Anthony and Victoria
Woodhull.

During the fall of 1871, the territo-
rial legislature in Wyoming made a
pass at repealing suffrage. Legisla-
tures at the time were trying to pass
the bill over the governor's veto, but
the anti-suffrage bill made it all the
way to the governor's desk.

Post lobbied against the bill, which
ended up on the governor's desk be-
cause it was one vote short in Con-
gress. Although Gov. John Campbell,
who signed the first suffrage bill, was
likely to veto, Post still reached out to
him personally.

Campbell vetoed the bill and ad-
dressed the Legislature, saying, "It is
simple justice to say that the women
entering, for the first time in the his-
tory of the country, upon these new and
untried duties, have conducted them-
selves in every respect with as much
tact, sound judgment and good sense
as men."

Nellie Tayloe Ross

As the governor's wife, Nellie Tay-
loe Ross made a home for herself and
her family in the governor's mansion.
She didn't know it yet, but a great per-
sonal tragedy would propel her to hold
a different position within those walls.

After the death of her husband, Ross
decided to run for his role as governor
to carry out his final term. According
to the Wyoming State Historical Soci-
ety, the election was about a month
after his death.

As a member of the Cheyenne Wo-
man's Club, Ross learned how to

speak publicly about politics and culture. Before marriage, she worked as a kindergarten and piano teacher, but had little employment experience otherwise.

While her husband, William Ross, held the office, he consulted Nellie on political matters daily. And as Wyoming's first lady, she was enamored by the lifestyle. Being so intertwined in the political sphere served her well after William's death.

After he died, on Oct. 14, 1924, the Democratic Party nominated Nellie Tayloe Ross as its candidate for governor. She accepted 45 minutes before the deadline after days of uncertainty.

Pained by grief, Ross decided not to campaign for her election. She was running on her husband's previous work and a promise to continue his mission.

She won the race by 8,000 votes, a significant victory.

And then she got to work. Ross outlined three of William's policies to continue, including state loans for farmers and the enforcement of prohibition, but she also brought ideas of her own. Ross proposed eight ideas that ranged from budget requirements to protections for female industrial workers.

As a Democrat in a sea of Republicans, Ross was unable to pass the new progressive laws, which gave her a reason to remain invested.

After the session, Ross became a nationwide sensation. She spoke at the Woman's National Democratic Club in Washington, D.C., the Woman's World Fair in Chicago and the National Governors' Conference in Maine.

In 1926, Ross ran for governor again. But this time, it was for herself. She lost the race by a narrow margin, but she wasn't done working in government. In Washington, D.C., she became the director of Woman's National Democratic Club.

According to the Wyoming State Archives, when she was first running for governor, she pledged, "I shall expect and feel in duty bound to make my own decisions in every case, realizing that upon me alone would rest the responsibility. The fact of my being a woman would in no way alter my obligation to the people in this respect."

Estelle Reel

Campaigning in the 1890s looked much different than it does today. Estelle Reel, who became Wyoming's first female statewide elected official, traversed the campaign trail in wag-



Estelle Reel (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

ons and on horseback.

Getting elected as a state official at that time was no small task, especially for a woman.

Reel's path to becoming Wyoming's superintendent of public instruction started within the walls of a school as a teacher in Cheyenne. She was voted in as Laramie County's school superintendent, and set her eyes on the statewide seat after her reelection two years later.

While Nellie Tayloe Ross became governor out of circumstance, Reel secured her own position through vigorous campaigning. According to the Wyoming State Historical Society, she even went down a mine shaft in Rock Springs on the road to election.

When she took office, Reel proved those who doubted her wrong. Immediately, she looked at the funding for schools and found improvements that made the school system more revenue. She fought for a standardized curriculum in Wyoming to benefit rural students and wrote a book that served as a guideline for teachers.

From her successes in that position, Reel also became the first woman to be confirmed for a federal office. She served as the national superintendent of Indian schools, and, like many officials, considered Native Americans inferior. Her work in the schools centered around the "dignity of labor" because Reel thought Native Americans

needed a more practical education for the roles they'd take in society, like agricultural laborers.

Although supportive of women's voting rights, Reel still believed that certain offices should be held by men.

Though her comments about women in government drew criticism from the suffrage movement, Reel is still remembered for trailblazing a path for women to hold elected positions.

Julia Bright

The suffrage bill was passed through an all-male legislature with help from women of influence behind the scenes. William Bright introduced the suffrage bill, and he was married to a woman named Julia Bright.

Julia's exact impact on the passage of the bill is not entirely known.

It is speculated the Julia was a driving force behind the introduction of the suffrage bill, but some stories of Julia and the Brights haven't stood up to the scrutiny of historians.

One story claims Esther Hobart Morris aided Julia in a harsh childbirth and later asked for William to introduce the suffrage bill, but there is no report of Julia having a child during that period.

She was more than 10 years younger than William, a former miner who



Louisa Swain (Wyoming State Archives/courtesy)

owned a saloon, and more educated than him. When her husband introduced the bill, he gave the reason that if black and Chinese men could vote, his wife should be able to as well.

Louisa Ann Swain

The first election that women in the Wyoming Territory were allowed to vote in was on Sept. 6, 1870. Born in 1801, Louisa Ann Swain had gone the majority of her life without the right to vote.

On the morning of Sept. 6, at the age of 70, Swain became the first woman to cast her vote, according to the Wyoming State Archives. She was otherwise uninvolved in the suffrage movement, but is still remembered for the momentous occasion.

After she cast her ballot, the Laramie Daily Sentinel wrote, "It is comforting to note that our first woman voter was really a lady ... of the highest social standing in the community, universally beloved and respected. The scene was in the highest degree interesting and impressive. There was just too much good sense in our community for any jeers or sneers to be seen on such an occasion."

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Gender pay gap afflicts Wyoming in more ways than one



By Tom Coulter
Wyoming Tribune Eagle

A century and a half after becoming the first U.S. territory or state to give women the right to vote, Wyoming is lagging behind its neighbors in gender pay gap statistics.

In the late 19th century, Wyoming's territorial legislature aimed to expand gender equality beyond the ballot box, as lawmakers also passed a law guaranteeing that teachers – most of whom were women – would be paid the same, regardless of gender. They also passed a bill guaranteeing married women property rights separate from their husbands.

Suffrage has a significant place in Wyoming's history, yet recent statistics reveal a more complicated legacy for women in the Equality State.

Though its exact ranking varies, Wyoming consistently shows up as one of the states with the largest pay disparity between men and women. A 2018 study by the state's Department of Workforce Services found Wyoming had the second-largest pay gap in the country, with women earning 68

cents for every dollar men made for the same work.

Gov. Mark Gordon highlighted the issue when he signed a proclamation recognizing the gender pay gap in June on the day women would have to work past the end of 2018 to earn what men made in 365 days that year.

The Wyoming Legislature has also explored options to narrow the pay gap. Rep. Cathy Connolly, D-Laramie, has sponsored several bills related to gender equality in past sessions, though only one, a bill raising fees for equal pay violations to the level for other labor penalties, has passed.

In the 2019 legislative session, Connolly's bill to raise the state's minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour failed in the House by a 23-36 vote. Despite the results, Connolly said there were encouraging signs with the legislation.

"I was really thrilled that there was recognition in the business community and, in particular ... the restaurant hospitality area, that for the first time, they decided to not oppose the bill," Connolly said. "It's the recognition that we need workers making a living wage."

The upcoming 2020 session will focus on the state budget, meaning each legislator is limited to submitting five bills for consideration. Connolly said she hasn't decided on her top five, but the minimum-wage bill could be one of them.

Another bill that failed last session would've prohibited employers from asking for workers' salary histories, a measure that Connolly said is designed to stop perpetuating the wage gap that might have existed at a previous job.

"For an employer to offer an employee a 10% to 15% bump in wages from their previous job, that's pretty good, right?" Connolly said. "But if that 10% or 15% is based on a wage gap in a previous job, all you're doing is perpetuating that wage gap."

Connolly, a gender and women's studies professor at the University of Wyoming, said developing statewide post-secondary education will be key to addressing the issue.

"One of the things that we know from all of the data is that in Wyoming, for women to receive a bachelor's degree is one of the biggest steps in order

to decrease the wage gap," she said. "The wage gap is enormous at lower educational levels, and it diminishes significantly with higher education."

There is a push to make more post-secondary certificates and certifications available in Wyoming community colleges, though Connolly said it's important that some of those opportunities are in female-dominated fields.

"I want to see jobs that dominantly employ women, for example, in the health-care sector, health management information systems, things like that," Connolly said. "So that's another avenue to adjust the wage gap is to make sure that our attention to re-training and post-secondary education includes thinking about the sectors that women work in, and the jobs that typically women do."

Navigating this economic reality can be especially difficult for single mothers, Wyoming Women's Foundation President Rebekah Smith said.

"Financial self-sufficiency is so important for women," Smith said. "If someone is financially independent or self-sufficient, they are more empowered."

That empowerment comes with tangible benefits. Making the same as their male counterparts would mean a woman in Wyoming could afford an additional 16 months of child care, 10.2 months of health insurance premiums, and 2.2 years of tuition and fees at a four-year university, according to estimates from the National Partnership for Women and Families.

The gender pay gap has a significant impact on the state's overall economic health, Smith said. The state's 2018 study found that if women were paid equally to men, Wyoming would see an additional \$153 million in income annually. That money would create economic activity that would produce 604 jobs and more than \$80 million.

"This is to our detriment," Rep. Sara Burlingame, D-Cheyenne, said of the pay gap. "We also know that when women make more, how much more reactive it is. When women have high salaries, it lifts everyone up. It means children are receiving better care."

Burlingame noted the statistics are worse for black and Hispanic women. Nationally, white women earn 79 cents for each dollar earned by a man, while black

women earn 62 cents and Hispanic women earn 54 cents, according to research from the American Association of University Women.

"Something that drives me absolutely bonkers is when people say women earn like 72 cents on the dollar," Burlingame said. "Women don't earn 72 cents on the dollar; white women earn 72 cents on the dollar."

While some argue that the gender wage gap is only due to more men being in Wyoming's mining and energy sectors, that argument is rooted in a misconception and doesn't dig into the numbers, Wyoming Women's Action Network founder Jen Simon said.

"A common misconception is that the gender wage gap is a result of making asymmetrical measurements, comparing high-paying industries that have a lot of men to low-paying industries that have a lot of women," Simon said. "When comparisons are made within industries and occupations, men earn more than women in all but five of the 125 occupations measured – whether there are more men than women, more women

than men, or an even mix of both within those industries."

The pay disparity within industries is coupled with the fact that occupations predominantly filled by women are most likely to be low-wage or minimum-wage jobs. About seven in 10 minimum wage jobs are staffed by women, Smith said.

"There are a lot of factors that go into it," Smith said. "A lot of minimum-wage jobs are going to be the ones that are available with a part-time option, or hours that work around a school schedule. Women are the primary caregivers for families, so working around child care and school schedules are major factors."

About 52,000 female workers in Wyoming are earning wages below \$15 an hour. An increase to \$15 an hour would mean those women would be able to be self-sufficient, substantially lessening their need for government assistance

to make ends meet, Simon said.

"Wyoming has the opportunity to be a leader on this issue and here's how: we can take the lead supporting businesses and implementing policies that are proven to close the gender wage gap while improving the bottom line of businesses,"

Simon said. "Some of the top businesses in the country – and the types of businesses that Wyoming is looking to attract – are already taking the initiative to close the gender wage gap because they know that it is good for their bottom line."

Burlingame said while the Legislature has a role in finding ways to close the wage gap, it isn't a policy issue alone. Rather, it requires an all-encompassing solution.

"I always believe, and maybe doubly so with wage gap, when we're at our best, we collaborate really well. We get people in the room from the Legislature, from the private sector, from education and say what would really work here," Burlingame said. "Not what other states tell us to do, but what would work for Wyoming. And once you get that buy-in, great things happen."

Former WTE state government reporter **Ramsey Scott** contributed to this report.

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Number of women in Wyo. Legislature lags behind national trends

By Tom Coulter
Wyoming Tribune Eagle

When it comes to women serving in government, Wyoming is a state of firsts. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the country's first female governor, justice of the peace and bailiff all came from the Equality State.

After setting the standard for female representation in American government, however, Wyoming has fallen behind most other states.

There are 14 women in this year's session of the Wyoming State Legislature, which accounts for just 15.6% of the Legislature's 90 seats. That statistic puts Wyoming in the bottom five states for female participation rates in state legislatures, according to the Center for American Women in Politics.

Wyoming also lags behind the national average for women in state legislatures: 28.9%. That number saw a 3% uptick from 2018 to 2019 following an election cycle in which a record number of women also were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Why so few women?

Rep. Sara Burlingame, D-Cheyenne, who was elected last year, said she hadn't given much serious consideration to running for office until the 2016 election.

"The 2016 election inspired a lot of us to think democracy needed to be more of a participatory event, like democracy was not on autopilot mode," Burlingame said. "We felt like if we weren't being represented, we should try our best to share our message."

Women made substantial political gains in the 2018 elections, but that surge of women doesn't tell the full story, CAWP Director Debbie Walsh said.

"We heard so much in the 2018 elections about this surge of women candidates and the increase of women at every level of office," Walsh said. "And while that was true, it was largely or really almost exclusively on the Democratic side, so it's not progress that we've seen across the parties."

Women are less likely to receive encouragement to run for office from oth-

ers, according to a 2012 study by the Women and Politics Institute at American University. While 49% of men were urged to run for office by current politicians, 39% of women reported receiving the same level of support.

Even for a woman like Rep. Cathy Connolly, D-Laramie, who was already a community activist and university professor before seeking office, the decision didn't become clear until another woman involved in politics asked her to.

"When I was asked to run, one of the things that occurred to me was, you know, put your money where your mouth is," Connolly said. "In Wyoming, you can make a difference."

Sen. Tara Nethercott, R-Cheyenne, said she decided to run after the former Republican in her seat, Tony Ross, decided not to pursue reelection.

"I had a positive experience overall, with support from men and women in Laramie County and throughout the state," Nethercott said. "I can only speak very highly of it."

Nethercott noted how Wyoming's geography could potentially deter women from seeking statewide office.

"The fact that Cheyenne is located in an isolated area of the state, in the corner, there's a geographic challenge for many women to be that far away—just the distance from family and other obligations, I think that might cause a deterrence," Nethercott said. "It's easier to have a business or have a family when the government is within your own local community."

Walsh agreed, noting how the Wyoming Legislature being part-time can be a hurdle for women.

"In many states, you see a concentration of women who represent the area either in or around the state capital, because it is, in fact, easier," Walsh said. "Women still are the primary caregivers at home. They often have a full-time job outside the home, and then being in the Legislature, in effect, becomes a third full-time job. Because even though it's not a full-time legislature, the work of being a legislator doesn't end when they're not in session."

A few female candidates have already announced plans to run for



Rep. Cathy Connolly, D-Laramie, listens to a fellow lawmaker during the 65th Wyoming Legislature's general session Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019, at the Jonah Business Center in Cheyenne. Wyoming Tribune Eagle/file

House seats in 2020, though in line with Walsh's point, they mainly hail from southeast Wyoming.

Inside the Capitol

Wyoming has two female lawmakers in leadership positions: Connolly, who is the House Minority Leader, and Sen. Liisa Anselmi-Dalton, D-Rock Springs, who is the Senate Minority Whip.

Connolly, who has served in the House since 2009, said it can be difficult for female legislators to get their ideas across.

"Me and other women, we have joked about things like we go to the microphone or in a committee meeting, and we say X, Y or Z. Then, three speakers later, a man says the exact same thing, and everybody nods, when you have just said it," Connolly said.

"We look at each other and roll our eyes like 'You have got to be kidding.' That has happened, and it happens across party lines. This is this is not a Democrat or Republican thing.

"Let's face it, politicians are probably some of the best mansplainers ... and 'best' with great big quotation marks around it," she said.

Nethercott, who serves as chairwoman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said she has been supported by all of her legislative colleagues, male or female.

"I'm a chairman early on in my first term, and that speaks well to the leadership of the Senate, who are all men,

to make the decision to put me in that position," Nethercott said. "I think that speaks well to them, and I am honored by that opportunity. I truly haven't experienced any negativity."

The number of women in the Legislature can influence the kind of legislation that gets passed, Wyoming Women's Action Network founder Jen Simon said. In Nevada, 52.3% of the members of the state legislature are women, and Simon said the state serves as a great example of what happens when equal gender representation is achieved.

"In their most recent legislative session, they passed a long-overlooked gender wage gap bill, bills on sexual assault, intimate partner violence and the processing of rape kits," Simon said in an email. "Oftentimes, these are bills that don't get the traction that they should or are subject to more hypothetical debate, because the representatives aren't familiar with the impacts."

Walsh said her center's research also shows women are more likely to cross party lines, partly because of the occasionally contrasting reasons men and women enter politics.

"When we ask men and women why they've run for office in the first place, women are more likely to tell us that they are there because of a problem," Walsh said. "When we asked the same question of men who serve in legislatures, they're more likely to tell us that they're there

150 years later, female voting participation is higher than ever

By Margaret Austin

Wyoming Tribune Eagle

On Sept. 6, 1870, women in Cheyenne marched into polling places across the city, ready and willing to participate in an election for the first time. According to the Cheyenne Daily Leader, out of 776 total votes, 171 were cast by women.

Today, the makeup of American elections looks very different. More women participate in elections than men, and Congress has more female members than ever before.

The data shows women are showing up to the ballot box to make their voices heard.

“The dynamic has really changed,” said Dave Marcum, political science instructor at Laramie County Community College. “If you look at the family dynamic or the dynamic of our economic system, you’re seeing greater and greater female participation.”

That rise in participation is also evident when it comes to voting.

The proportion of eligible women who voted has been higher than the proportion of eligible men who voted in presidential elections since 1980, according to a September study from the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

The difference in participation has been growing slowly since 1980, when the percentages were neck and neck. At that time, 61.9% of eligible women cast their votes, while 61.5% of men did. That LEASE.4 percentage point gap increased to a 4 percentage point difference by 2016, when 63.3% of eligible women voted compared to 59.3% of men.

Though the direct correlation is unclear, Marcum pointed out that the time period when participation rates diverged also coincided with the 1972 passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, which was intertwined with women’s liberation.

“That was basically the height of the women’s rights movement,” Marcum said.

With the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1960s, a flame was lit once again for the Equal Rights Amend-

ment, which states, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

Enough support was secured that the Senate and the House passed the bill in 1972. The battle to get the bill ratified stretched into the early ‘80s, but fell short in meeting the 38-state requirement for ratification.

During the women’s liberation movement, women participated in democracy by doing more than just voting. According to the National Organization for Women, gender equality advocates picketed the Miss America pageant, protested gender-specific help-wanted ads in the New York Times, and organized nationwide demonstrations and rallies.

Laramie County Clerk Debra Lee said that type of civic engagement increases participation because it catches people’s attention and makes them think.

“Movements like that play a huge role in mobilizing voters,” Lee said.

Groups like NOW and the League of Women Voters were quite popular during that time period and encouraged members to stay politically active.

Around the time of the movement, the number of women in the Wyoming Legislature was also seeing changes.

In 1973, four women total served in the Senate and the House, according to the Wyoming State Archives’ blue book. Twelve years later, in 1985, that number jumped to 22 – more than five times the amount in 1973.

The number of women in the Legislature now sits at 10, which Lee said has more to do with redistricting than lack of participation.

Today, there are many factors that drive women to vote.

LCCC’s Marcum said certain topics that affect women personally, such as abortion, may inspire female participation.

“You’re seeing issues like that gaining prominence and being discussed at the national level, and I think you could look at that as maybe another explanation as why women are more energized to not only vote, but run for office,” Marcum said.



Gabriela Sundquist of Cheyenne contemplates candidates at the VFW Post 1881 polling station while voting on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2018, in Cheyenne. Wyoming Tribune Eagle/file

More women ran for office in 2018 than ever before. Marcum said candidates who support either side of important issues may also energize voters because they care about the issue itself.

“A lot of what motivates people to go to the polls and vote is the personal connection they have to the issues that are being discussed,” he said.

From Lee’s experience as a county clerk, she said more women will also turn out for elections for judges and district attorneys if there has been a series of rulings they disagree with.

While issues can draw voters out to the polls, another factor that Marcum pointed to is the broader change in culture and family dynamics in the United States.

“More and more women are working and becoming the primary earners in a family,” Marcum said.

An analysis from Pew Research Center in 2013 showed that the number of mothers who are the sole providers for their families jumped from 10.8% in 1960 to 40.4% in 2011. The percentage of breadwinning single mothers was also on the rise.

One theory is that as primary care-

givers, women interact with people tightly tied to the government, such as teachers and health-care workers. Marcum said that kind of experience, like taking care of an elderly parent and dealing with high medication costs, can affect someone’s participation and vote.

While women still vote more than men, total voter participation is also looking up.

A total of 53% of the voting population participated in 2018’s midterm election, which is the highest voter turnout in four decades, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. For both men and women, participation increased by more than 10 percentage points compared to 2014.

Although the total number of voters is on the rise, participation still varies greatly across age demographics. The only age group where men vote at higher rates than women is ages 65 and older.

As a whole, 70.7% of those 65 and older voted, while only 43% of people ages 18-24 did. Women between the ages of 18 and 24 turned out at higher rates than men, but their participation

See **Voting**, page 18

Native American women look at suffrage anniversary differently

By Isabella Alves
Wyoming Tribune Eagle

For most of the Equality State, this year has been a celebration of events marking the 150th anniversary for women's suffrage.

But that isn't the case for all Wyoming women.

This is only the 150th anniversary for some women's right to vote. But it doesn't include Native American women, who called Wyoming home long before settlers came to the state.

Wyoming has the one of the largest Native American reservations in the country, and for the Native American women living in Wyoming, most didn't receive the right to vote until 1924, when Native Americans were finally recognized as American citizens. This was four years after women received the right to vote nationally.

For Rep. Andi Clifford, D-Riverton, this is something she's known her whole life. Clifford is the first Northern Arapaho woman to be elected to the Wyoming Legislature. She was elected in 2018, and represents a large portion of the Native American population in Wyoming.

Clifford said the lack of legal protections, such as the right to vote, wasn't an issue for indigenous women until colonization.

Before white people came to Wyoming and colonized native's lands, women had the right to vote in their tribes and held key positions of political power.

"My ancestors, before colonization, my people – the women were held in high regard and equal to men. They were in positions of power, they were in key political positions in our tribe. They were listened to," she said. "I want that to be known, we had it before colonization. Women were equal."

Clifford said Wyoming doesn't really feel like the Equality State for her. The more she learned about her history, the less true it felt.

There are still concerns about voting among her constituents when it comes to being encouraged to vote. For example, Clifford said there were still obstacles, such as validating



Rep. Andi Clifford, D-Riverton, is seen in the House chamber on Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019, during what was expected to be the final day of the 65th Wyoming Legislature's general session at the Jonah Business Center. Wyoming Tribune Eagle/file

tribal IDs to get registered to vote.

"I'm a third-generation American. My grandparents were not born citizens of the United States, since they were 11 or 12 years old. That's, like, real, and very, just to think of it in those terms, is very – I can't express it – it's baffling," she said. "And then with the women's rights, taking that claim, yes – it was just for white women. Not for my grandparents, not for my grandmas."

Native North American cultures did not subordinate women the way EuroAmerican cultures did, said Dee Garceau, professor of history at the University of Montana at Missoula. Garceau has learned elements of tribal history from Salish and Blackfoot elders. She credits Blackfoot elders Kenneth Charles Eaglespeaker and Marie Gussman, and Salish elders Felicite Sapiel McDonald and John Arlee for providing this information.

"In traditional Blackfoot culture, men and women had gendered divisions of responsibilities, but these responsibilities were of equal importance," Garceau said. "Even though men and women, for the most

part, did different things, women were not subordinated in traditional Blackfoot culture."

The historic Plains Indian tribes that were located in Wyoming were the Arapaho, Arikara, Bannock, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, Gros Ventre, Kiowa, Nez Perce, Sheep Eater, Sioux, Shoshone and Ute tribes, according to the state of Wyoming.

The Wind River Indian Reservation is now home to the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes.

"Coming from an egalitarian society, as a woman, from a tribal perspective, we have always had a seat at the table when it came to diplomacy and really having a say in our own communities," said Shoshone woman Lynette St. Clair.

St. Clair said because Native Americans weren't even considered citizens until the 1900s, she wants her vote to count and voice to be heard. She said she owes it to her ancestors to cast her vote because they didn't get that opportunity.

Historically, women were the first on site to butcher game and tan its hides. Through work like this, she said

women had to carry the weight of the tribe on their backs, and because of that responsibility, it gave women the opportunity to learn how to be leaders in their own rights.

St. Clair said many tribal societies were, in fact, matriarchal societies, and women were held in esteemed positions. She said Shoshone women had a voice and carried a lot of the workload in their tribe.

In fact, the famous Native American woman Sacajawea, who helped navigate the Lewis and Clark expedition, was a Shoshone woman and is buried in either Wyoming or North Dakota. In fact, during the fur trade era, many Native American women acted as cultural guides between the tribes and the fur traders.

When fur traders came to the Northern Plains, tribes responded to them as they would another tribe – they reached out to establish diplomatic and trade relations, Garceau said. In this context, if a native woman married a EuroAmerican trader, family ties strengthened the alliance between the two groups.

Native wives of EuroAmerican traders acted as cultural mediators between the traders and the tribes, she said. As part of the fur trade, native women served as interpreters, canoe guides, supply makers and fur tanners.

Moving forward to the late 19th century, federal legislation at the time made it difficult for Native Americans to gain U.S. citizenship and voting rights.

The Dawes Act of 1887 created a path toward citizenship and voting rights for Native Americans, but it was extremely slow. The Dawes Act divided tribal lands held in common into individual allotments. Once an individual tribal member gained legal title to their allotment, they could claim U.S. citizenship and voting rights.

But the federal government held each allotment in a trust for 25 years. During this time, the Native American neither owned the allotment nor got their citizenship.

Due to state voting laws at the time,

See *Native Americans*, page 18

Women's access to health care is limited in parts of Wyoming

By Isabella Alves
Wyoming Tribune Eagle

Having access to doctors and specialists is an important part of maintaining a healthy life. For women, health care often extends beyond the annual primary care visits.

Women's wellness tends to require more specialized care, due to health care needs such as mammograms and pap smears, which are regular tests to maintain a woman's health.

To accomplish these needs, sometimes it means going to an obstetrician-gynecologist, or an OB-GYN.

"The big part of it is, women's bodies change over their whole life," said Anthony Schirer, executive director of Cheyenne Ob/Gyn. "There's different phases, from things like birth control, child bearing and menopause. Each one of those stages have their own health concerns."

In Wyoming, there are currently 34 board-certified OB-GYNs, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Though in a Health Professional Shortage Area survey conducted in 2017, there were 36 OB-GYNs that responded to the survey, and only 23.3 of the specialists for full-time equivalent, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

This means of the 36 doctors that responded to the survey, many of them don't work full time, Kim Deti, Wyoming Department of Health spokeswoman, said in an email.

Wyoming is considered a frontier state when it comes to health care, said Gail Wilson, registered nurse and family planning director at the Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department. This means, in general, access to health care is limited in the state.

"Women's wellness is just more complicated," she said.

Deti said it's also important to note these surveys only count the doctors who respond and only include outpatient providers. This means the survey doesn't count any providers practicing in an inpatient setting, such as a hospitalist.

Across Wyoming, there's pretty limited access to health care. But in the Cheyenne area, access is better because it's a more populated, Wilson said. She mentioned that despite the limited number of providers—since there's fewer doctors, there's fewer appointment opportunities—it's important to let women know what is available to them.

She said the City-County Health Department provides Title 10 services, which is health care at reduced costs as part of federal funding for no-income or low-income people.

"The importance for recognizing or being able to detect a pregnancy as early as possible in the pregnancy is for the healthiest outcomes for both the mother and the child," Wilson said. "Access to prenatal care through the OB clinic is extremely important; that goes into the health of the entire family."

Using U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2016, the number of OB-GYNs per 10,000 women age 16 years or older was 2.7 (down from 3.1 in 2008) and per 10,000 women ages 15 to 44, which is considered reproductive age, was 5.5, according to ACOG. From 2008, this was down 3.1 practitioners per 10,000 women 16 or older and down 6.2 practitioners for women of reproductive age.

This means the number of OB-GYNs is continuing to decline, and especially in the Mountain West, women are considered more at risk for health-care shortages.

Schirer said in his experience there could probably be eight OB-GYNs in Cheyenne to service the community. On the other hand, he said, a hospital might do a survey and say there's a need for 12.

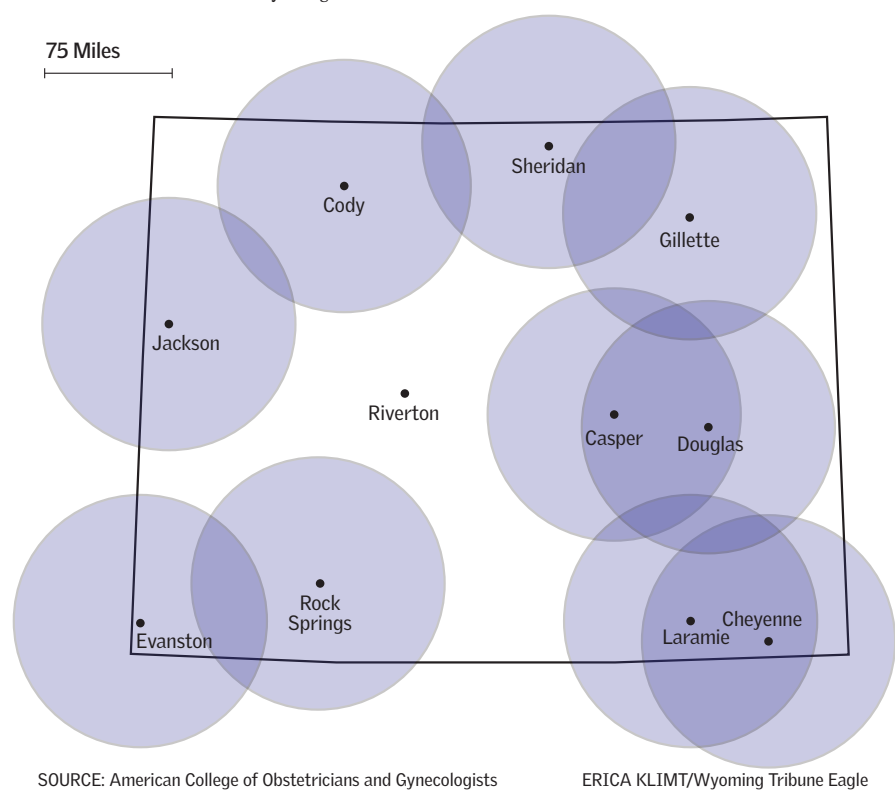
"It really does depend on how busy a physician wants to be," he said.

He said he knows of some physicians who want to see 35 to 40 people a day, and others want to see fewer. It really depends on how much an OB-GYN wants to work.

In Wyoming, there were about 3,318 women per OB-GYN in 2015. There was also a -2% to 2% growth range for in-demand women's health-care services.

Towns in Wyoming with an OB-GYN

This map shows a 75-mile radius around the towns in Wyoming with an OB-GYN. According to according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the only area where the circles don't overlap is in the Riverton area in central Wyoming.



"Approximately one half (49%) of the 3,143 U.S. counties lacked a single OB-GYN, mostly because these counties lacked a hospital with maternity services," according to ACOG. "More than 10 million women (8.2% of all women) in the United States lived in those predominantly rural counties, located especially in the Central and Mountain West regions, and commonly designated Health Professional Shortage Areas."

For the City-County Health Department, providers usually see local people, but Nikki Armstrong, a family nurse practitioner with a certified doctorate in nursing practice, said she does see people coming to Cheyenne from Rock Springs.

Looking at a map of Wyoming, Schirer drew about a 75-mile radius around the towns in Wyoming that had

In Wyoming, there are currently 34 board-certified OB-GYNs, according to the ACOG. Though in a 2017 Health Professional Shortage Area survey, there were 36 OB-GYNs that responded, and only 23.3 of the specialists were full-time equivalent, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

an OB-GYN. He said the only area where the circles don't overlap is in the Riverton area in central Wyoming.

Even then, this access depends a lot on how far people are willing to drive, he said.

His clinic mostly sees local people, but he knows of patients that drive from Colorado, even Nebraska, to come to the clinic because that's their personal preference, he said.

"Both men and women have a responsibility in their family situation to be able to encourage healthy lifestyles, and our clinic, as well as many others, promote the healthiest outcomes," Wilson said. "It just becomes a ripple effect in the whole family."

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Wyoming Army National Guard Spc. Tara Halfhill qualifies expert during her first time shooting a .50-caliber machine gun at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. She's a light wheel mechanic with the 920th Forward Support Company. (Wyoming Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire)

Women's roles in military changed significantly in the past 150 years

By Elizabeth Sampson
For the Wyoming Tribune Eagle

From scrubbing the laundry to serving as commanding officers, the role of women in the military has changed significantly in the years since the dawn of women's suffrage in Wyoming.

Today's military women are part of a fighting force that sees women serving in more jobs than ever before, and taking on deployment and combat positions that would have been unheard of 150 years ago.

United States Air Force Tech. Sgt. Ashley Ishmon is a woman who has served for more than 13 years at six duty stations. But her assignment to F.E. Warren Air Force Base was the first time she experienced having a female in the top leadership position

with Col. Stacy Huser.

"Being here at this base was my first ever experience having a female as a wing commander," Ishmon said. "She was amazing. That was just awesome to see. I've seen women as chiefs, but to see an actual woman leading the base was pretty impressive."

Ishmon is a defense paralegal who works as an Area Defense Counsel, a military attorney who represents any airman accused of a crime or facing some other action by the Air Force. She joined the military to further her education, and throughout her time in the Air Force, she has earned two associate's degrees, as well as a bachelor degree in criminal justice and a Master of Business Administration. She is currently working on her doctorate degree in psychology, with an empha-

sis in industrial and organizational psychology.

She said people may be surprised at all the different positions women serve in at F.E. Warren.

"Simply coming through the gate and to see a women standing there with a weapon – that may surprise them," she said. She added she wants to highlight the fact that women are serving on the base just like men.

During her time in the military, Ishmon has seen a growth in women serving in leadership roles, and she expects that trend to continue.

"I definitely see more women in command as we progress on," she said.

Kyle Brislan, a historian with the 90th Missile Wing at F.E. Warren, said women first were authorized to enlist or commission in the Air Force in 1976.

Before then, they were part of the women's auxiliary groups instead. Brislan said initially their roles in the Air Force were limited, and they could not fly combat missions or work missile alert. By 1978, some of those limitations were lifted, and by 1991, Congress allowed women to fly combat missions, he said.

"In today's Air Force, women serve alongside men in a variety of roles, ranging from pilot to missileer to security forces," Brislan said in an email. "Their legacy is celebrated annually here at F.E. Warren AFB, as the base's female missile crew members conduct an all-female alert once per year to honor the history of those heroines who challenged social and cultural conventions to improve gender equality."



Left: Spc. Travis Repella and Sgt. Andrea Geringer, along with a New Jersey Army National Guard mechanic, conduct maintenance and repairs on a New Jersey helicopter at the flight operations facility Jan. 15, 2019. Wyoming Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk crews conducted pre-mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas, before deploying to various parts of Afghanistan. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire)



Center: A morale patch designed for the all-female alert missileers at F.E. Warren Air Force Base is pictured March 7, 2019. The patch depicts the logos of famous comic book superheroes – Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel and Supergirl. The 90th Missile Wing participated in an all-female alert during Women's History Month in March. For 24 hours, female crews operated all ICBM silos across the United States. (Courtesy photo)



Right: Col. Stacy Jo Huser, 90th Missile Wing outgoing commander, gives her speech during the change-of-command ceremony on the Argonne Parade Field at F.E. Warren Air Force Base on May 31, 2019. Huser thanked the 90th Missile Wing for supporting her through her command, giving special thanks to her husband and children for their support at home. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ashley N. Sokolov)

Improvements over 20 years

Maj. Lara Taylor of the Wyoming Army National Guard has been in the military for 20 years, but it is within the last decade that she has seen some noticeable changes in the jobs of women in the military.

Taylor said two major changes she has seen in her time in the military include women being allowed into combat arms roles and the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) gearing up to be non-gender specific in terms of passing requirements. She said making the fitness test the same for everyone isn't fully integrated yet, but it soon will be.

"It allows us to be on an equal playing field with our male counterparts when it comes to physical aspects of our jobs," she said.

Another change Taylor has seen is how the military handles family time. When Taylor first joined the military, she was in the Naval Reserves for five years. She said during that time she was barred from going to school to become an officer due to a pregnancy. While she did get maternity leave, none of her male counterparts received any time off when their children were born. Now, in her current job, she just signed off on paternity leave for one of her male soldiers whose wife had a baby, she said.

"A plus for the military is they understood how important family is, and they have put a better focus on that throughout my career," she said.

Taylor remembers being a brand new second lieutenant who was straight out of school, and she deployed with a field artillery battalion who had not had women in their ranks before. Taylor said she was very welcomed into the group and knew there was no question that she was able to do the job she was expected to do.

"It was a very good experience," she said. "They taught me a lot, and they showed me a lot. They kickstarted my career to where I am today."

She currently serves as the officer in charge of the 94th Troop Command, and as she looks to the future for women in the service, she sees the military moving toward basing jobs on capability, not gender.

"If an individual is fully capable, both mentally and physically, of doing a position or a job in the military, it's not going to be questioned anymore whether they're male or female," Taylor said. "It's just going to be 'Can you do the job?'"

Overview of women in the military

According to Wyoming historian John Woodward, who is the director of the Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum in Casper, 150 years ago, the role of women in the military was much different than it is now. Women served as civilian employees, rather than as members of the military, and they served in roles such as laundresses

who washed and mended uniforms. They also would have served as nurses and cooks, he said.

Though women didn't officially serve in combat roles until 2016, after the Pentagon opened all combat positions to women, Woodward said throughout United States history, women have disguised themselves as men and fought in wars.

"There are no statistics of how many took this path, but there are examples in almost every major conflict of women masquerading as men in order to serve," he said.

In a list of highlights of the role of women in the military, Woodward said women contributed more and more as time went on.

The government established the U.S. Army Nursing Corps in 1901 and the U.S. Navy Nursing Corps in 1908, and women moved beyond civilian employment and into an official codified capacity with the military. The advent of World War I saw women beginning to contribute more, including serving as clerks, yeoman and telephone operators, Woodward said.

"They saw women being able to fill non-combat personnel roles that would free up men for combat roles," he said.

As World War I drew to a close and women's enlistments ran out, women's role in the military remained relatively unchanged until the second world war, Woodward said.

"That's when you saw the greatest expansion for places for women in the

military," he said. He mentioned the formation of women's reserve or auxiliary services, including the Women's Army Corps and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, which was the women's branch of the Naval Reserve during World War II.

"Probably the biggest and most substantive change that these women's reserve service groups implemented occurred in 1948, when President Harry Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act," Woodward said. "This officially codified a place for women in America's armed forces."

Women served in the U.S. military in Korea and Vietnam, and in 1976, the first women were admitted to the armed forces services academies, graduating with the class of 1980, Woodward said. He added that by the end of the 1970s, the Navy began integrating female sailors and Marines on non-combat vessels.

In 1991, Congress authorized women to be able to fly combat missions and serve on combat naval vessels, with the exception of submarines.

Woodward said that within the last 20 years, women have achieved some of the highest ranks the military offers, including Gen. Ann Dunwoody becoming the first female four-star general in the U.S. Army in 2008 and, in 2014, Adm. Michelle Howard becoming the first female Vice Chief of Naval Operations, which is the second highest ranked officer in the Navy.



Missileers from the 90th Operations Group are pictured with Retired Col. Pat Fornes, the first female officer on a U.S. missile crew and the first female missile squadron commander, and Retired Col. Linda Aldrich, first female Minuteman ICBM crew member, at F.E. Warren Air Force Base on March 22, 2016. In commemoration of Women's History Month, 90 all-female missileers within 20th Air Force pulled a 24-hour alert. (U.S. Air Force photo by Lan Kim)

Women in military, continued from 17

The first three women completed Army Ranger School in 1995, and the Department of Defense opened all combat roles to women in 2016.

A Wyoming National Guard solder, Sgt. Shelby Atkins, had the distinction of being the first female non-commissioned offi-

cer to complete a U.S. Army infantry qualifying course.

"At this point, all roles within the military are open to women," Woodward said.

"There are physical requirements for different positions, but there are no longer any barriers in regulation or status to women serving in any capacity.

Women are a big part of our military, and are going to be contributing as veterans for decades to come."

Elizabeth Sampson is a freelance journalist living in Cheyenne who has more than 12 years of experience. She can be reached by email at esampson78@gmail.com.

Voting, continued from 13

was still the lowest of any age. Lee said younger people have a different outlook on the democratic process.

"Those of us who have been around for a while, we see the difference our vote makes," Lee said.

When Ronald Reagan was in office, he lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. Lee said the shift made voting a coming-of-age act like getting your driver's license.

"It became a right of passage to vote," Lee said. "I think that's just what we were taught when we were younger."

Voting is still the easiest way to participate in democracy and make your voice heard. If you need to register, you can find the form on the Secretary of State's website. In Wyoming, you can fill out the form in person, mail it in or register at your polling place on Election Day.

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Native Americans, continued from 14

which, for the most part, said people had to own property and pay taxes, Native Americans seldom got that opportunity.

The Burke Act of 1906, shortened the federal trust period by requiring individuals to prove "civic competence" through wage work, farming, boarding school attendance or half-white ancestry. This was part of the federal government's efforts to convert Native Americans to EuroAmerican culture.

Since wage work was scarce on reservations, Native Americans who gained ownership of their allotment under the Burke Act often ended up losing the land because they were unable to pay taxes. Once they were off the tax rolls, they lost the right to vote.

Today, St. Clair said she feels like Native Americans have made headway since 150 years ago. The fact that Native Americans and women have the right to vote is a little bit celebratory, she said.

"We have an obligation not only to our community," she said, "but to our ancestors to express ourselves through our vote and to make a difference."

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Women in Legislature, continued from 12

because they've always had an interest in politics and the process."

Moving forward

There is no perfect formula for Wyoming to get more women in politics, but it starts with taking a more aggressive approach, Simon said.

"In Colorado, they've been working thoughtfully over the last two decades to make structural changes and to champion women running for office at all levels of government," Simon said. "That has moved them to relative parity in the last couple of years."

Colorado has the second-highest level of female participation in its legislature at 47%, trailing only Nevada.

Frank Eathorne, chairman of the Wyoming Republican Party, said the party hasn't fully evaluated its recruit-

ment efforts, though it hopes to place more focus on it in the future.

"Women are an inherent part of everything we do," Eathorne said. "It's really not necessarily an evaluation point, but it could be."

Eathorne noted the party celebrated women of Wyoming during its 2018 state convention, as all of the guests of honor and speakers were women.

"We're going to continue a similar theme to celebrate suffrage for the 2020 state convention," Eathorne said.

The State Central Committee, which acts as the party's governing body in Wyoming, includes spots for both a man and a woman from each county.

"We've got a pretty good balance, plus ... about six, maybe seven of the county chairmen are women," Eathorne said. "There's definitely no formal target, and I think that's because ...

if it isn't broke, don't fix it. Women are inherent in our system."

In reaction to Wyoming's bottom-five ranking, Eathorne said it "sounds like something we need to pay attention to."

"I see no resistance or problem whatsoever with making that a higher priority," Eathorne said.

Even with greater recruitment efforts, it's important to consider which women are being included in those efforts, Burlingame said.

"When we say we need women, we need women so that every little girl in Wyoming can look to the Legislature and see themselves represented," Burlingame said. "So then folks, particularly folks who have been marginalized, understand that the Legislature and seats of power are not just for the wealthy, the entitled, the enabled, but they're for people who

look like them, who have had experiences like they've had, who know what it's like to balance medical costs and grocery costs."

From Connolly's view, it might be worth taking a step back and considering the barriers – the time commitment for travel, limited child-care services, low per diem payments for legislators – that could be removed to boost political involvement.

"If we want a legislature that looks far more like Wyoming, we need to think about how we have structured the Legislature itself, so that we can think about it, who has the ability to serve," Connolly said. "These are heavy lifts."

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Balow: The future of equality lies in the inspiration, lessons and wisdom of the past



Ordinary people doing extraordinary things – that is the Wyoming way.

Louisa Swain, the first woman in the United States to cast her vote in an election – on Sept. 6, 1870 – was a wife and mother, on her

way to purchase yeast. An ordinary woman who did something extraordinary and didn't even know it at the time. This happens every day in Wyoming homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods and communities.

Our founders laid the foundation for Wyoming being the Equality State in the Wyoming Constitution. When Wyoming became a state in 1890, Amalia Post, a suffragette, said, "You have shown the world that as repre-

sentative men of Wyoming you have the courage of your convictions, and that you are neither afraid nor ashamed to allow women all the rights and privileges unrestricted of American citizens."

After receiving a copy, she declared that the Wyoming Constitution was the "Women's Magna Carta." Indeed, these are profound roots for Wyoming that guide us as a people.

A look through Wyoming's history is a glimpse at our present, and it is what will help shape our future. Wyoming stories, sometimes told 'round the kitchen table, are remarkable examples of spirit, grit and determination.

My great-grandmother, Ruth Kennedy, who lived in Worland, recounted, "There was no machinery other than hand labor. My dad was kind of late getting tractors. He didn't believe in getting anything until you

paid for it." She went on, "Our life on the farm was very hard work, but we enjoyed it. We didn't even think about it being hard, because everyone had to work, so it was just the same for everyone." Those roots run deep in Wyoming.

State and national equality discussions change form over time as society grows. As of late, they have focused on things such as gender wage gaps and numbers of women in elected office, as compared to men. These are important metrics to consider, but they alone do not define what equality means.

Equality is living in a culture where women can earnestly believe that the same opportunities available to men are available to them, as well. And that is the special thing about Wyoming – I can believe that, because I know of the Wyoming women past and present who know, believe and achieve this

each and every day. And I know the Wyoming men who stay true to those founding virtues of equality articulated by Amalia Post.

The joy of living in Wyoming is knowing that so many women and men remain true to our shared heritage of equality. Take a peek into any Wyoming community on any given day, and you'll find women who don't break the mold, but create it – again and again.

We are the Equality State not because of one measure or one study, but because of the founding principle of equality enshrined in our constitution that guided us forward in 1890, shaped our path as a state and culture, and rings true just as loudly today, more than a century later.

Jillian Balow is Wyoming's elected state superintendent of public instruction.

Connolly: A letter to a Girls State participant



I have had the honor of working with Wyoming high school students who participate in Girls and Boys State, a summer leadership and civics program. The kids run for state office, as well as draft and debate

policy bills. The issues they choose are some of the most cutting and crucial topics of the day.

While the participants rave about the program and their experiences, I am the one who is truly impressed. These kids are our future, and I am in awe of their commitment and passion. My essay on "Hopes and Dreams for Wyoming's Women and Our Future" is in the form of a response to a letter from the fictional Angelica, a Girls State delegate.

Hi Representative Connolly, This is Angelica M., and I'm getting ready to attend Girls State. I am so excited! I've been active in my school's

student government and several clubs, and I had hoped to run for office here in Wyoming. But I have some concerns. In preparation, I've been studying Wyoming's role in women's suffrage.

At first, I was totally stoked and proud of our place in history, but then I learned of some of the warts surrounding the vote. I am disappointed that Native women and men could not vote, and that some of the representatives were pretty racist. That part of our history makes me mad.

I've also been thinking about my future and whether I should stay in Wyoming. I don't like some of what I see regarding wages for women and other opportunities, and I have diabetes, so health care is a big concern. My best friend is gay and is often mocked. I don't want him to live like that, and we have talked of moving together. Is Wyoming really the Equality State?

Do you have any ideas for bills for Girls State? What could really make a difference for our future? Should I stay and pursue my dreams, or should I just

pack my bags?

Your constituent,
Angelica M.

Dear Angelica,

First, congratulations on your acceptance to Girls State! It's a great program, and I am sure that you will meet some wonderful other young women.

I agree with you about suffrage. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors; some have made us proud, others not so much. I think it is our job to learn from that history by honoring the good and learning from the mistakes.

To be sure, I want you to make Wyoming your home. And I will do my best to convince you. I believe that our motto as the Equality State is not simply a recognition of the past, but a call to each and every one of us to live up to its vision, to work for its dream. Our ancestors did.

The true meaning of equality is ever-changing. Equality is dynamic, not static. It must be to recognize our changing world, and we, its changing citizens. That work is not always

pretty and does not happen overnight. We need you as equality's champion.

Wyomingites are at times stubborn (if not ornery), and perhaps wedded a bit too much to a mythical past. Our history is far more complicated than a simple feel-good story of suffrage or the iconic image of a rugged cowboy alone on the plains battling wind and rattlers. It is a history marred by failures, as well as successes, that no myth can erode. We learn from those mistakes, and we make our present and future better for it.

Alongside our historical cowboys and suffragettes, imagine today's Wyomingite – a woman working at Walmart making ends meet for her family or the school's custodian working two jobs. We can love them both, our history and our current neighbors, and plan our policies accordingly.

We all need quality health care. Regrettably, the health-care outcomes for women and children in the state are trending in the wrong direction: downward instead of up. Far too many

See **Connolly**, page 23

Orr: More women needed in leadership roles



I never bought into the notion that somehow women were treated differently than men in the political arena, or, for that matter, that somehow leadership styles are different between the two.

As a lobbyist for more than 20 years, I was always treated with respect by both my colleagues and elected officials. I frankly didn't see a need for women-centered organiza-

tions, such as "Leap into Leadership," which promotes women to become active on boards, commissions and elected offices.

And then I ran for mayor, and quickly my eyes were opened. Sexism is alive and well.

Women in office are treated differently than their male counterparts, and I could write pages of examples. There is a difference in communication, leadership and even problem-solving skills between the sexes, but that is not to say that one is more favorable than the other.

But they are different, and we need

to work to bring more of those different traits together to not only problem solve current issues, but also be forward-thinking to create the future we would want for our next generations. So what does this look like, and how can we get there?

Ideally, what this looks like is more representational of one's community. In my office, I see applications on a monthly basis from individuals wanting to serve on a board or commission, and I'm happy to report that the ratio of men to women is fairly balanced. That's a great start. Now if we could only get more women to run for an

elected office.

Although I was admittedly late to this conversation, as women, we need to encourage each other to run for office. This is a conversation I enjoy having with our schoolchildren in their classrooms and in my office. I want to believe that the more women in leadership roles our young children see, going into the future, the current gender gap that exists becomes a thing of the past.

Marian Orr is the first woman elected to serve as mayor of Cheyenne.

Burlingame: More than accounting, I long for a reckoning



"Oh, make no mistake; it's not revenge he's looking for. It's a reckoning."
—Doc Holiday, "Tombstone"

I don't know how to imagine a future for women in Wyoming that doesn't account for our past.

Well, maybe I want something slightly more than an accounting. Maybe what I really want is a reckoning. There is so much in our past to be fiercely proud of: the passage of suffrage, Esther Hobart Morris, Nellie Tayloe Ross and Louisa Swain. The question I want to ask is if we can hold a place of pride and honor for these stalwart foremothers of ours, while still peering behind the curtain to see the women who've been waiting to take their place beside them.

It would be a handy rhetorical de-

vice to rattle off the names of these women to provide a counterpoint. But I truly don't know their names. Which is one of the saddest sentences that I know.

There is a reason the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is such a somber and crushing experience. To have your name and memory erased is a damnable thing. We speak of our history as though it is linear, an arrow shot from the past, arcing toward inevitability.

We enshrine our ancestors with definitive titles: Esther Hobart Morris was the first female Justice of the Peace, Nellie Tayloe Ross was the first female governor, and Louisa Swain was the first woman to cast her vote. But if we scratch the surface, we see the long shadow of colonization writ large over our stories.

Are we to believe that no Northern Arapaho woman served as an arbiter of justice in her community? We don't have to imagine female Iroquois

women who governed, we have the document that influenced our own Constitution, explicitly granting that right. We say "women" gained the right to vote but the "first" women of Wyoming, our indigenous sisters, were not granted full enfranchisement until the Voting Rights Act of 1964.

Sometimes I despair of ever knowing our full story. I worry that the bog of time has sucked these stories down into the mud. But the other night I attended an event that the Laramie County League of Women Voters put on, and amid the well-worn stories of suffrage that I've read a hundred times poking around the State Archives, I heard a new story. Geoff O'Gara spoke of the first election post-suffrage in the city of South Pass. Three African American women, he said, drove their horse and buggy to the polls and cast their vote without incident.

It isn't too late for some freshman just embarked at the University of Wyoming to decide that she'll be the ones to learn their names. Maybe she'll even stumble across a picture in the Archives of a card game, the two players dressed in men's suits, smoking cigars and thumbing convention in a way our transgender sisters will well recognize. They are our ancestors, and someday, maybe, we will know their names, and the past will be reconciled.

Is that what Doc Holliday meant by a reckoning? If you remember your history, Doc was a student of Latin and would have known that reckoning comes from reconcilio, to be brought back together. That is a reckoning I can get behind.

Sara Burlingame is a Democrat from Cheyenne representing House District 44 in the Wyoming Legislature.

Redman: It's time for Wyoming to truly be the "Equality State"



In the early 19th century, American women lacked not only suffrage, but many other basic rights. A married woman could not own property or sign a contract, she had no right to her wages if she

worked, and she had no custodial rights to her own children.

Wyoming is the "Equality State" and

the first state to grant women the right to vote. However, there are still some inequities. Although Wyoming was the first to ratify the right to vote for women, it is curious that there are not more women holding office, especially in the Legislature.

Although we have experienced some changes, there is certainly room for improvement.

Women are still paid less for doing the same job. In terms of self-sufficiency, there is room for improvement. Our elected officials need to

raise the minimum wage in Wyoming to a living wage (two-thirds of low-wage workers nationally are women). Establishing an Equal Pay Office in Wyoming would help.

In Wyoming, 27% of female-headed households live below the Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard, and do not have the ability to meet their basic needs with public or private assistance.

When jobs don't provide paid sick leave, job security for primary caregivers (typically women) is jeopard-

dized, not only due to her own healthcare concerns, but also those of her children.

These inequities have been even more challenging for women of color.

Wyoming's failure to expand Medicaid leaves a vulnerable low-income population struggling to afford healthcare.

It is time to celebrate Wyoming as truly the "Equality State."

Ann Esquibel Redman is a Cheyenne resident and founder of the Wyoming Latina Youth Conference.

Herman: Leaders must earn praise for current actions, not past history



People in Wyoming are celebrating the rescue and restoration of our beloved state Capitol, celebrating 150 years of women's suffrage and insisting we restore the statue of Esther Hobart Morris to the

Capitol front. EHB, after all, is the first woman officeholder in this country.

By all means, the state should be proud of the vision and courage of political and social leaders to win women's suffrage in 1869 and preserve it in 1890. However, I am OK with siting Ms. Morris' statue and recounting her role in women's progress in the educational setting of the new Herschler Building connector in the Capitol Square.

I do object to our modern leaders basking in 150-year-old accomplishments of their predecessors. That is a history to be proud of, but it is history. Instead, let them earn praise for their own vision and courage.

How? I have three relatively easy suggestions and one difficult long-term idea that is the one that will really make a difference for women in Wyoming.

First, pick up two bills recommended by a wage gap study that died in the 2019 Wyoming Legislature. House Bill 72-Wage Transparency would prevent employers from penalizing workers for discussing their wages. House Bill 84-Wage Equality-State Employees and Programs would shine a light on wage equality in state government. The study by the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services found that among full-time Wyoming workers in 2016, women earned 68 cents for every \$1 earned by a man.

Second, fix our minimum wage statute, 21-4-202. Yes, raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to something appropriate to the current century. But I particularly argue for repealing the provision that allows employers to pay tipped workers \$2.13 an hour—and more only if customers' tips fail to reach the miserably low federal mini-

mum wage of \$7.25 an hour. (A "tipped" worker is someone who makes \$30 a month in tips.) Tipped workers are dominated by wait staff, where women with family obligations find flexible work schedules. (While we're at it, repeal the minimum wage exemption for teenagers, too.)

Third, make Medicaid health coverage available to women who don't have children at home and are too poor to afford health insurance, because they are earning so little or they have quit work to stay home and care for family members. Yes, it's the Medicaid expansion the Wyoming Legislature has shrunk from enacting for years. Women are an important part of our workforce and an important part of family care, but they need health coverage to keep contributing as they do to our state.

Finally, everyone should be encouraging women's participation in their government at every age and at every level. We complain about lack of women in the Legislature (it is paltry). But year-round work/travel and compensation that barely covers costs

make legislative service impossible for most women with family and work obligations.

Civic engagement begins in local elected office, service on boards and commissions, and being heard on important issues in city and county government. Women build important political skills with these efforts. Most importantly, we need women's voices at the tables where laws are written and policies are made. Value and encourage their political work close to home. When they can, they will be ready to serve in legislative, statewide and national office, where we need them.

About the EHM statue: I do agree our state Capitol needs a monument in front to explain our amazing legacy of recognizing the importance of women's voices in our government. So, State Building Commission, let's get something installed.

And then let us all work to live up to that legacy.

Marguerite Herman is a legislative lobbyist for League of Women Voters in Wyoming and chairwoman of the Laramie County School District 1 Board of Trustees.

Lee: Wyoming women need to participate in the political process



History matters, and during this year's celebration of the 150th anniversary of women's suffrage, we find inspiration in the women and men who made sure we have the right to vote and hold office.

Women like Amalia Post, Esther Hobart Morris and Theresa Jenkins campaigned tirelessly for the right to vote and fought to make sure that right was preserved. Men like Edward Lee, William Bright and Gov. John Campbell were instrumental in shaping the story of women's suffrage in Wyoming.

A century and a half later, too many

of us take the right to vote for granted, and in doing so, we fail to honor the struggles of those who championed for it. Too many men and women do not show up at the polls. By their very presence at the polls, on juries and in public office, women changed the political landscape and the course of history.

However, today, the Equality State ranks at the bottom in the number of women elected to the Legislature. In every election, too many legislative seats go uncontested. In 2016, 37 women ran for the Wyoming Legislature, but only 10 won. In 2019, we have 14 women in the Legislature, six in the Senate and eight in House, representing 15% of our legislature. Half of our legislature's female senators are from Laramie County, and that's a good

start. But there's more to be done.

On the celebration of Wyoming's 150th women's suffrage celebration, let's remember the spirit and tenacity of those who put the right to vote and hold office into law and made sure we are able to exercise these rights today.

Teach your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren the sacrifices made to win these rights. Take them with you when you go to the polls. Talk about why it's important to use your voice at the ballot box. Discuss political issues and the role of government.

Encourage their participation in elections and decision-making. Let them know that students as young as 16 can apply to be election judges. And when your child or grandchild turns 18, take them to the County

Clerk's Office to register to vote, teach them how to research candidates and issues, and show them what their ballot will look like.

Mentor young women to participate in government or be proactive in seeking a mentor. Go to city council, county commission or legislative meetings, work on a campaign, run for office and vote in every election. When young women see other women running for office, they are often inspired to seek office ... and to write their own histories.

Yes, history does matter, and so does our vote.

Debra Lee is the elected Laramie County clerk. One of her duties is to oversee all elections in the county.

Dugger: What does a successful future look like for Wyoming women?



When I moved to Cheyenne and was brushing up on state and local history, I was thrilled to find out that Wyoming was right out in front on women's suffrage. How exciting to learn that women were first

able to cast votes here in general elections, that we had the first woman governor and the first female bailiff in the U.S. – appointed to look after the first women jurors!

Beyond elected office and civic duty, women were also taking part in the roughstock rodeo events at Cheyenne Frontier Days early on.

It was a heady time for women ev-

erywhere, but on women's rights, Wyoming seemed ahead of the game. On a broader level, women in the Roaring 20s flaunted their newfound freedom by bobbing their hair, losing their corsets, shortening their skirts and going "bohemian" in the age of jazz.

Flash forward to the present, and it seems the early strides in women's equality in Wyoming (and around the U.S.) seemed to sputter and stall along the way. Why? It wasn't just one thing, but a combination of local and national factors that helped put women "back in their place," including at least one death and injuries at rodeos that resulted in a ban of women participating in roughstock events; the Great Depression, where a family's survival depended on the man of the house keeping food on the table; then after

World War II, servicemen returning home to take back the jobs women had stepped in to do in their absence.

The crushing blow would be monied men of power keeping a tight grip on political machinery (which had pretty much always been the case).

What would a "best case" future for Wyoming women look like? Taking those early wins in equality and moving them forward at light speed, including:

1) A more concerted effort to mentor and support more women to run for elected office, from the school board up and through this effort build our own integrated power base.

2) More mentoring and support for women in business and higher education. Again, to help bring a better balance of power. Most small businesses

are owned, or run, by women, with the big difference being the larger the business, the fewer women at the helm. This needs to change.

3) On a more philosophical level: Figuring out how to embrace a broader identity for Wyoming beyond the cowBOY – making it feel more inclusive for everyone. Respecting history is important, but looking at a more inclusive way to portray the state, as a whole, would be a positive step.

The commemoration of women's suffrage is the perfect moment to set the vision and game plan that builds off those early firsts and moves Wyoming confidently forward to a more balanced, inclusive and hopeful future.

Vicki Dugger is executive director of the Cheyenne Downtown Development Authority.

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Tuebner: Take advantage of opportunities in front of you and make your own



I was born and raised in Cheyenne, a true Wyoming girl. My hopes and dreams for all Wyoming women started with me when I was a little girl.

I've always been inspired by our predecessors, like Nellie Tayloe Ross. I've been blessed to be raised by parents that instilled basic beliefs in oneself. It's easy to preach, but I believe in practicing what you preach.

When I reflect and look at my life, both personally and professionally, I think back to when I started out as a teller at a local bank. I remember dreaming of what it would be like to be a CEO/president of a financial institution, as well as having a family of my own. That set my plan in motion; both my undergrad and graduate degrees are in finance and economics from the

University of Wyoming. I'm the mom of two amazing young men that bring me so much joy.

The future of women in Wyoming is all about making your own opportunity and taking advantage of that opportunity in front of you. I have been given opportunities and have proven myself in a male-dominated role.

Working to open doors for women in all fields and encouraging young women to gain confidence and the belief they can accomplish anything by opening their own doors will strengthen us all. I live by always challenging oneself where believing what's impossible is possible and what's possible will happen.

I don't set goals, as goals are setting limits. I set authentic aspirations, where my guidance is to be true to oneself, as credibility is of the utmost importance.

Stephanie Tuebner is president and CEO of Blue Federal Credit Union, based in Cheyenne.

Nethercott: Remember the past while seeking a better future



Celebrating 150 years of women's suffrage is occasion for real celebration! It is a time of reflection and a time to evaluate the future of Wyoming women; in our past, lies our future.

I firmly believe that our history shapes who we are and who we will become. For the skeptics, the truth of this assertion is self-evident by me, a Wyoming woman and duly elected state senator. So, as I reflect on the question of what my hopes are for the future of Wyoming women, it is simply and powerfully to always remember who we are.

As one of the few female legislators, I am frequently asked to speak on the subject of women running for office and suffrage. Admittedly, at first, the topic made me uncomfortable. I did not run as a woman, I ran as a competent and committed candidate; my gender was not relevant.

I soon realized, however, that even my ability to be running for office was profound, and my discomfort was my ignorance. Because when I began truly understanding my own history as a fifth-generation Wyoming woman, my gratitude that this awesome and humbling experience of serving as a state senator is as a result of a hard-fought battle by men and women the world over, most notably here in Wyoming, who made the courageous decision to fight for this equality and this very opportunity for me.

So, history is not the story of strangers, it is the story of us. History is our memory, and we must remember what it is like to be a pioneer, a settler, a cowboy, a railroader, a public servant, a suffragist.

The story of us is in Esther Hobart Morris. Morris was many great things, but notably she was an ardent suffragist and the world's first female justice of the peace. What this means today is that as a suffragist, she advocated for what she wanted—equality. Studies in-

dicate that one factor contributing to the gender wage gap is that women do not negotiate and ask for higher compensation. Morris and the suffragists of her day had no qualms about confidently demanding equity.

Another contributing factor is that women have a tendency to not apply for higher-paying positions as a result of a fear of being unqualified. Morris, who was not a lawyer, but rather a saloon keeper, faced resistance simply for being justice of the peace, but was fearless in dispensing justice and maintained a perfect record. Of note, Morris' husband never supported her efforts, and she had him arrested for drunkenness and violence. Wyoming has an exceptionally high domestic violence rate that is simply unacceptable—a fact that the suffragists would never tolerate.

The story of us is also in suffragist Amalia Post. Post was abandoned twice by her husband and divorced. In the new frontier, Post became a successful entrepreneur and landowner. She also was active in politics and

served in the Republican Party for years. As the first woman to serve on a jury, she was also instrumental in defeating efforts to repeal suffrage.

Post focused not only on survival, but serving the greater good and a commitment to democracy through political service. Post would, as do I, encourage more women to enter into politics. The studies show that when women run for office, they get elected.

So, my hopes and dreams for the future of Wyoming women is that they remember their pioneering foremothers, and seek public office, wage equity, a rejection of domestic violence and to always know that as Wyoming women, we can achieve monumental change and global firsts. And in the words of another Wyoming suffragette, Theresa Jenkins, "the women of Wyoming have been placed upon a firmer foundation and hold a more brilliant torch."

Tara Nethercott is an attorney and Republican state senator from Cheyenne.

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people live in poverty, a term that does not adequately capture the realities of substandard housing, hunger, lack of mobility, and, most importantly, a lack of choices and opportunities.

You should not worry about the costs of treatment for your diabetes. No one should worry about the costs of cancer, or to get an MRI or a prescription filled for high blood pressure. We can do better. We can increase access to cervical cancer screening, the HPV vaccine, suicide prevention programs and primary care physicians.

We all need high-quality education. Our commitment to equity across the state and a constitutional mandate of a university "nearly free as possible" can make us proud. However, our growth and successes have stalled, and I am worried that we are not moving forward. Remember, the pursuit of equality means an obligation to make

needed changes.

We need to expand educational opportunities to include high-quality preschool. We need to value our teachers and to recognize the challenges they face daily. We need programs, in school and out, for kids who are struggling. We need to recognize, honor and protect our gay kids, who far too often suffer the brunt of bullies.

Let's show the world that we have made conscious, deliberate strides toward our motto of equality. We can do it with anti-discrimination legislation, by banning conversion therapy, and by building schools and facilities that recognize more than two genders. All our students should have the opportunity to graduate, pursue postsecondary education and to imagine a future in Wyoming. It takes political will and resources. These are our choices and you can help to shape and implement them.

We need an economy that works. I do

not want you leaving the state to pursue your dreams. Instead, I imagine you and your Girls State class thriving as our next generation of leaders, teachers, electricians, hair dressers and chefs. We need an economy that is built for you.

The wage gap between Wyoming's men and women continues to be one of the very worst in the nation. Turning a blind eye to that reality hurts us, and has prevented us from hard decisions to assure pay equity. Simply telling women to work in traditionally male occupations is not the solution. We need an economy that values and pays good wages in health, education and social services, as much as in construction, mining and manufacturing. Wage transparency will help, as will raising the minimum wage. Other states have moved the needle on pay equity; we can, too.

Angelica, I agree with you. The notion of equality in Wyoming is a be-

loved core value. Its practice, however, needs work. You are up to the task. Make Wyoming your choice, your home. You are our daughter. We care for each other.

Will you do me a favor? Each decade, send me an update. Tell me about your family, the work you have been doing, the policies pursued, the successes and failures. Have we moved that equality needle on health care, education and the economy? Have we reduced poverty? Are our neighbors safer and healthier? When we get to the celebration of the 200th year of suffrage, can we look back and know that we did our best? The Equality State demands it of us. Have a great Girls State, and I so look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
Representative Cathy Connolly

Cathy Connolly is a professor at the University of Wyoming and a Democrat state representative from Laramie.

Mockler: It's not just about being first



Stories abound about how and why Wyoming's women were afforded suffrage. They are part of the history and pride we will celebrate, and should debate, during the 150th year celebration.

Wyoming women have celebrated many firsts and lasts over the last 150 years. Our convoluted history demonstrates why a friend and I argued whether equal rights and equal opportunities are rights which must be nurtured and constantly exercised and defended, or whether they are just parts of a process that take time to evolve.

Whether process or right, the course to equality is an arduous one. In 1870, women were allowed to serve on juries, but in 1871, that responsibility was taken away. The law was not changed until 1949 when my grandfather, Frank Mockler, and one of the few women in the Wyoming House,

Madge Enterline, sponsored a bill to allow women to again serve on juries.

The constitution was not amended to ensure women this right until 1980. In 1889, 20 years after first being allowed to vote, no women ran to participate in the process of writing our constitution – instead, the women sat on the sidelines and lobbied (and hoped) that equal rights would become part of the document.

Women didn't begin to serve in the Legislature until 1910 (the House) and 1931 (the Senate); and today, at 15.6%, we have one of the smallest percentages of women serving in a state Legislature. We elected a woman superintendent of public instruction in 1894, but no woman served as president of the University of Wyoming until 2015.

We elected our only woman governor in 1924, almost 100 years ago. Our first congresswoman was elected in 1995, but a woman has yet to serve as a United States senator. Women serving in the judiciary was also slow to take hold – the first woman justice on our Supreme Court was not appointed

until 2000.

Today in Wyoming, women make up 48.9% of the population. We are a force that could be reckoned with, yet our prosperity lags in many critical social and economic areas whose outcomes are often designed and determined by political will.

We are 34th in national ranking of women who turn out to vote; 63.1% of us are registered to vote, only 54% of us do. And clearly, elections, and who has access and who participates, have consequences.

For example, consider that in 2018 Wyoming women were paid 77 cents for every dollar paid to men (this has gone up a bit in the last few years, but it still abysmal); or that our access to insurance and health care are among the worst in the country – both of which lead to higher illness and mortalities.

Apathy and disenfranchisement in any demographic is a loss to the whole – for without robust political engagement by all citizens, any democracy can fail.

While we all love to tout that Wyoming was the first state in the union to

constitutionally allow women to vote, I am concerned that 150 years of reiterating a long-past milestone fails to ensure that the promise the franchise heralded, and future that looked so bright 150 years ago, is enough. We need to dedicate ourselves to educating our electorate, and, through this, reawaken the passion that will expand the franchise. We must develop the infrastructure that encourages all of Wyoming's citizens to become more involved in the political process – at every level.

For Wyoming to succeed, all our voices, and votes, are essential to the success of the political discourse in our communities. The celebration of the 150th anniversary of Wyoming women's suffrage should not just be about the celebration of being first – it should also focus on building and enriching a legacy which will impassion and support the future of all citizens of Wyoming.

E. Jayne Mockler is a former state senator from Cheyenne who currently serves as vice chairwoman of the State Board of Equalization.



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