

March 7, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Sources:

Cavinder, Fred D., *The Indiana Book of Records, Firsts, and Fascinating Facts*, IU Press.

The Daily Republican (20 November 1920)
(<http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/81792535/>)

Bodenhamer, David and Robert G. Barrows, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (1994)

Indiana Commission for Women, *Hoosier Women Lead* (<http://www.in.gov/icw/2415.htm>)

Indianapolis Star (4 June 2013), "The women's suffrage movement in Indiana"
(<http://archive.indystar.com/article/99999999/NEWS06/110316008/RetroIndy-women-s-suffrage-movement-Indiana>)

Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, 1921
19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
(<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=63>)

INDIANA
COMMISSION
for women

100 N Senate Avenue, Room N103
Indianapolis, IN 46204

(317) 232-6720-direct
(317) 232-7485-fax

info@icw.in.gov
www.in.gov/icw

Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Women enter the election process

Women's suffrage did not begin in 1920. Women and the men who supported them fought for the right to vote for many years prior to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Over a twenty-year period (1890-1920) in Indiana, there were at least ten women suffrage bills proposed to the Indiana General Assembly. All were either rejected or left to die in committee. Finally, on January 16, 1920, Indiana ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. In August 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was finally ratified by the thirty-six states needed to pass the Amendment into law, thus, granting women the right to vote.

In Indiana, women did not waste time and began participating in the political process. According to *The Indiana Book of Records, Firsts, and Fascinating Facts*, Mrs. Anna D. Monroe of Indianapolis became the first woman to cast her ballot on November 2, 1920 and was joined by more than 500,000 women. According to Indiana voting records, men's votes totaled above 715,000 in 1916, the last presidential election before women voted. In November 1920, the number of ballots cast topped 1.2 million.

After that election, Julia D. Nelson (1862-1936) of Delaware County became the first woman to serve in the Indiana General Assembly when she was selected to replace Representative J. Clark McKinley who died shortly before the November 1920 election. She served a full term from 1921-1923. During her first year, she introduced five bills, including House Bill 425, which called for private hearings in certain cases involving rape and determination of paternity.

In November 1942, Arcada Stark Balz (1879-1973) was elected to the Indiana State Senate from the counties of Marion and Johnson. Originally becoming politically active when she suggested the establishment of a New Harmony Memorial and then serving as the president of that state commission, Balz became the first woman to win an election to the Indiana Senate. She took her seat at the start of the 1943-45 legislative session. She was re-elected in 1944, serving another four-year term. During the 1947 session, Balz served as chairwoman of the committee on Public Health and held a seat on the Committee on Benevolent Institutions. Being the first female member of the Indiana senate, her government service was praised in her 1973 *Kokomo Tribune* death notice which noted that she:

Pioneered in the campaign for legislation to license nursing homes and to regulate women's working hours and wages. She was also amongst the first to push for improving school attendance requirements and establishing a merit system for state employees.

Both Julia Nelson and Arcada Stark Balz paved the way for other women to serve as elected officials in the Indiana General Assembly. To date, 151 women have served in the Indiana General Assembly with the highest number serving at one time – 33 in total – during the 1995-1996 legislative session.