

Quick, Timely Reads  
*Reading in the Time of Coronavirus*

Women's Political Strength Grows in  
Three Movements

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ELECTED WOMEN

*Following is the third in a series of articles about women elected leaders from Erie County written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence Judith Lynch. Jefferson Vice President Ben Spегgen will host an online interview with Dr. Lynch at noon each Wednesday in October featuring the leaders.*

The 1960s was a tumultuous time in American history. It was a time of civil rights advocacy and the aggressive pursuit of minority and women's rights during one of the most detested wars in American history. Within the feminist movement, the convulsion of the 1960s is often referred to as the Second Wave. Just as the 1920s organizations pushed the women's movement forward, eventually succeeding in the passage of the 19th Amendment, this Second Wave of feminism, springing from the 1960s ferment, produced societally altering changes in the United States. One was the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) founded in 1966 by 28 women at the Third National Conference of Commissions on the Status of Women. This organization focused attention on a host of women's issues, including discrimination in the workplace and the dearth of women elected officials. Knowing the importance of being represented in the halls of government, N.O.W., along with other feminist organizations of the Second Wave of feminism, helped a record number of women seek and win elective positions in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, including Erie County and the city of Erie.

The Second Wave of feminism was followed by another tumultuous time in the late 1980s and 1990s that produced the Third Wave. In this Third Wave, women marched, demanded, and ran successfully for public office. By 1989, dramatic change had come to the city and county. The Erie Daily Times Viewpoint section of Wednesday, November 8, 1989, a day after the election, led with this headline: "The Year of the Women."

In Erie political history, 1989 will always be remembered as the year of the women. Erie not only elected its first woman mayor, but Erie County also elected its first woman judge.

Further, County Executive Judy Lynch was re-elected to a third four-year term, the city elected its first woman controller, a woman was elected to city council, a woman was re-elected to county council and two women were elected to the Erie school board. ... Republican Denise Robison ran a solid, very professional campaign to become the first member of the GOP to be elected to Erie's city council in 24 years (*The Erie Daily Times*, 11/8/89, 10A).

WOMEN ELECTED TO COUNTY-WIDE AND CITY-WIDE OFFICES		
DATES SERVED	NAME	OFFICE
1974-1976	MARY LAMARY	ERIE COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION
1974-1976	JUDY LYNCH	ERIE COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION
1978-1982	JUDY LYNCH	COUNTY COUNCIL
1981-1989	JOYCE SAVOCCHIO	ERIE CITY COUNCIL
1982-2002	JUDY LYNCH	COUNTY EXECUTIVE
1982-1996	BARBARA MACK	COUNTY COUNCIL
1982-1996	TRACY SEYFERT	COUNTY COUNCIL
1990-	STEPHANIE DOMITROVICH	JUDGE OF COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
1990-2001	GAYLE WRIGHT	EIRE CITY COUNCIL (resigned 8/21/01)
1990-1995	DENISE ROBINSON	EIRE CITY COUNCIL (resigned 5/1/95)
1990-2002	JOYCE SAVOCCHIO	MAYOR OF CITY OF ERIE
1990-2002	BRENDA PUNDT	ERIE CITY CONTROLLER
1992-2006	JOY GRECO	COUNTY COUNCIL
1994-2006	LINDA BEBKO JONES	PA STATE REPRESENTATIVE
1994-2004	ORTENSIA KELLER	ERIE CITY TREASURER
1996-2004	BARBARA MACK	ERIE COUNTY CONTROLLER
1996-2020	CAROL LOLL	COUNTY COUNCIL
2000-2010	RUBY JENKINS-HUSBAND	ERIE CITY COUNCIL
1999-	ELIZABETH KELLY	JUDGE OF COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
2004-2012	SUE WEBER	ERIE COUNTY CONTROLLER
2004-2015	JESSICA HORAN-KUNCO	ERIE CITY COUNCIL
2004-2020	SUSAN DIVECHIO	ERIE CITY TREASURER
2009-2012	KATHY DAHLKEMPER	U.S. CONGRESS
2012-2020	MARY SCHAAF	ERIE COUNTY CONTROLLER
2014-	KATHY DAHLKEMPER	COUNTY EXECUTIVE
2014-	TERESA STANKIEWICZ	ERIE CITY CONTROLLER
2016-2020	KATHY FATICA	COUNTY COUNCIL
2016-2020	SONYA ARRINGTON	ERIE CITY COUNCIL
2018-	KATHLEEN SCHAAF	ERIE CITY COUNCIL
2018-	LIZ ALLEN	ERIE CITY COUNCIL
2019-	ERIN CONNELLY	JUDGE OF COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
2020-	ELLEN SCHAUERMAN	COUNTY COUNCIL
2020-	MARY RENNIE	COUNTY COUNCIL
2020-	KIM CLEAR	COUNTY COUNCIL
• DATES SERVED: YEAR SWORN INTO OFFICE & DATE OFFICIALLY LEFT		

Historians appear to agree that there have been three feminist waves from the post-Civil War 19th century to today that have swept across the societal American landscape. The first wave came at the end of the Civil War and the concluding years of the 19th century. This movement focused largely on the right to vote and securing equal property rights. The leaders who emerged in this first wave were Lucretia Coffin Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, Alice Paul, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Margaret Sanger and Lucy Burns. The most prominent outcome, of course, was the adoption of the 19th Amendment.

The Second Wave of feminism came in the 1960s and centered on the pursuit of reproductive rights, equal pay for equal work and equal participation in the political process. Terms such as patriarchal and male domination characterized the feminist description of society. Occurring in the 1960s, the Second-Wave of feminism became a part of the protests of American intervention in Vietnam and the fight for civil rights legislation. In these high-profile revolutions, women linked arms with Vietnam protestors and African Americans in their fight for a more equal America.

In each of the feminist waves, organizations and women leaders and revolutionary authors, brought women together to work collectively on the issues that most impacted women in American society. Out of the fray came high-profile polemics pushing the feminist agenda. *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, published in 1963, is often credited with sparking the Second -Wave of American feminism. Along with her revolutionary book, Friedan co-founded and was elected the first president of the N.O.W. in 1966. Its

Betty Friedan



Friedan in 1960

mission was to bring women into the mainstream of American society, in full partnership with men.

Friedan and N.O.W. moved to change the prevailing system in which women were often seen as nonparticipants in the democratic process, which was seen as belonging to white males. N.O.W. became a prominent political force, lobbying Congress for laws to support and assist women seeking to end political and workplace discrimination and societal inequality. This fight for political rights, workplace equality, and women's control of reproductive rights erupted into a series of marches and protests in

which women publicly and forcefully demanded change.

In 1971, feminist Gloria Steinem joined Friedan and Bella Abzug in founding the National Women's Political Caucus. Their focus on political lobbying bore fruit when the Equal Rights Amendment, which sought legal equality for women and banned discrimination on the basis of sex, was passed by Congress in 1972. In 1973, one year later, feminists celebrated the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark ruling that guaranteed a woman's right to choose an abortion. In 1976, Steinem's *Ms. Magazine* became the first magazine to feature feminism as a subject on its cover. Despite the appearance of success, the Equal Rights Amendment was never ratified before its legislated deadline, and *Roe v. Wade* has systematically been weakened.

During this Second Wave, feminists saw themselves as revolutionaries rejecting a fundamentally unequal and corrupt power establishment and demanding equal treatment in the American democracy whereby all the voiceless and suppressed could gain a measure of control over their own lives. Though these goals remained unrealized, women during the Second Wave were voting in greater numbers than men and more women were running for office and being elected.

The Second Wave feminism also highlighted domestic violence as well as workplace discrimination in which the approximately 40 percent of women who worked outside the household were largely limited to jobs as teachers, nurses, or secretaries. The Second Wave quickly saw the enactment of new laws and programs. Rape-crisis centers and women's shelters from abuse were established in cities and towns across America. In addition, the Second-Wave brought about changes in custody and divorce law. Further, women became more accepted in the business world as entrepreneurs and as independent wage earners. Overall, the feminist movement challenged societal structure by encouraging women to challenge the gender norms of society and unite and fight using the democratic process to assure their rights as equals to men.



The Third Wave of American feminism, often referred to as the "women's liberation movement" made its debut in the 1990s.

Different about the Third Wave was the generation that propelled it, the Gen-Xers. Born in the late 1960s, '70s, and '80s, this generation came of age during



the rise of social media and had, due to the increasing diversity of America, a more entrenched equality. Though they saw an America that was still struggling with inequality, the majority of Gen-Xers lived in much more tolerant and diverse communities. For Gen-Xers, not just women and minorities were championed. Other parts of society that had been branded as inferiors, such as the gay community, were protected. They sought an inclusive America, not dominated by any class, race, or gender. A situation that appears to have galvanized this new generation was the congressional hearings on the Clarence Thomas nomination to the Supreme Court that provoked Rebecca Walker to write an article in the January 1992 Ms. Magazine titled "Becoming the Third Wave."

I write this as a plea to all women, especially women of my generation: Let Thomas' confirmation serve to remind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over. Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives. I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the Third Wave. (Ms. Magazine, 1/1992)

Another part of the Third Wave was the #MeToo movement that appeared in 2017. Hundreds joined those who alleged sexual assault after a New York Times article uncovered multiple allegations of sexual harassment made against film producer Harvey Weinstein. The temper of the times allowed many more women to come forward with allegations against other powerful men, including Supreme Court Justice nominee Kavanaugh and President Donald Trump.

On January 21, 2017, the first full day of the Trump presidency, hundreds of thousands of people joined the Women's March in Washington, D.C., a massive protest aimed at the new administration and the perceived threat it represented to reproductive, civil and human rights. In addition, over 3 million people in cities around the world held simultaneous demonstrations, providing a worldwide call for full rights for all women. The Third Wave also extended the categorization of the unequal, fully embracing the concerns of women of color, lesbians and gay men, immigrants and religious minorities. As this Third-Wave was coursing through American society, the number of women elected to Congress grew to all-time high.

One of the most interesting aspects of these feminist waves has been their impact on women seeking and being elected to office. Each of the feminist waves has resulted in the increase of women elected officials. Running and being elected takes a lot of ingenuity and work. Nevertheless, we should recognize that success has come, not from the candidate alone, but from the collective efforts of women riding on the waves of feminism, saying "we have had enough of being second class citizens."

Today, more women are being elected to office on the federal, state, and local level than ever before. In the United States, women are considerably more likely to be registered to vote and to go to the polls than men. Nationally, about 61.5 percent of women are registered to vote while only about 57.9 percent of men are registered to vote. Generally, about 42.7 percent of registered women vote while only about 40.9 percent of the men registered to vote cast a ballot. Women are already dominating the political arena with their fervent participation in the democratic process. The 2020 presidential election probably will see the highest percentage of people voting in our history; there will probably be more women who vote than men and it will demonstrate that Americans are counting the days to when our nation is no longer a white male oligarchy.

Yes, we have never had a female elected president. Today only about 28 percent of the elective offices in the United States are held by women. Though this percentage is small, it is far greater than 50 years ago when about 3 percent of the elective offices were held by women. For optimists who believe in America's ability to continue to enlarge the democratic aspects of the American Constitution, it is only a matter of time before women hold at least a majority of the elective positions in the United States. In Erie County, we now have more women elected officials than ever before in our history.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Judy Lynch, Ph.D., is a Scholar in Residence at the Jefferson Educational Society. She was named the Jefferson's Decadean Scholar in 2018. She continues to serve on the Jefferson's Board of Trustees and was its first chairwoman. From 2004 to 2017, she served as Associate Professor of Political Science and History at Mercyhurst University. From 2002 to 2004, Dr. Lynch taught at Allegheny College and was part of the Civic Engagement Institute. Prior, she worked as an analyst for the CIA and served for 20 years as Erie County Executive. She received her Doctorate With Distinction in Political Science in 2001 from the University of Pittsburgh and her M.A. in Social Studies from Gannon University. Her undergraduate degree, a B.A. in History and Political Science, is from George Washington University.*



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