

March 23, 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](http://www.in.gov/icw) to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

#### Sources:

- American Bar Association, *Enrollment and Degrees Awarded, 1963-2012* ([http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal\\_education\\_and\\_admissions\\_to\\_the\\_bar/statistics/enrollment\\_degrees\\_awarded.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/statistics/enrollment_degrees_awarded.authcheckdam.pdf))
- Indiana Female Firsts in the Legal Profession (<http://www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/museum/female-firsts/>)
- Indiana Commission for Women, *Timeline of Women's "Firsts"* (<http://www.in.gov/icw/2489.htm>)
- *Women's History Month*, United States Courts (<http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-inspired/annual-observances/womens-history-month.aspx>)

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 of the Bench

In 1870 women were counted as part of the workforce for the first time during the U.S. Census. They made up fifteen percent (15%) of the total workforce; and, five women were counted as lawyers. Since then, women have been increasing their presence in all segments of the workforce. According to the American Bar Association, women's representation in law school classes has climbed since 1992 to approximately fifty percent (50%). Despite this increase, the number of women serving as judges has not kept pace. For example, in 2011, the number of female judges serving in Indiana was approximately twenty-one percent.

There has been progress through the education, hard work and achievements of women who have forged a path for others in the legal profession. At the federal level, the first woman appointed to the federal bench anywhere in the United States was Genevieve Rose Cline. Serving twenty-five years, she was appointed to the U.S. Customs Court in 1928 by President Calvin Coolidge. In 1934, Florence Allen became the first woman to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit after President Franklin D. Roosevelt's appointment. Later, she became the first woman to serve as chief judge of a U.S. Court of Appeals. In 1949, Burnita Shelton Matthews became the first woman to serve as a U.S. District Court judge when President Harry S. Truman appointed her to that position. And, in 1981, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor made history when she became the first woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court after being appointed by President Ronald Reagan.

In Indiana, there have also been many accomplished women who have made history through their own service to the judicial branch of Indiana's government. V. Sue Shields became the first woman in Indiana to become a trial court judge when she was elected to the Hamilton County Superior Court in 1964. She was also the first female judge on the Indiana Court of Appeals, serving from 1978 until 1994. In 1994, she then became the first woman to be appointed as federal magistrate judge in Indiana.

In 1975, Betty Barteau was the first woman elected to the Marion Superior Court. She served in that capacity for 16 years before being appointed by Governor Bayh to the Indiana Court of Appeals in 1991. Linda Chezem was the first female County Court judge after her appointment by Governor Otis Bowen in 1975 and then her election in 1976. She was also the first female Circuit Court judge, serving from 1982 to 1988.

Judge Sarah Evans Barker became the first female federal judge in Indiana when she was appointed to the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Indiana in 1984. Judge Tanya Walton Pratt is the first African-American federal judge in Indiana history when she is appointed to same Court in 2010.

Myra Selby was appointed as a justice of the Indiana Supreme Court in 1995. She was not only the first female to serve on this Court, but also the first African-American member of the Court. She stepped down from her position in 1999. In 2012, Loretta Rush became the second woman to be appointed on the Indiana Supreme Court and made history in 2014, when she became the first woman Chief Justice.

The importance of recognizing the women who have served in the judicial branch in Indiana is a reminder of not only how their contributions have shaped legal history specifically but also how they have inspired other women to follow in their footsteps.