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Lady, If You Go Into Politics: North Dakota's Women Legislators, 1923-1989

Ann M. Rathke

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To Rachel and the memory

of Larry
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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the seventy-two women who served in the North Dakota legislature between 1923, when women first took seats, and 1989, the state's Centennial year. Their collective story has been absent from major scholarly works about the history of North Dakota, a state which prizes its unique and colorful political heritage. The purpose of this study is to remedy this lack of information.

A variety of published and unpublished sources were consulted, including the records of proposed bills and resolutions. A survey was developed and used to obtain additional biographical and other information about current and former women legislators. The study focuses on a series of questions about this group of women. What were their collective and individual backgrounds and subsequent pathways to the legislature? What were their major legislative interests and their committee assignments? What legislative leadership positions did they hold? What were their legislative initiatives, especially those on behalf of other women? And how did the answer to these questions change over time? Women legislators were hypothesized to have come into their own as a group in the 1970s. This hypothesis was modified. Research findings suggest that it was in the 1980s that collectively these women came of age.
Lady, if you go into politics, leave the men alone. Don't run to them for everything you want to know. Don't swallow all they tell you. Post yourself first, establish your own opinions—don't be a gull. Build your own knowledge and confidence—and do it by yourself.

--Minnie D. Craig, 1933

In 1933 when Minnie Craig provided advice to women considering politics, she was well qualified to speak on the subject. A veteran of six legislative sessions, she had been one of the state's first two female legislators and was now the first woman in any state to preside as Speaker of the House of Representatives. She was one of only 132 women serving in state legislatures in the country in 1933. Politics in general and state legislatures in particular have historically been the province of men. "Political man" has been well documented. "Political

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1"TRUST IN SELF, SAYS SPEAKER: Minnie Craig Gives Advice to Women Considering Politics," Fargo Forum, [February 1933], Minnie Craig Scrapbook, Minnie D. Craig Papers, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

2"132 WOMEN ARE IN STATE LEGISLATURES: Won Elections in 34 States--Mrs. Minnie D. Craig Speaker of N.D. House," Valley City Peoples Opinion, 12 January 1933, Minnie Craig Scrapbook.
woman," long considered a contradiction in terms, has until recent years scarcely been noted. This study contributes a new chapter to the growing body of literature about women in American politics.

The focus of this study is the seventy-two women who served in the North Dakota legislature between 1923, when women first took seats, and 1989, the state's Centennial year. During the first one hundred years of statehood, 7,417 legislative positions were filled by men. In comparison, the seventy-two women serving during the period filled 338 positions. Women, in other words, have occupied only slightly more than 4 percent of all legislative seats held over the past century.

Who were these few "ladies" who went beyond considering politics to seek and win legislative positions? What were their collective and individual backgrounds and subsequent pathways to the legislature? What were their major legislative interests and how were these reflected in their committee assignments? What committee chairs and other leadership positions did they hold? What were their legislative initiatives, particularly those on behalf of women? And finally, how did the answers to the above questions change over time?

North Dakota's women legislators are listed in alphabetical order in appendix A. Selected details of their service are provided. Appendix B lists women legislators by session.
Information for this study was gathered from a variety of sources, including surveys completed from March to October 1989 by fifty-seven former and current women legislators; archival and newspaper collections held by the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies; newspaper clippings in the libraries of the Grand Forks Herald, the Bismarck Tribune, and the Fargo Forum; legislative records held by the North Dakota Legislative Council; and interviews with former and current women legislators and their relatives. Also drawn on were numerous books and articles about women in national, state, and local politics, including the few, but invaluable, studies of the role of women in North Dakota's political tradition.

This collective biography is divided into three time periods, 1923 to 1969, 1970 to 1979, and 1980 to 1989. The twenty women who served in the legislature between 1923 and 1969 are the subject of chapter 2. Chapter 3 focuses on the thirty-one women who served in the legislature in the 1970s. Twenty-six of these women began their service in the seventies and five were veteran legislators from the previous period. The subject of chapter 4 is the forty-one women who served in the legislature in the 1980s. Of this group of women, twenty-six began their service in the

4See appendix C for a sample survey.
eighties and fifteen carried over from previous periods. The changing profile of North Dakota's women legislators unfolds throughout the course of the three chapters. Chapter 5 summarizes these changes and addresses a final question. Did North Dakota's women legislators "post" themselves, establish their opinions and build their own knowledge and confidence as Minnie Craig advised in 1933? The working hypothesis of this study is that it was not until the 1970s, when an appreciable number of women came to serve in the legislature, that female lawmakers as a group came into their own with the strength, confidence, and sense of purpose suggested by Craig.
Masculine hostility to the idea of women having an equal share in the privileges and responsibilities of government did not melt away after ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment which granted them the vote. After more than thirty years, politics is still a man's world. India Edwards, Vice-Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, summed up the tribulations of a woman politician in one exasperated comment, "If I didn't have the crusading spirit, I'd get the hell out and go home."

--Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena A. Hickok, 1954

Women have much to learn in the "Game of Government." Men have been the politicians for so long, they much resent the interference of women upon their exclusive right to handle the cash, line up all the schemes [sic], tell everyone what they must do and be very careful not to tell them "Why."

--Minnie D. Craig, [1954-1956]

Politics for women in North Dakota, or anywhere else, is no pink-tea affair.

--Brynhild Haugland, [1950]


2 Minnie D. Craig, Handwritten autobiography, Minnie D. Craig Papers, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo, 70-71.

3 Carl Hennemann, "Politics No Pink Tea, Woman Solon Says," source unavailable, [1950], Brynhild Haugland Newspaper Clippings Collection, privately held, Minot.
Historical Background and Overview

Women's participation in the "game of government" in North Dakota as in other states began long before ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution on August 26, 1920. Barred from the electoral arena of voting and office holding, women learned to play and even influence the game from the outside. Through their clubs and other voluntary associations, women worked collectively to create and demand change in government institutions and public policy. 4

In North Dakota, as in other states, the female voice for change and reform from territorial days through the first two decades of the twentieth century was focused primarily on the issues of temperance and woman suffrage. For many women, Elizabeth Preston Anderson of Fargo, for example, female suffrage was a means of attaining social goals, particularly prohibition. 5 Anderson was a leader in both the temperance and woman suffrage movements in North Dakota.

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The women of Dakota Territory had attained limited suffrage prior to statehood in 1889, voting in local school elections and for state superintendent of public instruction and county superintendent. In 1917 woman suffrage was expanded in North Dakota to include voting in municipal and presidential elections. Apparently unable or unwilling to integrate fully these new voters, election officials in North Dakota required women to use separate ballot boxes in the presidential election of 1918.

Described as a "long, exhausting battle," the struggle for woman suffrage in North Dakota was waged primarily in the legislative chambers. Suffragists suffered more than one "'defeat by political trickery'" at the hands of opponents of female suffrage in the legislature. On the last day of the session in 1893, for example, a woman suffrage bill introduced by Senator James W. Stevens of Dickey County passed the Senate and was sent to the House. After Elizabeth Preston Anderson addressed the House, the chamber passed the bill. Anderson reported what happened next:

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6Ibid., 195-97.


9Ibid., 14.
Following the vote came a most spectacular fight. The Speaker of the House, George Walsh, refused to sign the bill. Governor Shortridge, however, said the bill did not need the speaker's signature and that he would sign it if it reached his office. For many hours after that, however, the bill was mysteriously lost and men were placed in the halls to prevent it from reaching the governor's office. It never did.

Final victory for female suffrage in North Dakota came as a result of the Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in North Dakota on December 2, 1919, in a special session of the legislature. In addition to full voting rights, ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment meant expanded opportunities for women to seek elective office. Up until this time only three women had sought and won statewide elective office in North Dakota, all in the position of superintendent of public instruction.

The door open for full political participation by women, suffragists and anti-suffragists alike predicted the rise of a female voting bloc poised to transform American life and politics, for better or for worse. Recognizing this potential, politicians turned their attention to women voters and sought to win their support. The first half of the 1920s witnessed a flurry of legislation in Congress and in legislatures across the country addressing the special

10 Ibid., 12-13.
11 Ibid., 14.
interests of women. In North Dakota such legislation included the numerous bills prepared by the Children's Code Commission and proposed in the 1923 legislative session.

Although women did exhibit certain patterns of political participation different from men, including lower voter turnout, it was clear by the end of the first decade of female suffrage that a women's bloc did not exist. Legislatures, predominantly populated by male representatives, responded with a precipitous drop in responsiveness to questions perceived as women's issues. Women continued to be vastly outnumbered by men in public office, as women and men alike continued to view politics as a "man's world." The door to political power and equality that suffragists had predicted would open for women as a result of the vote was only slightly ajar.

It was against this historical backdrop that women began to seek and win seats in North Dakota's legislature. Two women were elected in 1922 in the first state election after full woman suffrage. From the 1923 session through the 1969 session, twenty women served in the legislature, eighteen in the House and two in the Senate. Women were and

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still are thinly scattered in state senates across the country and in the United States Senate. According to Irene Diamond in her 1977 publication *Sex Roles in the State House*, the status of senates as "upper" houses is the reason for the sparse representation of women in these chambers. Perceived greater power and opportunity for leadership positions—"All of this spells status and no women."  

Of the women to enter legislative service during this forty-six year period, eleven, or just over half, served a single term. Five women served between two and five terms and four served six or more. One explanation for the significant number of short term female legislators during this period of our state's history is the lack of perception of politics as an endeavor for women. A striking exception to this pattern is Brynhild Haugland, elected to the House in 1939. In 1989 she served her twenty-sixth term as a representative. Two years earlier she was recognized and honored as the nation's longest serving state lawmaker. Her tenure was so unusual for the era that as


early as 1951 Brynhild Haugland was being referred to as "a long term lady legislator." 18

All but three of the women beginning their legislative tenure prior to 1970 were the first woman from their county to serve in the North Dakota legislature. Fourteen (70 percent) of the twenty women entering the legislature during this period were elected from counties east of a line dividing North Dakota in half east to west (see figure 1). Three counties--Cass, Ward, and Pierce--elected more than one woman. No women were elected from counties west of the Missouri River. Six women were elected out of three of the state's four most populated cities--Fargo, Minot, and Grand Forks. The remaining fourteen were elected out of small towns and rural areas.

The largest group of women to serve in any one session during the period were the five who served in 1967. They held just over 3 percent of the legislative seats. Fourteen, or over two-thirds, served at least one session as the lone woman in a chamber or with one other woman. Brynhild Haugland was the only woman in the entire legislature for four sessions and the only woman in the House for an equal number of sessions. The 1935 session is the only one in which no woman served.

18"Long Term Lady Legislator Has Heart for the Farm," Bismarck Tribune, 2 March 1951.
Fig. 1. Post offices of women legislators serving between 1923 and 1969.
(Base map: North Dakota Highway Department.)
When North Dakota's premier women legislators, Minnie Craig of Esmond and Nellie Dougherty of Minot, took their places in the House of Representatives in January of 1923, North Dakota was suffering an economic depression caused by low crop prices, higher land prices, and poor crops. The post-war prosperity enjoyed by most of the nation bypassed North Dakota. The end of free land and the beginning of a rural exodus signaled the passing of the pioneer era.19

According to historian Elwyn Robinson, North Dakota politics in the 1920s reflected not only the economic depression of the state, but also the conservative movements afoot in the nation. It was a period dominated by a struggle between the Nonpartisan League, called "North Dakota's greatest political insurgency,"20 and the Independent Voters' Association, an organization formed in reaction to the League, to control the Republican Party and, in Republican North Dakota, state government.21

Minnie Craig, a Leaguer, and Nellie Dougherty, a Democrat who was employed and supported by the Independents, represented the two warring factions of the dominant

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21 Robinson, 388-95.
Republican Party. From the "explosive politics of the 1930s" and the insurgency of a new Republican faction (the Republican Organizing Committee) in the 1940s to the eventual realignment of state politics in the 1950s, women legislators' party loyalties continued to reflect the dominant political culture. Seventeen (or 85 percent) of the twenty women who served in the legislature between 1923 and 1969 were aligned with either League or IVA Republicans. Only after the League merged with the Democratic party in the mid-1950s and a healthy two-party system took root in North Dakota did Democratic women begin to seek and win seats in the legislature in more than minuscule numbers.

**Background Characteristics**

Outlining and comparing the background characteristics of North Dakota's women legislators over time is essential to determining changes in their collective history and profile in the sixty-six years covered in this study. According to Irwin N. Gertzog, author of *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Treatment, and Behavior*, documented change in background characteristics "means that there has been change in the social, economic, and political resources that successful female candidates have been able to aggregate and exploit." In this and the following two

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23 Irwin N. Gertzog, *Congressional Women: Their*
chapters these background characteristics will be traced and analyzed: age, marital status, number and age of children, and occupation at the time of first election to the legislature; education; ethnic background and religious preference; prior political experience and family political connections; and political party and organizational affiliations.

Biographical information about the twenty women who served in the legislature between 1923 and 1969 is extensive, but by no means complete. A major source of this information is contemporary newspapers. The press, and presumably the public, showed more than a passing interest in the professional and personal backgrounds of the state's early women legislators.

An example of this interest is the press reaction which greeted Minnie Craig and Nellie Dougherty at the commencement of the 1923 legislative session. The Fargo Forum reported that both Craig and Dougherty had taught school, disliked publicity, believed in economy and cooperation, and expected to support the programs of their respective factions.\(^{24}\) The same newspaper noted that Craig was "a musician of ability and a good cook according to her


\(^{24}\) "North Dakota's First Woman Solons Mum On Tactics They Will Use," Fargo Forum, [January 1923], Minnie Craig Scrapbook.
John Andrews, editor of the Courier-News at Fargo, described Craig as "a fine clear-eyed and clear-thinking woman of good presence and attractive personality" and Dougherty as "a slight slip of womanhood, youthful and obviously earnest." Andrews apparently deduced Dougherty's earnest nature when at the swearing in ceremony "her white face set out in profile and her lips moving gave the impression of a young girl at prayer." Though earnestness and musical and culinary abilities are not among the background characteristics to be traced in this study, other characteristics deemed noteworthy by the contemporary press, such as occupation and political party affiliation, will be.

Age, Marital Status, and Number and Age of Children at Time of First Election to the Legislature

Studies indicate that women officeholders tend to be middle-aged and to seek and obtain public office at a later age than men. Traditional women's roles,

25 "Two Women Members of State Assembly," Fargo Forum, [January 1923], Minnie Craig Scrapbook.


particularly child rearing, have been cited as a possible explanation for this pattern.  

From 1923 to 1969 the median age of the twenty first-term North Dakota women legislators was forty-eight. They ranged in age from thirty-three to sixty-two upon their first election. The youngest were Nellie Dougherty, elected in 1922, and Brynhild Haugland, elected in 1938. Dougherty was the youngest member of the House in the 1923 session. The oldest woman was Sybil Kelly, elected in 1958 at age sixty-two. Three-fourths, or fifteen, of the women were in their forties and fifties at the time of their initial election.


"Getting Ready For Business At Bismarck," Benson County Press, [January 1923], Minnie Craig Scrapbook.
Popular images of the woman officeholder include widows who succeeded husbands who died in office, divorcees whose marriages could not withstand the demands of public life, and single, career women without family constraints. In fact, the marital profile of North Dakota's first twenty women legislators shows little resemblance to this popular image. Five, or one-fourth, were single when elected. Fourteen were married, one was widowed, and none were divorced. This profile would have surprised Illinois legislator Bernice T. Van Der Vries, who in 1948 observed that "so many of the women winning public office are widows, with a minimum of home responsibilities." If the term "widow's succession" is interpreted broadly, one woman could be said to have entered the legislature via this route. In 1951 Senator Harry O'Brien of Park River, having served three terms in the House and four terms in the Senate, announced his retirement due to ill health and "hinted he would like to see Mrs. O'Brien chosen for the post which he proposed to vacate." He

31 Marilyn Johnson and Kathy Stanwick, Profile of Women Holding Office (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, 1976), xxx.


subsequently "brought the matter up" at the county Democratic nominating convention the following year and Rosamund O'Brien was nominated for the post. Mrs. O'Brien was elected by a comfortable margin in the November election and served her first session in 1953. Harry O'Brien died on October 10, 1953.  

Whether it is manageable, appropriate, or even moral for a woman to seek and hold public office when she has young children is an issue of long-standing debate. In her study of women legislators in 1974, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick observed that society prescribes a clear hierarchy of values for women--children first, husbands second, careers last. According to Kirkpatrick, many of the women in her study avoided a conflict around this prescription by delaying legislative service until their children were grown or at least well beyond what might be considered a tender age.

Given the role constraints experienced and described by a representative sampling of women legislators in Kirkpatrick's study in the mid-1970s, it is not surprising that forty years earlier pioneer woman legislator Minnie Craig contended that the only woman who did not belong in

34 North Dakota Legislative Council, Journal of the Senate of the Thirty-third Session of the Legislative Assembly, 351.
35 "Death Takes Harry O'Brien."
36 Kirkpatrick, 230.
politics was the mother of young children. Married and childless, Craig declared that "If I had young children, you'd not find me here. I'd be home where I would belong." Agnes Geelan, whose long political career boasts several firsts, including North Dakota's first woman mayor (elected in 1946 and 1950) and first female state senator (elected in 1950 and 1952), believes that having a supportive husband and no children gave her the freedom to pursue her career. Speaking to a reporter in 1982, Geelan said that had she had children, "You wouldn't be talking to me today."

Of the twenty women who served in the legislature between 1923 and 1969, five, or one-fourth, were single women with no children. Of the fifteen married women, three had no children, although one, Rosamund O'Brien, was a foster mother. Seven of the married women with children were first elected to the legislature after their children were eighteen or over. These fifteen women fit the profile of the "typical" woman officeholder with no active child rearing responsibilities.

Five married women legislators sought and won election when they had at least one child under eighteen. Lavina Amsberry and Mabel Lindgren, elected in 1928, were the first

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37 "TRUST IN SELF, SAYS SPEAKER."

mothers to serve in the legislature. Amsberry's area newspaper recognized her distinction with a headline reading "The First Mother of Our District in the Legislature." She had two children at home, ages eleven and fifteen, when she served. Mabel Lindgren's five children were between the ages of seventeen and six when she served. Pregnant with her sixth child, Lindgren decided not to seek re-election in 1930. Two women with children at home served in the legislature in the 1930s--Nellie Olson with one child in elementary school and another in high school and Susie Ista with four children between the ages of seventeen and five. Not until 1966 was another mother of a school age child, Helen Claire Ferguson, elected to the legislature. All five of the women elected to the legislature between 1923 and 1969 with one or more children at home were one-term legislators.


40 Vera Gothberg, telephone interview by author, 24 March 1990.


42 Audrey Gruger, telephone interview by author, 24 March 1990.


Occupation When First Elected to the Legislature and Educational Background

Politics differs from most professions in that participation, even as an officeholder, requires no specific educational or occupational training. Minimum requirements for public office seekers relate to citizenship, age, and residence, not education or occupation. Even so, office holders as a rule have higher educational and professional status than the general population. Of the professions, law is traditionally the most common among office holders. Knowledge and skills acquired through legal training have been seen as assets to both the political candidate and the public office holder.

While information about the educational and occupational backgrounds of women state legislators serving prior to 1970 is scarce, in a study published in 1968 Emmy E. Werner provided the following profile of women in the 1963/64 state legislatures. While most had some post-high school education, less than half were college graduates. Most had worked in one or more professions, with business, public relations and teaching being the most common. Represented, but less well, were the mass media, law, social work, and nursing. Farmers, doctors, and ministers were

45Johnson and Stanwick, xxxvii.
46Gertzog, 38-39, 45.
few and far between. A profile of women holding office, including legislative seats, during 1974 and 1975 shows a predominance of traditional women's occupations. Poorly represented were occupations such as "law, journalism, public administration or insurance and real estate, which are frequently associated with political activity and entry into office.”

North Dakota's first twenty women legislators ranged in educational background from some high school to a graduate degree, with a majority having had some post-high school education. While seven (35 percent) attended or completed high school, thirteen (65 percent) attended or completed college. Of the thirteen women in the latter group, two had some college and eleven were college graduates. While three of these college graduates did post-graduate work, only one of the first twenty women legislators earned a post-graduate degree. She was Helen Claire Ferguson, who had a masters degree in institutional management. Six of the college-educated women graduated from normal or teachers colleges and one from a business college. The first five women to serve in the legislature were normal school graduates.

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48 Johnson and Stanwick, xxxviii.
While the educational profile of North Dakota's early women legislators is quite typical of female officeholders in general, their occupational profile is less so. Although seven, or just over one-third, of the women who served in the legislature between 1923 and 1969 taught school prior to their legislative service, none were teachers at the time they were elected. In general, traditional female occupations were not well represented among this group of women. Besides teaching, other occupations notable for their absence were nursing and social work. Only one woman, Nellie Dougherty, was employed in a clerical position. Four women were full-time homemakers when first elected. Eleven combined homemaking responsibilities with part or full-time employment outside the home.

Most of the early women legislators who were employed part or full-time outside the home were engaged in nontraditional occupations, including farming, insurance, banking, sales, and journalism. Farmers and journalists were particularly well represented among this group of women, with six women engaged full or part-time in farming and three employed full or part-time in newspaper work. While several of North Dakota's first women legislators were engaged in one of the occupations traditionally associated with political activity and advancement, none were employed in that occupation most associated with politics--law.
Ethnic Background and Religious Preference

In the preface to Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History (1988) sociologist and ethnic scholar William C. Sherman weighs the importance of ethnicity or nationality the state's history. "In a sense," he wrote, "the story of the ethnic groups in North Dakota is the story of North Dakota." Scholars and nonscholars alike have long recognized that ethnic background influences the way many of us live our daily lives. The ethnic component can figure into matters as mundane as food and beverage tastes and as important as job preference and work habits, level of education and educational performance, and religious and political behavior. 49

When women began to serve in the state legislature in the 1920s, North Dakota was a land of immigrants. A majority of the state's population was foreign born or had at least one parent who was foreign born. Communities defined by their ethnic makeup persisted well into the 1950s, when improved roads and modern highways lessened geographic isolation. Ethnic identification remains strong in North Dakota, particularly in the rural areas. Ethnic diversity is also a persistent theme. 50


50 William Sherman, preface to Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History, edited by William Sherman and
Available sources reveal the ethnic background of seventeen of the state's first twenty female legislators. Seven women from this group (41 percent) had at least one parent of British Isles ancestry, including English, Scotch, Scotch-Irish, and Irish. Familiar with government by tradition, individuals of British Isles' descent strongly influenced the state's politics, most notably during the reign of Alexander McKenzie, the "Boss of North Dakota" and a Canadian Scot. Four (24 percent) of the seventeen women whose ethnic heritage is known were of German descent by virtue of one or both parents. Noteworthy by their absence are Germans from Russia, the second largest national group in the state. That nationality influences one's politics is demonstrated by the opposition of the foreign-born, especially Germans, to women's suffrage.

Nine (53 percent) of the women under discussion claimed one or both parents of Scandinavian ancestry, including Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes. Over half of these

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Sherman, Prairie Mosaic, 3.

Reed, 195.
women descended from Norwegians, the largest nationality in North Dakota. Described as "politically restless," Norwegian Americans have generally been aggressive in seeking public office and exerting political influence. Temperance was one cause for which many Norwegian North Dakotans crusaded.54

The ethnic heritage of the women who began their legislative service between 1923 and 1969 is clearly not as diverse as the general population in North Dakota. The state's smaller ethnic groups (Ukrainians, Poles, Czechs, Bulgarians, French, Syrians, Dutch, Belgians, and others) are represented by only one woman, Grace Stone whose paternal grandparents were French and English.

Religious preference and ethnic background are biographical variables, which are often linked. Scandinavians, for example, are traditionally Lutherans.55 One might expect that the strong showing of Scandinavian women in the legislature between 1923 and 1969 would mean a healthy percentage of the women serving would be Lutheran. This expectation is born out. More women are identified as


55 Ibid., 185.
Lutheran (six, or 30 percent) than any other single denomination.

Nine other women are identified as belonging to other Protestant denominations, including Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Moravian. The total percentage of Protestant women serving during this time period is fifteen. Three women (15 percent) are identified as Catholic. One woman identified herself as a Christian and another indicated no religious preference. In her 1974 book about women legislators Jeane J. Kirkpatrick observed that most of the women in her study were Protestant, a religion that "traditionally defines hard work and perseverance as human rather than male virtues." These qualities are clearly assets to any political candidate or officeholder.

Family Political Connections and Prior Political Experience

In his study of the first one hundred female U.S. Congresswomen Irwin Gertzog observes that many of these women had a parent or other close relative who held public office. Before World War II family political connections combined with family wealth "were virtually indispensable to would-be congresswomen." Women who are exposed to political activism in their developmental years are presumed to be

56 Kirkpatrick, 226.
less influenced or constrained by societal prescriptions regarding the world of politics, which traditionally has been a male world.57

Prior political experience, including office holding, is another biographical variable shared by many of the women who served in the U.S. Congress between 1917 and 1983. Experience in elective office and, perhaps to a slightly lesser degree, experience in appointive office and political party leadership, are supposed to "provide would-be representatives with the appropriate skills, political orientations, proximity to decision-making centers, visibility, and credibility."58

Although generalizations about the prior political experience of women in state legislatures from the 1920s through the 1960s are not available, one scholar observed that women serving in the 1963/64 state legislatures commonly served in state or local party organizations or in municipal government prior to election to the legislature. How frequently this service included elective office is not indicated.59 A study of women holding office on all levels during 1974 and 1975 revealed that although a considerable number of these women had served in elective or appointive

57 Gertzog, 6, 36-37.
58 Ibid., 39-41.
59 Werner, 46.
public offices or political party positions, the vast
majority had held only one public office or none. 60

Given the limited former office holding experience of
women in public office at all levels as late as the
mid-1970s, it is not surprising that the majority of women
who served in the North Dakota legislature prior to 1970 did
not hold an elective office prior to their election to the
legislature. Eight (40 percent) did seek and win elective
office prior to their legislative career. Of these eight
women all but one served on a county or city school board or
as county superintendent of schools. One in this group of
women, Agnes Geelan, was a mayor when first elected to the
legislature.

That activism in the county or local school district
was a common and perhaps predictable political training
ground for women during this period is evident in a 1929
article in the Bismarck Tribune indicating that first-term
legislator Lavina Amsberry's training for politics was
obtained working for the division of school districts in her
county. The only woman whose prior office holding
experience did not include a stint as a school board member
or a superintendent of schools was Mabel Lindgren, who

60 Johnson and Stanwick, xl-xli.
served one term as a justice of the peace in Minot before becoming a legislator. 61

At least half of the women who began their legislative service during the first five decades after women's suffrage were active in precinct, district, or state political party organizations prior to their legislative election. The Nonpartisan League, which was represented by eight of the first twelve women to serve in the legislature, had a large, active women's membership from its beginning. 62 In 1919 Minnie Craig was elected president of the League's network of women's clubs. On the opposite side of the political fence, Nellie Dougherty became interested and active in politics while working as a stenographer at the Independent Voters Association headquarters in Minot. 63 Beginning in the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, it was common for a female legislator to have served as a precinct committee chair and/or on one or more campaign committees prior to being a successful legislative candidate.

With political activism as an officeholder and/or as a volunteer party worker an integral part of the profile of the state's pioneer women legislators, it is not surprising


63 "North Dakota's First Woman Solons."
that nearly half of these women claimed family roots in electoral politics. The most common family link was a father or husband who had served in public office at some point prior to the woman's legislative service. John Sanderson, father of Laura Sanderson, was an early county judge and a member of the city council in LaMoure. Mary McGinnis' father, John McGinnis, was elected city alderman for Jamestown in 1883. Henry Ellingson, father of Nettie Ellingson, served several terms as register of deeds for Pierce County, and Helen Claire Ferguson's father was a state's attorney. Grace Stone's husband was on the Grand Forks board of education prior to her bid for a legislative seat.

Three women legislators from the period, Rosamund O'Brien, Sybil Kelly, and Anna Powers, had an immediate family member or an in-law who preceded them in the legislature. Kelly's father, Fred Baker, served in the Senate from 1909 to 1912, and O'Brien's husband, Harry O'Brien, served in the House from 1935 to 1940 and in the Senate from 1940 to 1950. Anna Powers' father-in-law served in the House the 1905 and 1907 sessions.

A sense of inherited political interest and activism is evident in statements by and about a number of these early women legislators. A reporter writing about Mabel Lindgren, who served in the 1929 session, quoted her as saying that she had inherited her interest in politics from her politically active father and that "questions of the day
were discussed at home."64 While growing up, Mary Rathbun, elected in 1932, was exposed to conversations "centered on government and politics, economics, and social changes needed to improve living conditions."65 Three-term House member Sybil Kelly was quoted as saying, "It seems as though I've heard about politics all my life."66

Organizational Affiliations

Prior political experience and family political connections have long been viewed as distinct advantages on the path to public office. Organizational activity is yet another means of developing the political awareness, knowledge, and skills often seen as prerequisites for office holding. Because women's organizations have served as leadership training grounds for women since before female suffrage and because women have traditionally been less involved in professions, such as law, which are associated with office holding, organizational affiliation is likely to be especially important to women office seekers.67 Joanne V. Hawks, who has authored or coauthored a number of

64"North Dakota's Woman Legislators."
67Johnson and Stanwick, xxxiv.
articles about women legislators in southern states, notes "the frequent presence of the so-called clubwoman in politics." 68

Clubwomen abound among the first twenty women to serve in the North Dakota legislature. All of these women were members of at least one organization, with most holding memberships in three or more. A wide range of organizations are represented by this group, including political, professional, public service and public affairs, religious, farm, social and cultural, and fraternal and patriotic. The General Federation of Women's Clubs and local women's clubs were particularly popular.

Membership in a women's auxiliary of a political party or faction, such as the Nonpartisan League Woman's Clubs and county and state Republican women's clubs, was common throughout the period. Activism and leadership in nonpartisan women's political organizations such as the League of Women Voters have often served as a route to state legislatures for women. Organized nationally in 1920, the League of Women Voters has been referred to as "a kind of farm club for women politicians." 69 Aloha Eagles, first elected in 1966, gives the League of Women Voters total

68 Ellis and Hawks, "Creating a Different Pattern," 73.
69 Hartmann, 15-17.
credit for her successful bid for a House seat.\textsuperscript{70} In the 1970s the League of Women Voters route to the legislature would be increasingly prevalent.

**Legislative Interests**

An officeholder's background characteristics, from education and occupation to political and organizational affiliations, influence what interests he or she brings to and develops in office. The interests of women officials are a topic of long-standing discussion. The debate over women's suffrage extended to the question of what interests and concerns women would pursue once they had the right to seek and hold public office. Would they, for example, follow the lead of Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin of Montana and "infect politics with pacifism" as some feared?\textsuperscript{71}

Education, health, welfare, and children are foremost among those policy areas believed to be of special interest to female legislators. Women's prelegislative experiences as wives and mothers and in "feminine" occupations such as teaching, nursing, and social work have been the explanation for this pattern.\textsuperscript{72} Those areas of interest traditionally regarded as women's interests are generally accorded lower

\textsuperscript{70}Paul Windels, "Garbage dispute spurred formation of Fargo League," \textit{Fargo Forum}, 10 July 1988.

\textsuperscript{71}"A False Alarm," \textit{Williams County Farmers Press}, 20 November 1929, 2.

\textsuperscript{72}Kirkpatrick, 152-53; Diamond, 89-90.
status than are traditional male areas of interest, which are seen as centering around finance. 73

From survey data and information obtained from contemporary newspaper accounts, several observations can be made about the legislative interests of the women who served in the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1969. The interest most commonly shared by this group of women was education. Given the strong showing of education in the prelegislative experiences of these women, this finding is not surprising. Sybil Kelly spoke for other early women legislators when in 1959 as a first-term representative she

stated, "Education has always been one of my special interests."\textsuperscript{74}

The welfare of people, especially women and children and the elderly, was another common interest. A particularly vocal advocate was Minnie Craig, who in her first term in the House in 1923 "declared that she was deeply interested in all legislation affecting women and children."\textsuperscript{75} Craig's interest in women went beyond their general welfare to issues of women's rights. Interest in women's rights among the state's women legislators received new life in the 1960s with the election of women like Representative Aloha Eagles who had an avowed interest in such issues as the Equal Rights Amendment.\textsuperscript{76} The welfare of farm women was of particular interest to Lavina Amsberry, elected in 1928 and familiar herself with the "patterns of a farm woman's life."\textsuperscript{77}

A few women who served during this period expressed a special interest in health care and law enforcement. A variety of other interests captured the attention of individual women legislators. Among these were taxes, the

\textsuperscript{74}Hiller.

\textsuperscript{75}"Women Members of Legislature Both Have Teaching Experience," \textit{Bismarck Tribune}, [January 1923], Minnie Craig Scrapbook.


\textsuperscript{77}"North Dakota's Women Legislators."
judiciary, transportation, government improvement, revision of election laws, labor relations, the environment, safety, agriculture, water programs, zoning, municipal government, and tourism. The above observations indicate that while North Dakota's early women legislators did show significant interest in education and welfare, two policy areas perceived to be of special interest to women collectively, their legislative interests were wide-ranging.

Committee Assignments

According to Jeane J. Kirkpatrick in *Political Woman*, a legislator's special interests are reflected in his or her committee assignments. Commonly, the committee assignment process begins with legislators submitting their preferences to the leadership of their respective houses at the start of each session. These requests are generally honored.\(^{78}\) In North Dakota the Speaker of the House makes committee appointments after consulting with party floor leaders. In the Senate, it is the committee on committees that makes these appointments.\(^{79}\) Because much of the important work of the legislature is done in committees, committee assignments are taken seriously by those who give them and those who get them. A legislator's committee assignments have a direct

\(^{78}\)Kirkpatrick, 125-26.

influence on which policy areas that legislator will concentrate. 80

Comparative studies of state legislatures have shown that when committee assignments are doled out, "... women are more likely to be assigned to committees such as Education, Health, and Welfare; whereas men are more likely to be assigned to Appropriations, the Judiciary, and other committees dealing with money and capital development." 81 Other related committees typically assigned to women are those concerned with disadvantaged groups, local government, government ethics, and various "housekeeping" details necessary to the smooth operation of the legislative body itself. Until the 1960s, women's service on congressional committees showed a similar pattern, with congresswomen generally receiving initial and subsequent committee assignments deemed appropriate to their gender. 82

In her 1974 study of women legislators, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick advanced two possible explanations for this pattern, one being that:

... the male leaders of party and legislature--and the leaders are male--discriminate against women in making committee and subcommittee assignments,

80 Kirkpatrick, 125.


82 Gertzog, 129-39.
systematically excluding them from the powerful committees, and shunting them, regardless of their interest and preferences, onto the 'poor' committees desired by no one because they influence nothing or, at best, to those committees whose subject matter is presumed (by these same males) to be especially suited to women.

A second explanation is that women are concentrated on education, welfare, and health committees because these are policy areas they have a special interest in and are inclined to request. While Kirkpatrick's research led her to support the latter explanation, both explanations have their proponents. Available data are insufficient to draw conclusions about the experience of North Dakota's women legislators in regard to this question. However, it is possible to demonstrate the extent to which these women have focused, by virtue of their committee assignments, on "male" verses "female" policy domains as described by Kirkpatrick and others.

When women began to serve in the North Dakota legislature in 1923, there were thirty-one standing committees in the House and Senate. The titles and number of standing committees fluctuated slightly over the next two decades. With the establishment of the Legislative Research Committee in 1945, the standing committees were

83 Kirkpatrick, 125-126.
84 Ibid.
85 Robinson, 433.
reorganized. In 1947 the number of standing committees was reduced to fourteen. \textsuperscript{86} This and several other modernizing measures produced an orderly committee system in which, according to long-term legislator Brynhild Haugland, "All new legislators have an opportunity to serve on important committees." \textsuperscript{87} In 1971, the number of standing committees was further reduced to twelve, including one joint committee. \textsuperscript{88} The discussion of committee assignments in this chapter will be divided into two periods, 1923 to 1946 and 1947 to 1969.

Between the 1923 session and the 1947 session ten women served in the legislature. These women were assigned to and served on twenty-three committees during this period. They typically served on at least three committees. Their assignments were concentrated in Education (eight women or 80 percent of those serving), Temperance (eight women or 80 percent of those serving), Public Health (five women or 50 percent of those serving), Apportionment (four women or 40 percent of those serving), and Revisions and Corrections of the Journal (four women or 40 percent of those serving). This last committee was referred to by Minnie Craig as "a


\textsuperscript{88} North Dakota Legislative Council, \textit{Senate and House Rules and Committees, 1971}, 41-43.
sort of 'waste basket' into which new members might be
tossed so that they would think they had a 'committee
appointment.' When Social Welfare was created in 1939,
the only two women serving at the time (Byrnhild Haugland
and Susie Ista) were assigned to the committee. Each of the
above assignments could be considered a typical female
committee appointment.

Women were placed with somewhat lesser frequency on
other committees dealing with subjects deemed appropriate
for their gender. Two women were assigned to Public Safety,
School and Public Lands, and Enrolled and Engrossed Bills, a
"housekeeping" committee.

Few women who served during this twenty-four year
period were awarded seats on standing committees
traditionally thought of as men's committees. Minnie Craig
was the only woman to be assigned to either Ways and Means,
Appropriations, or Banking. This last committee was an
obvious choice for Craig, who was a banker. The lone woman
to serve on either Agriculture or two agriculture related
committees (Livestock and Drainage and Irrigation) was
Brynhild Haugland, a farmer. Nellie Olson, who served a
single term in 1937, was the only woman assigned to
Judiciary. Two women were appointed to Election and
Election Privileges, a committee which would be subsumed by

89Craig autobiography, 29-30.
Judiciary in 1947. Just one woman was placed on Rules, Joint Rules, Joint Committee on Rural Institutions, Public Debt, Joint Committee on Labor, and Joint Insurance.

The above discussion is illustrated graphically in table 1. As the table indicates, over 70 percent of female committee assignments between 1923 and 1946 were to committees devoted to traditional female concerns. Only 29 percent were to nontraditional or "male" committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periods &amp; (total N of assignments)</th>
<th>N &amp; (%) to trad. female</th>
<th>N &amp; (%) to trad. male</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-1946 (52)</td>
<td>37 (71)</td>
<td>15 (29)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947-1969</td>
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<td>1970-1979</td>
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<td>1980-1989</td>
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Ten women began their service in the legislature between 1947 when the standing committees were reorganized and 1969, the end of the first era of women's participation in the legislature. Brynhild Haugland, whose service continued, brought the number of women to serve during this twenty-two year period to eleven.

A survey of women legislators' standing committee assignments between 1947 and 1969 shows that women continued to be frequently assigned to committees dealing with education, health, and welfare. Eight (73 percent) of the
eleven women serving during the period were assigned to Education. Six (55 percent) were assigned to Social Welfare, a committee that incorporated Public Welfare, Public Health, Public Safety, and Temperance. Fewer women (only three or 27 percent) were seated on Political Subdivisions, a committee devoted to yet another traditional female interest--local government.

After legislative reorganization in 1947, women continued to be less frequently assigned to most of the committees traditionally assigned to men. Only one woman, Sybil Kelly, was assigned to Appropriations. Rosamund O'Brien was the lone woman to be assigned to Natural Resources and likewise Fern Lee on Transportation. When it was suggested that Transportation was an unlikely committee choice for a woman, Lee "defended her viewpoint saying, 'Safety laws and such things are of direct interest to women.'" Sybil Kelly and Brynhild Haugland were the only women to serve on Agriculture during the period. Nettie Ellingson, who was in insurance, and Rosamund O'Brien, who was in publishing, were assigned to Industry and Business. O'Brien and Grace Stone served on Finance and Taxation.

While women's representation on a majority of the committees traditionally assigned to men was low, more

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frequent assignments to several "male" committees pointed to a shift during this period in the established pattern of female committee assignments. Three women were placed on General Affairs and Labor Relations. Four women were assigned to State and Federal Government, the first assignment going to Brynhild Haugland in 1949. The most dramatic break from the pattern of committee assignments established in the first decades of women's service in the legislature was the sharp rise in the number of women assigned to Judiciary, traditionally a man's committee. While only one woman served on this committee before 1947, eight were assigned to Judiciary between 1947 and 1969. The only committee assigned to women as regularly was Education.

A summary of these developments can be found in table 2. As the table indicates, only 29 percent of women legislators' committee assignments between 1923 and 1946 were to committees devoted to traditional male concerns. In the succeeding period, the percentage of these assignments increased to 54 percent. This shift in the pattern of women's committee assignments indicates that by the fifties and sixties North Dakota's women legislators were increasingly addressing policy domains historically considered outside their gender's particular areas of interest and competence while continuing to focus attention on traditional female concerns.
Table 2.--Committee assignments, 1923-1969

<table>
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<td>16 (46)</td>
<td>19 (54)</td>
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Committee Chairs and Other Leadership Positions

A common theme in studies of women lawmakers on the state and national level is the underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership on committees, particularly "important" committees, and in House and Senate chambers as a whole. In all the state legislatures represented in Political Woman, Jeane Kirkpatrick reported "a male monopoly of top leadership positions."91 In her 1977 study of sex roles in state legislatures, Irene Diamond observed that "important leadership positions are more commonly held by the men."92 By the mid-1980s women legislators comprised nearly 15 percent of state legislative seats in the United States, while holding about 9.5 percent of all committee chairs and about 10.5 percent of other leadership positions, such as majority and minority leader.93 In his 1984 study

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91 Kirkpatrick, 222.
92 Diamond, 46.
of the first one hundred U.S. congresswomen, Irwin Gertzog noted that few women have chaired House standing committees and no woman has ever served in a top leadership position in the House.  

In North Dakota, committee chairs as well as committee vice chairs are almost always members of the majority party. Leadership positions on committees are selected in a manner similar to committee assignments. In the House, the Speaker of the House chooses committee leaders after consulting with the majority leader. In the Senate, the committee on committees has this responsibility.  

Between 1923 and 1969 four of North Dakota's women legislators chaired standing committees, two in the House and two in the Senate. Three of the four women were Republican. That Republican female committee chairs outnumbered Democratic female committee chairs is not surprising given the Republicans' total dominance of the legislature during the period.

The first woman to head a standing committee was Minnie Craig, appointed chair of the Banks and Banking Committee during her second session in the House. A banker

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Conference: Women in Legislative Leadership, by the Center for the American Woman and Politics (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, [1986]), 57.

94 Gertzog, 93, 139.
95 Omdahl, 62.
by occupation, Craig was a staunch supporter of the Bank of North Dakota who, from early in her legislative career, spoke out on banking issues.  

In 1925, the session in which she served as chair of Banking, Craig asked to head the Appropriations Committee, but was denied in favor of Frank Vogel. Apparently to compensate her for the denial, Speaker of the House B. C. Larkin promised Craig an appointment to the state Budget Board that fall. Because that appointment normally went to the chair of Appropriations, Larkin extracted a promise from Vogel that he would resign as chair of Appropriations in time to make way for Craig's appointment to that board. When the time came, a reluctant Vogel did resign and Craig was appointed to the Budget Board by the governor. Although Craig never chaired the Appropriations Committee, she felt that the honor was divided between her and Vogel in the 1925 session.  

Had Craig not been elected Speaker of the House in 1933, she would have been appointed chair of Appropriations, a committee on which she was considered nearly irreplaceable.

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96 "Benson County Legislator Boosts Bank of North Dakota," Nonpartisan Leader, [December 1922], Minnie Craig Scrapbook.

97 Craig autobiography, 30-49.

98 "Legislators Face Leadership Joust," in Bismarck Tribune, 31 December 1932, Minnie Craig Scrapbook.
Byrnhild Haugland was the second woman to chair a standing committee, in this case Public Welfare. First appointed chair in 1941, Haugland would head the House's social welfare committee for a total of twenty-three sessions. In at least one session, Haugland carried every bill dealing with social welfare onto the floor herself.  

The third and fourth women to head standing committees were Agnes Geelan, who chaired Labor Relations in the Senate in 1951, and Rosamund O'Brien, who chaired Social Welfare in 1955, also in the Senate. O'Brien also chaired a procedural committee, Enrolled and Engrossed Bills, for two sessions.

Two women, both Democrats, served in secondary leadership capacities on committees during this period. After chairing Social Welfare in the Senate in 1955, Rosamund O'Brien served as vice-chair in 1957. Anna Powers was appointed vice-chair of the Social Welfare Committee in the House in 1965. Powers would go on to serve as vice-chair of State and Federal Government in the 1970s.

Committee chairs are one level of the leadership hierarchy in the North Dakota legislature. In addition to committee chairs, each chamber has a presiding officer. In the House the Speaker of the House presides and in the Senate the lieutenant governor presides and is called president of the Senate. The Senate elects a president pro

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tempore to serve in the absence of the president of the Senate. The president pro tem is always a member of the majority party. 100 Each chamber also has a majority leader and a minority leader, an assistant majority leader and an assistant minority leader (also called "whips"), and a caucus leader for each party.

Minnie Craig was the only woman to serve in a leadership position other than committee chair or vice chair during the period 1923 to 1969. Craig's rise to leadership as Speaker of the House in 1933 was unprecedented in North Dakota and the nation. The significance of her appointment was not lost on her fellow House members. In placing Craig's name in nomination, H.F. Sweet declared:

We are making history today. . . . The candidate that I am about to mention is a woman. I believe, Mr. Chief Clerk, that never before in the history of this state, or so far as I know in the history of the United States--and very likely the history of the world--never before has a woman been accorded the honor of presiding over a legislative session. 101

The evening prior to the election of Speaker of the House, Nonpartisan League legislators, who controlled the House in 1933, had selected Craig as their candidate for the

100Omdahl, 58-9.

position. The League's selection of a woman for the speakership was thought "not such a radical step for them as it might appear, for they have a tradition of fairness to women." Apparently Craig's selection was not simply the result of the good graces of her fellow Nonpartisan League legislators. According to newspaper sources, Craig sought the position of Speaker and "did some clever political maneuvering to get the necessary indorsement [sic]." The morning following her endorsement by the League Minnie Craig was elected Speaker of the House by a unanimous vote.

The press was keenly interested in the first female Speaker of the House. Craig received requests for her photograph from newspapers in this country and in Europe, and articles about her appeared in such newspapers as the *Boston Sunday Globe*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the


106 Craig autobiography, 54.
New York Times. Articles noted this veteran legislator's impressive record in past sessions and the fact that she had the support of her House colleagues, one of whom was quoted as saying:

We can trust her. We know her to be absolutely honest, broad in vision and tolerant of other people's rights, sympathetic to needed reform and untiring in effort to achieve it. We are mindful of the fact that through her legislative experience and her happy disposition, through her voice and seasoned judgement, she has the attributes that go to make a successful speaker. We have chosen quality.

While noting her political background and legislative achievements, the press also commented extensively on her domestic qualities and physical appearance. A photograph of Craig doing the dishes (a photograph which, according to Craig, was taken at the press's request) appeared in several east coast newspapers. One of these newspapers described Craig as a woman who "can wield a gavel as well as she can wipe a dish." Another noted that the first woman to preside in two houses "does her own housework."

107 Minnie Craig Scrapbook, 17-18.
108 "Woman's Sagacity Wins Gavel."
109 Minnie Craig Scrapbook, handwritten note, 22.
110 Ibid., 17, 22, 32.
111 "Woman's Sagacity Wins Gavel."
The press also took note of her considerable musical ability, her love of gardening, and her reputation as "a capable homemaker, an excellent cook, a fine needlewoman and a pleasing hostess." Physical descriptions of Craig seldom failed to mention her lower jaw, which was said to be "firm" by one source and "determined" by another. From this latter source we also learn that Craig dressed neatly, "generally in dark colors and simple modes" and that she had black bobbed hair and wore glasses.

After some puzzlement, the question of how to address the House's female presiding officer was resolved and Craig was referred to as "Madame Speaker." According to the press, the leadership style of "Madame Speaker" was that of a school mistress and the atmosphere in the House in 1933 was that of a classroom. An editorial in the Ray Pioneer expressed sympathy for Craig for having "to hold that bunch of unruly 'school boys' in line." The editorial was accompanied by a cartoon picturing a slim Craig dressed in a


115"Maine Woman as Speaker."


117"TRUST IN SELF, SAYS SPEAKER."
sheath standing behind a desk and wielding a rolling pin. Her chin is more pointed than determined.\textsuperscript{118} The message of this image seems to be that in this particular era of women's participation in politics a female leader had to be seen in terms of "teacher" and "homemaker," two roles for women with which society was comfortable and familiar.

Minnie Craig revealed in her unpublished autobiography the frustrations and disappointments she experienced as Speaker of the House in 1933. A constant source of annoyance was Chief Clerk James Curran's habit of signing his name to engrossed bills where Craig's signature was supposed to go. Perhaps even more frustrating to Craig was the fact that she was never consulted or informed about procedural strategy. She felt she was treated like an outsider by male legislators whom she described as "so accustomed to 'running things,' they didn't want my point of view."\textsuperscript{119} Craig had come up against what others would refer to as the "old boys' club" or the "old boy network."

Another source of frustration for Craig was the lack of assistance she received from the Nonpartisan League floor leader, who was rarely in his seat and frequently absent from the chamber. An additional aggravation was the habit several members had of changing their votes after observing

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{118}"'Give It To 'em Minnie,'" \textit{Ray Pioneer}, [January 1933]. Minnie Craig Scrapbook.
\textsuperscript{119}Craig autobiography, 59-60.
\end{flushright}
the way she voted. All the above difficulties were compounded by the fact that the House met in 1933 in temporary, inadequate quarters in the Bismarck Municipal Auditorium because the capitol building had burned in late 1930.120

Minnie Craig announced in June of 1933 that she would not be seeking re-election to the legislature. A broken ankle and a new position as field worker for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration were presumably reasons for her retirement. In announcing her retirement, Craig expressed her appreciation for the cooperation and support she had received from men and women during her time in office. She added, however, the following observation:

After all, men don't like to follow a woman. They may appreciate her services, but they are much happier when those services are confined to a secretarial job, to routine work.121

In assessing Craig's role as Speaker of the House in the 1933 legislative session, political historian Larry Remele wrote:

Mrs. Craig persevered despite exclusion from strategy meetings of her own faction; her ability to overcome the obstacles contributed much to the success of the session, one which convened at the depths of the worst agricultural depression in state history and one which considered much remedial legislation of long lasting impact.122

120 Ibid., 58, 60-61.
121 "Minnie Craig No Candidate For Election," source unavailable, [June 1934]. Minnie Craig Scrapbook.
122 [Larry Remele], Minnie Craig Biography File, State
Twenty years passed before another woman was elected Speaker of the House in one of the United States. In 1953 Consuelo Northrup Bailey was elected Speaker of the Vermont House of Representatives. Fifty years passed before another woman was elected Speaker of the House in North Dakota. In 1983 Patricia "Tish" Kelly became the second woman to serve as Speaker of the North Dakota House of Representatives.

**Sponsored Legislation**

One of the major roles of a legislator is sponsoring legislation in the form of bills and resolutions. Sponsored legislation is considered a reliable indicator of a lawmaker's legislative priorities. These priorities, whether enacted or not, have an impact on the legislature as an institution by broadening views of what are legitimate issues for a legislative body to consider.

Archives and Historical Research Library, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck.


125 Gertzog, 161.

126 Sue Thomas, "The Impact of Women on State Legislative Policy," Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA,
Given the importance of legislative priorities to the legislative process, the following questions relative to the priorities of North Dakota's women legislators will be pursued. To what extent have North Dakota's women legislators sponsored legislation dealing with issues deemed to be peculiarly within the interest of their gender? To what extent have they expanded the scope of their legislation into policy areas not traditionally thought of as women's concern? And finally, have North Dakota's women legislators brought to the legislative agenda particular issues and concerns affecting women as a class by way of their sponsored legislation? If, as studies have concluded, "one type of power is bringing issues to the agenda that have been suppressed or overlooked,"\textsuperscript{127} the extent to which North Dakota's women legislators have introduced these issues and concerns is a measure of their impact on the institution.

The above questions will be addressed by analyzing the involvement of women legislators in sponsoring bills and resolutions during the thirty-five sessions covered by this study. Recognizing that overlapping will occur, bills and resolutions will be classified into one of three categories: (1) those addressing traditional female issues and concerns,\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item 1-4 September 1989, 14. \\
\item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 7.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
specifically, health, education, welfare, and children; (2) those addressing nontraditional issues and concerns, such as "manufacturing and trade, business and finance, agriculture, taxation, public works (and other matters that encourage horse trading for palpably parochial benefits), civil, criminal and constitutional law, and the appropriations process"; and (3) those addressing issues and concerns directly affecting women as a class in their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers and in their positions in the work place, in government, and in education and other institutions.

Women serving in the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1969 were involved 576 times in sponsoring legislation in the form of bills and resolutions. The actual number of bills and resolutions is less than this.

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128 Gertzog, 129-30.

129 The author acknowledges the contribution of Michelle A. Saint-Germain to the development of the categories outlined in this section. For a longitudinal analysis of bills proposed by legislators in the Arizona legislature, see Michelle A. Saint-Germain, "Does Their Difference Make A Difference? The Impact of Elected Women on Public Policy in Arizona," Social Science Quarterly 70, no. 4 (December 1989): 956-968.

130 For the content analysis of female legislative proposals, a brief title or description of each bill and resolution sponsored by a woman legislator was obtained from records held by the North Dakota Legislative Council. Proposals introduced between 1923 and 1941 were located in House and Senate journals. Those introduced beginning with the 1943 session have been entered on data base and were made available in computer printout form.
figure because some legislation was cosponsored by two or more women. Four hundred and eight (70 percent) of these 576 legislative sponsorships addressed issues and concerns traditionally viewed as male. Legislation in this category covered a wide range of subject matters, including, but not limited to, taxes, insurance, elections, weather modification, zoning, corrections, libraries, wages, labor relations, water projects, banking, fairs, and legislative procedures. Appropriation legislation often called for funding for construction, maintenance, and repair of public buildings. Legislation dealing with agriculture and agricultural products and public safety were commonly sponsored or cosponsored. Numerous pieces of legislation sought to regulate and license a wide variety of professions from chauffeurs and watchmakers to nurses and hairdressers.

One hundred and forty-eight (25 percent) of the legislative sponsorships made by women between 1923 and 1969 addressed issues of traditional interest—health, welfare, education, and children. Again, this legislation covered a wide range of subject matter.

Disease control and treatment, development and enhancement of medical programs and facilities, and extending health services to rural North Dakotans were some of the health issues addressed. Alcohol and drug abuse and treatment were the concern of many of the health related pieces of legislation. This long-standing concern was first addressed by a woman legislator in 1923 when Nellie
Dougherty sponsored a bill making it a misdemeanor to operate a motor vehicle while intoxicated and providing for a penalty and a bill relating to the sale and smoking of opium and the sale and use of other narcotics. Among the numerous pieces of legislation relating to the sale and use of tobacco was a bill prohibiting the sale of candy cigarettes.

Welfare related legislation provided for a wide range of public assistance programs, including aid to the blind, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled. Development and enhancement of special care facilities and the creation and governance of welfare agencies were addressed numerous times. Women legislators' consistent and intensive activity on the public welfare committee is evident in the level and depth of their legislative sponsorships in this area. This is particularly true of Brynhild Haugland, who had a part in writing the enabling legislation necessary to receive and implement all federally-funded public assistance programs in North Dakota for over fifty years.\footnote{Byrnhild Haugland, "Women Legislators History Project Survey," completed 18 May 1989. Held by author.}

Legislative sponsorships in the area of education dealt with, among other things, school buildings and lands, teacher contracts and certification, curriculum, special needs students, tuition, and school district reorganization. Closely linked were the many pieces of legislation
addressing other needs and concerns relating to children. Adoption, foster care, child abuse, juvenile court, day care, and runaways were commonly addressed, as was the issue of contributing to the delinquency of minors.

Eighteen (3 percent) of legislative sponsorships by women between 1923 and 1969 addressed the issues and concerns directly affecting women as a class in their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers and in their positions in the work place, in government, and in education and other institutions. The actual number of bills introduced in this category was eleven. Again, the explanation for the higher number of legislative sponsorships is that some pieces of legislation had more than one female sponsor.

Minnie Craig was the first woman to sponsor legislation in this category. In 1927 she sponsored a bill providing that married women could act as administrators and executors of estates and as guardians of children. In rising to explain her vote on this measure, Craig said:

In behalf of the married women of North Dakota, I feel it is my duty to thank the men of this House for their support of this measure. By their support and the passage of this measure, they will have assisted in bringing married women from "civil death" in the eyes of the law to "civil life." I vote "aye." 132

In 1937 Nellie Olson sponsored two bills which specifically addressed the status of women. The first was a bill to increase the dollar amount of mothers' pensions. The second bill provided for the selection of precinct committeewomen. In the 1940s Brynhild Haugland sponsored a bill providing for the selection of precinct, county, and state committeewomen.

During the 1950s Brynhild Haugland sponsored three bills addressing the interests and priorities of women within the family unit. The first two provided aid to mothers, in one case mothers with dependent children and in the other case unmarried mothers. The other expanded the residency rights of married women.

The 1960s saw women legislators sponsoring bills addressing the interests of women in the work place for the first time. In 1963 Anna Powers and Sybil Kelly co-sponsored a bill providing for equal pay for males and females for equal work. It was during the same year that Congress passed the federal Equal Pay Act. Until this time employers could pay women less than men for the same work without consequence. During the 1963 session Anna Powers sponsored a second bill affecting women as workers, this one relating to minimum wages and hours. In 1965 Powers sponsored an equal pay bill which added the concept of

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133 Hartmann, 53.
comparable worth. In 1967 five women cosponsored a bill equalizing women's rights and responsibilities to serve on juries.

The last bill sponsored by a woman legislator during this period which affected women as a class addressed the issue of abortion and was by far the most controversial. The bill, sponsored in 1969 by Aloha Eagles, provided for the liberalization of North Dakota's abortion law, which at the time permitted abortion only to save the life of the mother. Eagles was threatened for her sponsorship of this bill and was provided with police protection for a period of time during session. Eagles lists her work on "women's legislation," including abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, rape, and abuse, as her major accomplishment as a legislator.

Summary and Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion of the twenty women who served in the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1969, this brief collective profile emerges. Research indicates that North Dakota's first twenty female legislators tended to be married, to have no active child rearing responsibilities, and to be in their late forties.

134 "Abusive Phone Call To Fargo Solon Has Capitol in Uproar," Fargo Forum, 11 February 1969.
135 Eagles survey.
when first elected to the legislature. They were well educated for women of the time and frequently combined homemaking with other part-time or full-time employment. Employment outside the home tended to be in an occupation not ordinarily considered a "feminine" occupation, most notably farming, business, journalism or sales. The majority were elected from the eastern half of the state, were aligned with one of two factions of the Republican party, and were single-term legislators.

Not an ethnically diverse group, North Dakota's first women legislators were more often than not of Scandinavian or British Isles ancestry. They were predominantly Protestants, with Lutherans outnumbering all other Protestant denominations.

Though the majority of the first twenty women to serve in the legislature did not hold an elective office prior to becoming legislators, those who did served on a county or city school board or as county superintendent of schools. A majority were active in precinct, district, or state political party organizations prior to their legislative election and nearly half claimed family roots in electoral politics. They were members of partisan and nonpartisan political organizations as well as a wide range of other organizations.

Although North Dakota's first twenty female legislators held a wide variety of legislative interests, the interest they most commonly shared was education.
Interest in public welfare and particularly the welfare of women, children, and the elderly was also common. These interests were reflected in their committee assignments, with women being well represented on Education and Social Welfare. Women legislators were infrequently assigned to standing committees by tradition more likely to be assigned to men. After legislative reorganization in 1947, more female assignments were made to traditional male committees than in the earlier part of the period, with the most significant increase being in the number of women serving on Judiciary.

Four of the first twenty women to serve in the North Dakota legislature chaired standing committees. Two chaired committees traditionally considered "male" committees (Banking and Labor Relations) and two chaired a committee traditionally associated with women's concerns (Social Welfare). The lone woman to serve in a leadership position other than committee chair was Minnie Craig, who was elected Speaker of the House in 1933.

North Dakota's first twenty female legislators were involved 576 times in sponsoring bills and resolutions between 1923 and 1969. Seventy-one percent of these legislative sponsorships addressed nontraditional issues and concerns, while 26 percent addressed traditional. Only 3 percent addressed issues and concerns affecting women as a class. Few as they were, they represented the earliest attempts of North Dakota's women legislators to bring to the
legislative agenda particularly, if not uniquely, female issues.

This collective profile of the twenty women who served in the legislature during the first five decades after women's suffrage provides a base from which to explore the backgrounds and legislative careers of the women who followed them in the 1970s and 1980s. Though few in number, North Dakota's pioneer women lawmakers forged a place for themselves and later women in the world of legislative politics. Through their committee assignments and legislative sponsorships, they addressed and advanced a wide range of issues in both traditional and nontraditional domains. By the end of the period they had initiated nearly a dozen pieces of legislation addressing issues and concerns affecting women as a class.

Among their ranks were Minnie Craig, Brynhild Haugland, Agnes Geelan, and Rosamund O'Brien, who proved that women could secure and handle top legislative leadership positions. Craig, who reached the highest ranks of the legislative hierarchy only to find male colleagues unwilling to follow her direction, paved the way for future female leaders such as Agnes Geelan, who stated, "I didn't have to prove myself because of Minnie Craig." Each of the twenty women who served in the North Dakota legislature

136"Life of Hard Political Work."
between 1923 and 1969 made her mark by affirming with her very presence Eleanor Roosevelt's declaration that in the male world of politics, "Women are Here to Stay."\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{137}Roosevelt and Hickok, 221.
CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF "POLITICAL WOMAN": THE 1970S

The most important finding of this study is that political woman exists.\(^1\)

--Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, 1974

Since time immemorial, women have been drafted to fill low-paying jobs; consequently, it's surprising that there haven't been more women involved in North Dakota politics.... Oh, we have provided more than our share of workers in the field. Scores of women put their hands, feet, and minds to work to elect men to office, but rare are the times that women have reached that status. The year 1972 may mark a change in that situation. Thirty-two women ran for State office and twelve were elected to the Legislature. Considering that there are 153 legislators, twelve may not seem much of a breakthrough; but considering that in the past our maximum was five, breakthrough it is.\(^2\)

--Aloha Eagles, 1973

**Historical Background and Overview**

The emergence of women as a political force in the 1970s was an integral and important part of a dramatic shift in women's place in American life. A key element of the changing pattern of women's participation in politics was

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\(^{1}\)Kirkpatrick, 217.

the upsurge in the number of women seeking and winning elective office. As a result of the influence of the contemporary women's movement, the public increasingly accepted the idea of women in office, and women as a group came to see themselves as potential candidates and officeholders. Many of the women who sought public office in the wake of modern feminism attributed their growing political aspirations simply to individual decisions, not recognizing the role of the women's movement in raising public consciousness of women's right to such aspirations.

During the seventies women's total representation in federal, state, county, and local elective offices more than doubled. The number of women serving in state legislatures increased steadily during the period. The total number of women legislators serving in state legislatures in 1971 was three hundred and forty-four; by the 1979 session this number had risen to seven hundred and seventy. By the end of the decade women's overall representation in state legislatures had risen to above ten percent.

Even with the notable increase in the number of women officeholders during the 1970s, women remained vastly underrepresented in government bodies, including state

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3 Hartmann, 86-7.
4 Mandel, 13.
5 Ibid., 16-17.
legislatures. This fact led Jeane J. Kirkpatrick to conclude in her 1974 study of female legislators that "the most interesting question about women's political participation is why that role is so insignificant."\(^6\) In a profile of women officeholders published by the Center for the American Woman and Politics two years later, authors Marilyn Johnson and Kathy Stanwick continued to ask, "Why are women absent from political roles?"\(^7\)

As in 1923 through 1969, women's participation in the North Dakota legislature in the 1970s reflected dominant trends. As the number of women serving in state legislatures nationwide steadily increased throughout the decade, so did the number of women serving in the North Dakota legislature. In the 1971 session five women served in the legislature. During the next three sessions women lawmakers increased in number from thirteen in 1973 to sixteen in 1975 to nineteen in 1977. By the 1979 session twenty women served. In other words, women's representation in the legislature quadrupled during the period.

The total number of women serving in the North Dakota legislature in the 1970s was thirty-one. Of this group of women, five began their service prior to 1970 and twenty-six began their service during the seventies. The total number

\(^{6}\) Kirkpatrick, 3.

\(^{7}\) Johnson and Stanwick, xix.
of female legislators serving in the five decades prior to 1970 was twenty.

The 1972 election saw the greatest single increase in the number of women elected to the legislature; twelve women were elected, more than doubling the number gaining seats in 1970. This unprecedented increase in the number of women elected to North Dakota's legislature occurred the same year as the U.S. Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm of New York ran for the Democratic presidential nomination, and Republican Ann Armstrong became the first woman keynote speaker at a national convention of a major political party.  

The decade that brought a marked increase in women's representation in the legislature found North Dakota a modernized state continuing to deal with the boom-and-bust cycle in agriculture and other industries. The early 1970s saw record grain prices as well as high prices for land and machinery. This boom climate encouraged new and established farmers to build their operations. By the end of the decade, a decline in crop prices spelled a downswing for the rural economy. Energy industries boomed in the seventies. As energy companies changed the face of western North Dakota, North Dakotans debated their impact.

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8 Mandel, 115-116.
9 Remele, "North Dakota History," 40-41.
By the 1970s the Republican party's dominance of the state's political life had weakened. In 1960 a newly merged Democratic-NPL party succeeded in capturing the governorship, an office the party continued to hold throughout the seventies. In 1965 House Democrats outnumbered House Republicans for the first time. Control of the House reverted to the Republicans in 1967. Though overall control of the legislature remained in the hands of the Republicans during the seventies, the Democratic-NPL increasingly challenged that control. In the 1977 session there was an equal number of Democrats and Republicans in the House. Republican control of the Senate remained steadfast.

In the 1970s women legislators' party loyalties continued to reflect the dominant political culture. Whereas 85 percent of the women serving in the legislature between 1923 and 1969 were aligned with the Republican party, in the 1970s sixteen (or 62 percent) of the twenty-six beginning women legislators were Republicans. Democratic women, on the other hand, increased their numbers from three in the previous period to ten in the seventies. As a result of this tripling of their presence, they now made up 38 percent of all beginning women legislators. All but one of the five women whose service began before and

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10 Ibid., 39.
continued into the seventies were Republicans. Although Republican women legislators continued to outnumber their Democratic female colleagues, a shift in the pattern of party affiliation had occurred.

During the 1975 session Republican and Democratic women legislators formed a caucus, which according to the group's first chair, Stella Fritzell, was "'a place where women can discuss their interests and become knowledgeable without being partisan.'"\textsuperscript{11} Prior to 1975 female lawmakers had not met formally or informally as a group.\textsuperscript{12} Caucus member Corliss Mushik recalled:

> When we first started it, we did call regular meetings about every two weeks. We met in the upper balcony early in the morning and the attendance was not large. But people did visit regularly and informal coalitions were formed where women would share in the proposals and bills that interested them most.\textsuperscript{13}

According to Patricia "Tish" Kelly, who was a freshman legislator in 1975, the organization was "deliberately loose and unstructured, but it was a real serious effort to bring us together on issues we could agree on."\textsuperscript{14} The legislative


\textsuperscript{12}Corliss Mushik, taped interview with Corliss Mushik and Patricia "Tish" Kelly by author, 10 September 1990.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14}Patricia "Tish" Kelly, taped interview with Corliss Mushik and Patricia "Tish" Kelly by author, 10 September 1990.
women's caucus continued to meet informally every session through 1989.15

While some patterns, such as party affiliation, saw change in the seventies, others remained fairly stable. In keeping with tradition, women legislators remained concentrated in the House. Twenty-two (85 percent) of the twenty-six women who began their service in the seventies were elected to the House. Female House members had made up 90 percent of the women who served prior to 1970. All five of the women whose service began before and continued into the seventies sat in the House of Representatives. None of the women who served in the House between 1970 and 1979 sought and won a seat in the "upper" House.

Women elected from the eastern half of the state continued to outnumber the women elected from the west. Sixteen (62 percent) of the twenty-six women who began their service in the 1970s were elected from eastern counties (see figure 2) Seventy percent of the women serving prior to 1970 were from eastern North Dakota. Three of the five women whose service extended into the seventies were eastern North Dakotans. While no women from west of the Missouri River were elected to the legislator prior to 1970, two women from west river country were elected in the 1970s.

15Ibid.
Fig. 2. Post offices of women legislators serving in the 1970s.
(Base map: North Dakota Highway Department.)
They were Violetta LaGrave and Corliss Mushik, both of Mandan.

Looking at geographical representation from another angle reveals a change in pattern. While six (30 percent) of the twenty women serving between 1923 and 1969 were elected from the cities of Grand Forks, Minot, and Fargo, sixteen (or 61 percent) of the twenty-six women who began their service in the seventies were elected out of these cities plus Bismarck. Of these sixteen women, seven (44 percent) were elected from Grand Forks. Five were elected from Fargo.

Another change in pattern is apparent when number of terms of service is examined. While eleven (55 percent) of the women elected before 1970 served only one term, only eight (31 percent) of the women first elected in the seventies were one-term legislators. The largest increase was among those women serving between two and five terms, up over 17 percent. Women serving six or more terms saw an increase of nearly 7 percent from the previous period. An increase in career-minded ventures into politics in the wake of the contemporary women's movement is one explanation for this change in pattern.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^\text{16}\)Severson, 205.
Background Characteristics

The following discussion of background characteristics and legislative interests will focus on the twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the 1970s. The five women whose service began before and extended into the seventies will not be included in these two sections because their background characteristics and legislative interests were discussed previously. However, the focus will broaden in the sections on committee assignments, leadership positions, and sponsored legislation to include the five carry-over legislators. Their involvement and contributions in these areas were an integral part of the total picture of women's legislative service in the seventies. The discussion of where established patterns stayed fairly consistent and where they underwent appreciable change will continue throughout the remainder of the chapter.

As the press had taken note of the first women to win election to the North Dakota legislature, the influx of women seeking, winning, and taking legislative seats between late 1972 and early 1973 did not escape the attention of the contemporary press. After the November 1972 election, the Grand Forks Herald noted in an editorial that it was fifty years ago that month that Minnie Craig and Nellie Dougherty had become the first two women elected to the state's legislature. The editorial reported with a note of pride
that more women would be serving in North Dakota's legislature the coming year than in any other state.\textsuperscript{17}

The considerable interest on the part of the press in the personal as well as professional backgrounds of North Dakota's first women legislators was reflected in the press reaction to female legislative candidates seeking election in 1972. The Fargo Forum, for example, ran a lengthy article in October of 1972 about the Fargo-area female legislative candidates. While the article provided a wide range of information about these candidates, there was extensive discussion of familial and personal considerations such as provisions for the care of children, husbands, households, and pets during campaigns and legislative sessions and appropriate attire for female candidates and officeholders. Readers came away knowing among other things which women were comfortable wearing pants and which women hired outside help to assist with house cleaning and/or child care.\textsuperscript{18}

Once elected, the eleven women serving in the 1973 legislature, now recognized as "the largest group of women ever voted into the Legislature at one general election," continued to receive press attention. Given the personal nature of some of that attention, perhaps other

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Grand Forks Herald}, 26 November 1972, 4.

\textsuperscript{18} "Women in Politics," \textit{Fargo Forum}, 29 October 1972.
newly-elected female legislators agreed with Violetta LaGrave of Mandan who stated, "Actually, I wish we weren't news."

In a Fargo Forum article that appeared just prior to the 1974 election, female legislative candidates reported that they were better accepted in this campaign than in previous campaigns. Evidence of this, they felt, was a reduced interest in their families and what they wore and an increased interest in their stands on issues and their campaign strategies. Reflecting this shift in interest, the article profiling these 1974 legislative candidates made no reference to the women's families, clothing or hair styles, but covered extensively their efforts at campaign financing.

Age, Marital Status, and Number and Age of Children at Time of First Election to the Legislature

During the 1970s the median age of first-term women legislators saw little change from the previous period. While the median age of beginning women legislators was forty-eight between 1923 and 1969, the figure decreased only slightly, to forty-seven, during the seventies.


Where the age pattern did change after 1970 was in the age range of first-term women legislators. While three-fourths of the women who began their legislative service prior to 1970 were in their forties and fifties when first elected, first-term women legislators in their forties and fifties constituted only slightly over half of all first-term women legislators in the seventies. Increasing in number were women at both ends of the age spectrum. While no women in their twenties were elected to the legislature prior to 1970, two women in their twenties began their legislative service in the seventies. They were Rosie Black and Terry Irving, both of Grand Forks. While only one woman in her sixties was elected to the legislature prior to 1970, four women in their sixties began their service in the 1970s.

In addition to a broadening of the age range of first-term women legislators, the 1970s brought a change in the marital profile of beginning female lawmakers. While the percentage of married first-term women legislators remained high (70 percent prior to 1970 and 69 percent during the seventies), the percentage of single women decreased markedly (from 25 percent to 8 percent). A significant increase was seen in the number of widows gaining election (from 5 percent to 19 percent). The 1970s brought the first divorced woman to the legislature.

Pauline Benedict was the lone woman to enter the legislature by way of the "widow's route" during the
seventies. Her succession to her husband's legislative seat was under slightly different circumstances than those under which Rosamund O'Brien succeeded her husband, Harry O'Brien, during the previous period. George W. Benedict had served the third district in the House during the 1973 and 1975 sessions and had planned to seek re-election in 1976 when he died unexpectedly on June 3, 1976. His widow, Pauline, who had campaigned with him and had accompanied him to Bismarck during his two sessions in the legislature, had no plans to run for his seat. However, because she had worked so closely with her husband, supporters saw Benedict as a logical candidate and encouraged her to make a bid. Because of the encouragement, Benedict did seek and ultimately won election to the House in the fall of 1976. Benedict, who saw her service in the House as a way of carrying on her husband's work, was assigned to the same committees on which her husband had served. 21

While the percentage of first-term women legislators with no active child rearing responsibilities remained high in the seventies, the decade did see an increase in the percentage of beginning women lawmakers with one or more children under the age of eighteen. Prior to 1970 fifteen women legislators (75 percent of the total) either had no children or had only grown children. In the seventies

seventeen (65 percent) of the twenty-six beginning women legislators fit this category. The number of first-term women legislators with one or more children under the age of eighteen increased from five (25 percent of the total) to nine (35 percent of the total). For all five of the women with young children who served prior to 1970, their first term would be their last. In contrast, all but two of their counterparts in the seventies served two or more terms.

Whether it was manageable, appropriate, or even moral for a woman with young children to seek and serve in public office continued to be an issue in the 1970s. It was an issue for one-term senator Pamela Holand who, in making her first bid for a legislative seat in 1972, was advised not to picture her five young children in her campaign brochure. She did and, whether or not that decision affected the outcome of the election, she lost her bid.\(^2\) According to Holand, one of the special problems faced by women who are legislators and mothers is "coping with the guilt and stress associated with being in a nontraditional role."\(^3\) Rosie Black, who had three children under the age of four when she was first elected to the House in 1976, found that there were "some bad feelings from a few people about a woman who will leave a young family to serve, but for the most part,

\(^2\) "Women in Politics."

people were good about it."24 Perhaps Bonnie Heinrich, who had a thirteen year old child when she was first elected in 1977, best summed up the experience of women like herself when she wrote, "[women] who have younger children have real problems being legislators."25

That many women continued to delay political careers until their children were grown or well into their teens is evident from the comments of other women first elected to the North Dakota legislature in the 1970s. Shirley Lee, who had three grown children and a sixteen-year-old when she was first elected to the Senate in 1972, stated in an interview shortly after her first election that the unique role of women to influence and motivate their children was "a great opportunity not to be neglected." Women's advantage she concluded was that "later on in life when their children grow up, they have more spare time than men, who must earn a living." In the same article, Elynor Hendrickson noted that she had three grown children who had left home by the time she was first elected to the House in 1972. She recognized that "there is a time in life when a woman can become 'quite stagnant'" and that one answer for women at this stage in

life is "they can run for office."\textsuperscript{26} Ruth Meiers, first elected in 1974, was another woman who delayed her entry into politics until her children, in this case six sons, were grown. Meiers, for whom service in the legislature was a stepping stone to becoming North Dakota's first woman lieutenant governor, was quoted as saying, "I don't think I'd have been elected to the Legislature if my children hadn't have been grown." However, she saw this pattern changing for young women seeking and winning political office in the 1980s. She hoped that she had played a part in bringing about that change.\textsuperscript{27} Most, if not all, would agree that she had.

\textbf{Occupation When First Elected to the Legislature and Educational Background}

The occupational profile of beginning women legislators was yet another area which underwent change in the 1970s. Whereas a significant majority of the women elected to the North Dakota legislature prior to 1970 were employed outside the home and in occupations generally considered nontraditional, the 1970s brought a marked increase in the number of full-time homemakers and of women employed in traditional occupations within the ranks of

\textsuperscript{26}Dvorak.

\textsuperscript{27}Mike Dorsher, "Ruth Meiers' Last Interview: Historic North Dakotan talks about politics and fatal fight with cancer," \textit{Bismarck Tribune}, 22 March 1987.
first-term female legislators. The number of full-time homemakers increased from four prior to 1970 to nine in the seventies. In Burness Reed's bid for a legislative seat in 1972, she ran as a housewife and homemaker out of the belief that "that group is currently under-represented in Bismarck." Upon their first election, none of the women who served between 1923 and 1969 were teaching school or working in a health-related field. In contrast, seven women beginning their legislative service in the 1970s were engaged in one of these two fields. The number of women working as secretaries remained fairly constant (one prior to 1970 and two in the seventies).

The seventies saw a corresponding decline in the number of incoming women legislators employed in nontraditional occupations. For example, the number of women engaged in either farming or journalism decreased from nine to three. Of the other nontraditional occupations represented by one or more pioneer women legislators—banking, insurance, and sales—only sales continued to be represented in the 1970s.

In addition to the above change, the occupational profile of women beginning their legislative service in the 1970s broadened to include retired women (Marjorie Kermott and Stella Fritzell) and a female student (Terry Irving).

Though no lawyers were among the women who began their legislative service in the seventies, Terry Irving was a law student when she was elected in 1973.

As in the period prior to 1970, the women beginning their legislative service in the seventies ranged broadly in educational background. Furthermore, they continued the primary educational pattern which was the predominance of post-high school education. Change did occur, however, in the number of women aggregated at some educational levels. While seven women who served between 1923 and 1969 attended or completed high school and two had some college, two women who became legislators in the seventies had a high school education and eleven had some college. The number of college graduates among first-term women legislators increased slightly (eleven prior to 1970 and thirteen in the 1970s). Where the greatest change occurred was in the number of female legislators with graduate degrees. While only one woman with a graduate degree served prior to 1970, during the seventies four first-term women lawmakers had or were earning graduate degrees. The number of women with some graduate work decreased slightly (three prior to 1970 and two during the seventies). The rise in the educational level of beginning women legislators during the seventies corresponded with an increase in the educational level of the entire population.
Ethnic Background and Religious Preference

The 1970s saw a shift in the ethnic makeup of first-term women legislators. While nine (53 percent) of the seventeen women who served in the North Dakota legislature prior to 1970 and who can be identified in terms of ethnic background claimed one or more parents of Scandinavian ancestry, their counterparts among the twenty-six women first elected in the seventies numbered eleven (42 percent), showing a decline of 11 percent. Gaining in representation were women of British Isles ancestry (up 17 percent to 58 percent of the total) and of German descent (up 11 percent to 35 percent of the total). The 1970s brought the election of two women who were Germans from Russia as well as women from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds, including French, Dutch, Czech or Bohemian, and Italian. Also elected was a woman who was part Native American. The broad ethnic diversity of the state's population as a whole was reflected to a greater extent in the women entering legislative service in the seventies than in the women elected in the previous five decades.

While the ethnic makeup of beginning women legislators shifted and broadened during the seventies, its related biographical variable, religious preference, saw little change. Protestants still outnumbered members of any other religious groups and Lutheranism continued to be the best represented Protestant denomination. While seventeen (65 percent) of the twenty-six of the women beginning their
legislative service in the seventies were Protestants, only four (15 percent) were Catholics. Of the remaining women, one identified herself as a Christian, one indicated her religious preference to be Reform Judiaism, and two indicated no religious preference.

Family Political Connections and Prior Political Experience

While family political connections and prior political experience continued to be important to would-be women legislators in the seventies, several significant changes had occurred in this particular pattern. During the five decades prior to 1970, eight (40 percent) of the twenty women who served in the legislature held prior elective office, almost exclusively as school board members or in the position of county superintendent of schools. In contrast, only two (8 percent) of the twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the seventies held an elective office prior to their election to the legislature. These women were Stella Fritzell, who had served on the Grand Forks park board, and Florenz Bjornson, who had served on the West Fargo school board. Prior office holding, particularly at the school district level, though a common and predictable stepping stone to the legislature for would-be women lawmakers prior to 1970, was a route few women took to the legislature in the seventies.

Two of the twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the seventies took advantage of a
rare and unusual elective opportunity which ultimately led each of them to run for the legislature. Stella Fritzell and Elynor Hendrickson were delegates to the State Constitutional Convention, which met for thirty days in January and February of 1972 to draft a revised state constitution. After the proposed revised constitution was turned down by voters on April 28, 1972, both Fritzell and Hendrickson decided to become legislative candidates. For Fritzell the failure of the revised constitution meant the defeat of a series of environmental protection provisions for which she had fought. Seeking an opportunity to continue to work for these provisions, Fritzell ran for the Senate in the fall of 1972 and won. Hendrickson sought election to the House the same fall in hopes of being "able to work for the implementation of 'the many sections of the proposed constitution which were designed to improve the operation of our state government and the welfare and rights of our citizens.'"

Although she was not a delegate to the convention, Pamela Holand attended many of the meetings and was


31"Republican ticket includes incumbents, newcomers."
disappointed when the proposed constitution was rejected. Motivated to work for the passage of recommendations made in the constitution, Holand also ran for the legislature in the fall of 1972. Defeated in that election, she ran again in 1974 and won.\(^{32}\)

Like the women who served in the legislature in the five decades prior to 1970, the twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the 1970s were active in precinct, district, and/or state party politics prior to their election to the legislature. Over 65 percent of these women served on campaign committees and as general party workers before becoming legislative candidates themselves. Perhaps other female legislators can recall as Dayle Dietz did, "phoning, baking cookies, decorating for banquets, going door-to-door, making signs, etc." on behalf of other candidates before making her own bid for the legislature.\(^{33}\)

Among other things they stuffed envelopes and solicited funds, opened their homes to tours, attended state political conventions, and worked at the polls. Not nearly as many women were involved in leadership positions as were serving as general party workers. Only half as many beginning women legislators (35 percent) were elected or appointed to political party leadership positions such as state,

\(^{32}\)Holand survey.

district, and precinct chairwoman and vice-chairwoman, district secretary and treasurer, and national political convention delegate.

At least a third of the women who would begin their legislative service in the seventies joined and served in district and state political party women's organizations prior to running for the legislature. Such women's organizations had also provided a political outlet for the women who served before them. In addition, a number of the women beginning their service in the 1970s took advantage of outlets that were either not available to or not sought by would-be women legislators in previous decades. One of these outlets was political organizations formed and led by young people. At age eleven, future House member Cheryl Watkins formed a teenage Republican group in her community in Minnesota.\textsuperscript{34} Future senator Shirley Lee was active in the Burleigh County Young Republicans and Rosie Black was involved in the young Republicans' organization in Grand Forks.\textsuperscript{35}

Another outlet was paid employment on the staff of an elected official serving in state or federal government or the staff of the legislature. Among the women to gain

\textsuperscript{34}Cheryl Watkins, "Women Legislators History Project Survey," completed 12 October 1989. Held by author.

political know-how and experience via this route were Corliss Mushik, LuGale Backlin, Terry Irving, and Patricia "Tish" Kelly. More than a decade before she made her first bid for the legislature in 1966, Corliss Mushik worked for the legislature as a stenographer. Later she served as secretary to long-time political leader Arthur A. Link when he was Speaker of the House and then House minority leader.\footnote{Lucille Hendrickson, "Newest Woman Legislator Looks at Both Sides," \textit{Bismarck Tribune}, 1 February 1971.} LuGale Backlin served as a committee clerk during the 1969 and 1971 sessions before her bid for a House seat in 1972.\footnote{Judy Johnson, "Former GOP Solon Committee Clerk," \textit{Grand Forks Herald}, 27 March 1975.} Terry Irving was a legislative intern in the 1973 session.\footnote{"Link supports Irving candidacy," \textit{Grand Forks Herald}, 30 November 1973.} She was subsequently elected to the House of Representatives in a special election held in December of 1973. Patricia "Tish" Kelly was a staff person for two congressmen before moving to North Dakota and ultimately running for the legislature.\footnote{Patricia "Tish" Kelly, "Women Legislators History Project Survey," completed 18 April 1989. Held by author.}

Like a majority of the women who served in the legislature prior to the 1970s, half of the women who entered the legislature in the seventies claimed family roots in electoral politics. The most common family link
was to have had a father or a husband who had served in public office at some time prior to the woman's legislative service. Occasionally it was a grandfather, an uncle, or father-in-law who was the former officeholder. Included in this group of male relatives were state's attorneys, school board members, city council members, a county commissioner, a register of deeds, a mayor, and a lieutenant governor.

While four women legislators who began their service prior to 1970s had an immediate family member or an in-law who preceded them in the legislature, seven women who entered the legislature in the seventies could make this claim. Shirley Lee, Carolyn Houmann, and Ruth Meiers had fathers who served before them in the legislature. Meiers, whose first session was in 1975, took her place in the House "20 years to the day after her father finished his 22-year-career in the Legislature." Janet Wentz and Pamela Holand both had in-laws who served in the state legislature. Jean Herman's husband served five terms in the legislature before her first session in 1977 and Pauline Benedict succeeded her deceased husband in the same session.

The sense of inherited political interest and activism demonstrated by several of the women who served in the legislature prior to the 1970s was evident in a number of the women who succeeded them in the seventies. Among these

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40 Dorsher, "Ruth Meiers' Last Interview."
women was Terry Irving who at the age of four stuffed envelopes for Harry Truman with her parents. Violetta LaGrave shared her father's, her husband's, and her son's interest in politics, a pursuit she referred to as "the love of our families." Ruth Meiers recalled of her growing up years, "'We literally had politics at the table with our bread and butter.'" Meiers, who said having had a father in the Senate "'probably had something to do with why I ran for the House,'" remembered visiting her father in the Capitol as a child and "'being impressed that Brynhild Haugland was the only woman in the House.'" Perhaps it was part of her political inheritance that as an adult she would become one of Haugland's colleagues in the House.

Organizational Affiliations

Like the women who preceded them, the twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the seventies were active in a broad range of organizations, including political, professional, public service and public affairs, religious, farm, social and cultural, fraternal and


patriotic. The professional organizations of which they were members, the North Dakota Nurses Association, American Agri-women, and the North Dakota Association of Realtors, to mention a few, reflected the occupational profile of this group of women. Nearly three-quarters of these women were active in four or more organizations upon their initial election to the legislature.

The most striking feature of the organizational profile of this group of women was the frequency with which they listed the League of Women Voters in their active memberships and the credit they consistently gave the League for preparing and motivating them to seek legislative office. Over a quarter of the twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the seventies were active in the League of Women Voters when they decided to make a bid for the legislature. Among these women was Corliss Mushik, whose interest in politics and government as well as specific issues was spawned by the League. Mushik held several positions of responsibility in the League, including legislative lobbyist, before resigning from leadership in that organization to seek a place in the partisan world of legislative politics. Armed with a confidence in herself gained in part from her League experience, Mushik ran unsuccessfully in 1966 and 1968 as a "forlorn hope

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candidate in a district where few believed a woman candidate could win. In 1970, on her third attempt, Mushik did win.46

Her affiliation with the League of Women Voters and with her church women's group played a role in Janet Wentz's decision to run for the legislature. During the 1973 session Wentz traveled to Bismarck to lobby as a member of the League of Women Voters on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment. Despite her efforts, all the Minot Republican legislators whom she had lobbied voted against the amendment and it lost by one vote. Sometime later, at a meeting of her church women's group, she relayed the story of her unsuccessful lobbying effort spontaneously adding, "I'm as smart as those men down there." "You sure are," responded a friend. According to Wentz, this gesture of support in particular and the women's movement in general were the impetus for her seeking a legislative seat.47

Among the other women to take the League of Women Voters route to the legislature in the 1970s were Elynor Hendrickson and Pamela Holand. An interim step for both of them was the State Constitutional Convention. While Hendrickson, an active League member, attended as a


delegate, Holand observed the proceedings as a member of the North Dakota League of Women Voters, which studied the convention as one of its official projects.

Legislative Interests

Following in the footsteps of the women they succeeded, the new crop of female legislators in the 1970s were particularly interested in education. Over half declared education to be among their top legislative interests. Among the educational programs these beginning women legislators came prepared to support were public kindergarten and public television. Perhaps Kay Cann best expressed the enthusiasm of this group of women for education when she said during her first legislative campaign in 1972, "Education is the answer to everything. . . . I would get on all the education committees I can." 48

The welfare of people, a common interest among North Dakota's early women legislators, continued to be a central issue for female legislators after 1970. When Ruth Meiers said in a 1977 interview, "'I'm very concerned about the needs of people,'" 49 she spoke for a majority of the women who began their legislative service in the 1970s. Beginning women lawmakers expressed concern for the welfare of specific groups of people, including women, children, the

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48 "Women in Politics."

49 Andrist, "Little Done for People".
elderly, Native Americans, and the underprivileged or, in the words of Representative Janet Wentz, "those in society who have the least power." For some of these women, concern for the welfare of women extended to concern for their rights and support for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Beginning women legislators also demonstrated an active interest in the rights of other groups of people, including workers, consumers, children, and senior citizens.

Like their predecessors, the women who began their legislative service in the 1970s were interested in a variety of health care, legal, economic, and agricultural issues. More women expressed an interest in environmental issues than in the previous period. This shift is understandable given the marked increase in energy development in the seventies and the corresponding increase in concern over its impact. Among the beginning female legislators with an avowed interest in the environment were Stella Fritzell and Kay Cann. Fritzell, who was consistently described as the legislature's top environmentalist during her tenure, declared exploitation of natural resources to be her biggest concern from the time of her first bid for a Senate seat in 1972. Cann, also an

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50 Wentz survey.

51 Chuck Haga, "18th District Senate Candidates Include Longtime Vets," Grand Forks Herald, 23 October 1972.
outspoken environmentalist, stated in her 1974 legislative campaign, "'I grew up in northern Minnesota and watched the mining companies rape the range. I would like to have a part in seeing that this does not happen in North Dakota.'"  

Committee Assignments

The two most notable features of women's service on standing committees in the first three decades of women's participation in the North Dakota legislature were the heavy concentration of women on committees dealing with education, health, and welfare and the relative absence of women on committees dealing with appropriations, taxation, agriculture, and other policy areas traditionally defined as male. A shift in this pattern began to develop, however, after legislative reorganization in 1947. Though women's representation remained low on Appropriations, Agriculture, and Finance and Taxation, the overall percentage of their assignments to several other traditional male committees increased in the fifties and sixties. While this shift was occurring, women continued to be assigned consistently to education and social welfare committees.

A survey of the collective committee assignments of the thirty-one women who served in the legislature in the

1970s shows a shift in the pattern of women's representation on traditional female committees, specifically, a decline in the representation of women on Education. Whereas 80 percent of those women serving between 1923 and 1946 and 73 percent of those serving between 1947 and 1969 were seated on Education, only 26 percent (or eight) of the women serving in the seventies were assigned to this committee. Even with this decrease in female representation, Education was the fourth most frequently assigned of the twelve standing committees.

At least one woman denied placement on Education during the decade was newcomer Bonnie Miller Heinrich. Upon her first election to the legislature in 1977, Heinrich, a former teacher and a former lobbyist for the North Dakota Education Association, requested assignment to the Senate education committee. When the Republican majority denied her request, Heinrich expressed her displeasure and fellow Democrats called the move an attempt to "spike a promising career." Republicans said the denial was necessary to achieve geographic balance on the committee. Regardless of the explanation, this is a concrete example of a committee request not being honored, but more importantly, it is an example of one woman's willingness to put herself at "the center of a scrap over committee assignments."^53

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While the percentage of women legislators assigned to Education declined appreciably in the 1970s, women's representation on other traditional female committees varied only slightly. Whereas 55 percent of the women serving in the legislature between 1947 and 1969 were assigned to the social welfare committee, 52 percent of those serving between 1970 and 1979 were assigned to this committee. Regardless of this insignificant decline, the social welfare committee was the one most frequently assigned to women during the decade. Women's representation on Political Subdivisions improved incrementally during the seventies. Whereas three (27 percent) of the women who served in the legislature between 1947 and 1969 were seated on this committee, nine (29 percent) of their colleagues received similar assignments during the following decade.

The shift toward higher representation by women on traditional male committees that began between 1947 and 1969 continued during the seventies. With ten women (32 percent of the total) assigned to Judiciary during the decade, it continued to be the traditional male committee most frequently assigned to female legislators. State and Federal Government maintained its place as the second most frequently assigned "male" committee with seven women (23 percent of the total) assigned to it between 1970 and 1979.

Committees with the lowest representation by women between 1947 and 1969 continued to be those with the lowest in the 1970s. However, even these committees saw some
increase in the number of women assigned to them. Committees to which only one or two women were assigned in the fifties and sixties (Appropriations, Natural Resources, Transportation, Agriculture, Industry and Business, and Finance and Taxation) were assigned to between two and six women in the following decade. The lowest representation was on Transportation, with two women assigned, and Agriculture and Finance and Taxation, with three women each. Slightly higher gains were made in the representation of women on Appropriations, Natural Resources, and Industry, Business, and Labor, with four, five, and six women assigned to these committees respectively. The increase in women on Natural Resources is likely to be linked to the heightened interest of women legislators in resources development and environmental protection. Increased representation by women on Industry, Business, and Labor may be attributed to the reorganization of that committee in the early seventies to include labor. Labor Relations was one of the committees that gained in female representation during the previous period.

The increased representation by women on Appropriations, a committee often prefaced with such words as "weighty" and "powerful," did not go unnoticed by male legislative colleagues. According to Corliss Mushik, when she and fellow newcomer, Aloha Eagles, were first appointed to House Appropriations in 1975, they were "patronized and spoon-fed for a few weeks" by male committee members. In
the process of challenging this attitude, the women, in Mushik's words, "revealed that females can have a firm inner core," and that, in general, they "are far less prone to depend on the back scratching system." Mushik requested and received appointment to Appropriations after experiencing the frustration of seeing that committee kill bills approved in her two previous committee assignments, Education and Social Welfare. Mushik, a Democrat, and Eagles, a Republican, both came to Appropriations with a demonstrated interest in "people issues." This propensity often earned them the title "bleeding hearts" and led to at least one eulogy on the House floor about their "hearts of gold." Mushik and Eagles, who served on House Appropriations during the 1975, 1977, and 1979 sessions, were joined by Patricia "Tish" Kelly, a Democrat, during the 1977 session, when an equal number of Republicans and Democrats served in the House. Kelly lost her seat on Appropriations when Republicans gained control of the House in 1979. She was placed, however, on the "important House Finance and Taxation Committee."

54 Mushik survey.
Until 1979 the few women who had been appointed to Appropriations all served in the House of Representatives. The 1979 session saw the first woman assigned to Senate Appropriations, referred to in the press at the time as "the most exclusive committee of the most exclusive men's club in the state." The woman was Stella Fritzell, and the reason she received the assignment was, in her words,"'I asked for it.'" In addition to wanting to be involved in economic issues, Fritzell sought the move to Appropriations because she felt that her reputation as an ardent environmentalist had weakened her position on Natural Resources, her committee of choice for the preceding three sessions. In surrendering her position on Natural Resources, Fritzell remarked, "'Whenever you get labeled, you lose your effectiveness.'"\(^5\^8\)

The only standing committee on which no women served during the seventies was Joint Constitutional Revision. This committee, which is comprised of members from both houses, was not established until 1977.

The development of female committee assignments is illustrated in table 3. The increase in the number of women serving in the North Dakota legislature in the seventies over the number serving in the two earlier time periods

accounts for the greater number of total committee assignments. As the table indicates, however, this increase had little effect on the proportion of assignments to traditional female and traditional male committees. The shift toward greater representation by women on "male" committees that occurred between 1947 and 1969 clearly continued in the seventies. The result of this shift was that by the end of the sixth decade of their service in the North Dakota legislature, women were as likely to be addressing nontraditional policy domains by virtue of their committee assignments as they were traditional.

Table 3.--Committee assignments, 1923-1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period &amp; (total N of assignments)</th>
<th>N &amp; (%) to trad. female</th>
<th>N &amp; (%) to trad. male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-1946 (52)</td>
<td>37 (71)</td>
<td>15 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-1969 (35)</td>
<td>16 (46)</td>
<td>19 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1979 (73)</td>
<td>33 (45)</td>
<td>40 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
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Committee Chairs and Other Leadership Positions

In the five decades prior to 1970, four of North Dakota's women legislators chaired standing committees and two served as vice chairs. Only one woman, Minnie Craig, was selected for a leadership position other than committee chair or vice chair. In this case, the exception to the rule was a notable one in that Craig was elected to the highest position in the House. While gains were made in the
1970s, the pattern of underrepresentation of women in legislative leadership positions continued.

Between 1970 and 1979 only one woman, Brynhild Haugland, a House Republican, chaired a standing committee. She served as chair of the social welfare committee throughout the decade, including the 1977 session when Republicans and Democrats shared control of the House.

Women legislators faired better in attaining secondary leadership positions on standing committees. Eight women served as vice chairs during the seventies, six in the House and two in the Senate. One woman, Fern Lee, served as vice chair of two committees during the decade, bringing the actual number of positions held to nine. Seven out of eight of the female vice chairs were Republicans. The lone Democrat, Anna Powers, was vice chair of State and Federal Government during the 1977 session when Democrats had an equal say with Republicans. The other women to serve as vice chairs were Grace Stone (House Judiciary in 1971 and 1973), Aloha Eagles (House Social Welfare in 1971 and 1973), Fern Lee (House Political Subdivisions in 1975 and House State and Federal Government in 1979), Shirley Lee (Senate Natural Resources in 1975, 1977, and 1979), Stella Fritzell (Senate Industry, Business, and Labor in 1977), Alice Olson (House Social Welfare in 1977 and 1979), and Rosie Black (House Political Subdivisions in 1979).

Three women served in leadership positions other than committee chair or vice chair during the seventies, one as
assistant minority leader in the House, one as Democratic
caucus chair in the House, and one was Democratic caucus
chair in the Senate. Each was the first woman to serve in
that capacity in the North Dakota legislature. All were
Democrats.

When Corliss Mushik was serving her first term as
assistant minority leader in the House in 1977, she was
referred to in the press as "a bulwark of the Democratic
party in the North Dakota House." She would go on to
serve as the second in command of the Democratic minority in
the House for another two sessions. Gaining the confidence
of fellow House Democrats and being selected as one of their
floor leaders were particularly rewarding experiences for
this Mandan legislator.

Terry Irving of Grand Forks was a freshman legislator
when she was selected by House Democrats as their caucus
chair during the legislative presession in December of 1975.
At the time, Irving credited her successful bid for the
position to the fact that she was a woman and from a larger
city, two qualities she believed caucus members were looking
for in a candidate that session. In retrospect, Irving

60 Mushik survey.
thought her election as House Democratic caucus chair her major accomplishment as a legislator. When Bonnie Miller Heinrich was selected by Senate Democrats as their caucus leader in December of 1978, she had just been elected to her second term in the legislature.

While seniority and party affiliation are important factors when legislative leadership positions are being vied for, gender has been named by some as another contributing factor. As was discussed in the previous chapter, researchers, among them Jeane Kirkpatrick and Irene Diamond, have observed a preponderance of men in the top leadership positions in legislative bodies. The "old boys' club," experienced if not named by early female legislative leader Minnie Craig, was still alive and well in the 1970s according to some of the women who served during the decade. At the time of the 1984 election when her name was on the ballot for lieutenant governor, Ruth Meiers recalled that when she was a rookie legislator in the 1970s the "'old boys' club was very strong, very definite.'" According to Corliss Mushik in a 1979 interview, it was a club to which women did not belong. Rosie Black found not fitting in

64 Vogel, "Local legislator is a fighter."
with the "old boys' and "young turks" an isolating experience. Among the other problems reported by women legislators were a lack of respect from some male colleagues, a sense of either not being heard or not being taken seriously, a lack of understanding of the "undercurrents" and "power plays" familiar to male legislators, and the bewilderment of being so outnumbered by men. One female legislator recalled that the most difficult thing about her one term in the House was "working around arrogant, obnoxious, sexist creeps with no sense of humor." Coupled with these problems was what Joann McCaffery, who served a single term in 1977, described as women's tendency to "hold a 'minority attitude' toward themselves and other women" demonstrated when they "lack

65 Black survey.


71 Irving survey.
self confidence and independent faith in their own abilities." McCaffrey's opinion was echoed by fellow House member Janet Wentz, when she wrote:

Our strengths are also our weaknesses. We lack self confidence. We are too polite. We are not assertive enough. We are hung up on being fair. All of these things put us at a disadvantage in a male system and politics is so male--so much the "old boy" network.

**Sponsored Legislation**

While the twenty women serving in the North Dakota legislature in the five decades prior to 1970 were involved 576 times in sponsoring bills and resolutions, the thirty-one women serving in the 1970s were involved in 738 such sponsorships. Two reasons for the higher rate of legislative sponsorships in the latter period were the significant increase in the number of women serving and the greater proportion of these women serving multiple terms. As was explained in the previous chapter, legislative sponsorships outnumbered actual pieces of legislation because many of the latter were sponsored by more than one woman.

The vast majority (71 percent) of legislative sponsorships made by women between 1923 and 1969 addressed issues and concerns conventionally viewed as male, while

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73 Wentz survey.
only slightly over one-fourth (26 percent) addressed traditional women's issues and concerns and just 3 percent spoke to issues and concerns affecting women as a class. While the number of sponsorships in the first category remained high in the 1970s (460 or 62 percent of the total), the overall proportion decreased nine percentage points. In turn, the number of sponsorships in the categories of traditional women's issues and women's class issues rose to 225 (31 percent of the total) and fifty-three (7 percent of the total), respectively.

As in the previous period, the legislation sponsored by female lawmakers in the seventies in nontraditional or "male" policy areas covered a wide range of subject matters, with agriculture, election and campaign reform, licensing, taxes, legislative reform, banking, and insurance continuing to be among the most regularly addressed concerns. Women legislators demonstrated their interest in the rights of senior citizens, consumers, mobile home owners, and other groups through their sponsorship of bills designed to prohibit discrimination and extend protection. Concern for animal rights was expressed through a variety of bills, including one that defined rare and endangered animals and another that required that vehicles hauling live animals in the winter be covered. Women legislators' heightened interest in the environment was reflected in a number of bills, including one requiring all beverage containers to be recyclable and another requiring permits for and
environmental impact statements from persons engaged in activities significantly affecting environmental quality. The attention of female lawmakers was also turned to energy development and its corresponding impact. Female sponsored legislation addressing these issues sought, among other things, to provide for a coal development impact aid program, enforce surface mine reclamation, limit the construction and operation of nuclear energy conversion facilities in the state, and create a natural resources council.

Equally diverse was the legislation sponsored by female lawmakers in the seventies addressing those issues traditionally viewed as women's concerns—health, welfare, education, and children. While a broad range of health concerns were addressed, one of the areas that received considerable attention was drug and alcohol abuse, prevention, treatment, and education. The growing attention and sensitivity to rights issues surfaced in several pieces of female-sponsored legislation, including a bill requiring designated nonsmoking areas in public buildings and another calling for the study of the rights of nursing home residents.

Welfare legislation considered a wide range of needs of the elderly, the handicapped, the disabled, and the poor. Women legislators sponsored proposals for a number of studies in this area that had far-reaching goals and implications. Among these were a study to determine the
feasibility and potential benefits of establishing a department of human services, a study of the implementation of laws requiring public buildings and facilities to be accessible and usable for the physically handicapped, and a study relating to welfare of the state's senior citizens in terms of housing, nutrition, education, and employment.

Legislation sponsored by women lawmakers dealing with education addressed a multitude of concerns relating to students, teachers, administrators, curriculum, and facilities. Authorizing the North Dakota Educational Broadcasting Council to contract with noncommercial public television and radio stations and giving the state's school districts the authority to establish free public kindergarten were among the educational issues championed by women legislators in the seventies. Female-sponsored legislation relating to school curriculum sought to integrate consumer, environmental, and Indian education into the established course of study in public schools. The numerous pieces of legislation sponsored by women legislators addressing the needs of children beyond their education dealt with a variety of issues relating to the rights and the protection of minors. Prevention of drug and alcohol abuse by youths was the goal of many of these bills.

While only 7 percent of legislative sponsorships made by North Dakota's women lawmakers in the seventies addressed issues and concerns affecting women as a class in their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers and in their
positions in the work place, in government, and in education and other institutions, this figure represents a notable increase from the previous period. In the five decades prior to 1970, women legislators were involved eighteen times in sponsoring legislation in this category. The actual number of pieces of legislation was eleven. In the succeeding decade, women legislators were involved fifty-three times in sponsoring such legislation. In this case, the actual number of bills and resolutions was thirty. Regardless of which measure is used, the figures show that issues and concerns affecting women as a class were addressed nearly three times as often by women legislators in the seventies than in the previous five decades.

With the increase in the number of sponsorships and actual pieces of legislation in this area came an expansion in the issues they addressed. This phenomenon occurred not only in North Dakota, but in legislative bodies nation-wide in the 1970s as "the women's movement focused public attention on a host of new issues, including rape, wife beating, sexual harassment, child care, and displaced homemakers." According to historian Susan M. Hartmann, by the end of the decade, the women's movement and its allies had worked "a modest revolution in public policy."74

74 Hartmann, 99, 127.
Nineteen of the thirty pieces of legislation affecting women as a class sponsored by North Dakota's women lawmakers in the seventies addressed issues and concerns of women in their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers. Thirteen or two-thirds of these focused on improving the legal status of women in marriage, at widowhood, and at divorce. These bills and resolutions sought a variety of reforms relating to domicile, property, alimony, child support, inheritance, insurance, and domestic violence. A half a dozen pieces of legislation addressed the issue of abortion.

Legislation addressing the legal status of women in marriage sought to discard remnants of English common law that viewed wives as nonpersons and to reinforce the concept of marriage as an equal partnership. A prime example of a lingering inequity in marriage law was addressed by Jean Herman, Rosie Black, and Aloha Eagles in 1979 when they sponsored a bill to repeal that section of North Dakota Century Code designating the husband as the head of the family. Under this law the husband had the right to "choose any reasonable place and mode of living" and the wife was obliged to conform to it. Failure of the wife to do so was

considered desertion. A bill recognizing the wife's contributions to the support of the household through her labors as homemaker was sponsored by Terry Irving and Alhoha Eagles in 1975. Eagles sponsored a related bill, this one in the area of probate law, during the 1979 session. This bill recognized the equal effort of a husband and a wife in obtaining property owned in joint tenancy and affirmed the inheritance rights of the surviving spouse upon the death of the other. A bill sponsored by Corliss Mushik the same session addressed the problem of domestic violence and affirmed the right of the abused spouse to protection and relief. Though it did not address spousal rape, an issue that would surface in the following decade, a bill designed to protect the rights of rape victims in criminal prosecutions was sponsored by Cheryl Watkins and Janet Wentz in 1975.

Legislation addressing the legal status of women at widowhood and at divorce sought to provide economic protections for homemakers upon the loss of a spouse through death or divorce. Four separate pieces of legislation sponsored by female lawmakers in the 1977 and 1979 sessions sought to reform divorce laws in relation to alimony, child support, and the division of property. A bill sponsored by Cheryl Watkins in 1973 was designed to reduce the incidence

76Ibid., 2.
of nonpayment of court-ordered child support. In 1977 Corliss Mushik, Janet Wentz, Aloha Eagles, and Pauline Benedict sponsored a resolution directing an interim study to determine the extent of the displaced homemaker crisis in North Dakota and to identify available programs and services. The following session Mushik and Alice Olson sponsored a bill providing counseling, training, jobs, services, and health care for women displaced from their traditional roles as mothers and wives by death, divorce, or other loss of family income. The health care and insurance needs of a specific group of homemakers, single mothers, were addressed by legislation sponsored by LuGale Backlin in 1973.

The issue of abortion continued to be addressed in the North Dakota legislature in the 1970s. In the 1971 session Aloha Eagles again sponsored a bill to liberalize North Dakota's abortion laws, legislation that was cosponsored by Grace Stone. Just prior to the defeat of the bill on the House floor in February 1972, Eagles predicted that if the bill did not pass, the "courts will do what the Legislature didn't have the vision to do."77 In January 1973 the Supreme Court of the United States restricted the authority of state legislatures to prohibit abortion through its controversial decision in the case of Roe v. Wade.

77 "Death Knell was Sounded Early," Fargo Forum, 5 February 1971.
Beginning in the 1973 session and continuing throughout the decade, legislation seeking to limit the effects of Roe v. Wade was introduced in the North Dakota legislature. Five of these bills and resolutions were sponsored by one or more female legislators.

Eleven of the thirty pieces of legislation affecting women as a class sponsored by North Dakota’s women lawmakers in the seventies addressed issues and concerns of women in their positions in the work place, in government, and in education and other institutions. While the majority of these bills and resolutions sought to expand the rights of women and to prohibit discrimination against women, several measures were sponsored in opposition to the broadest of the antidiscrimination measures, the Equal Rights Amendment.

In 1975 Terry Irving was the sole sponsor of a bill directing an interim study of state laws which discriminated on the basis of sex. Measures designed to identify and address specific areas of sex discrimination, as well as other forms of discrimination, were sponsored by women legislators in the seventies. A bill sponsored by Marjorie Kermott, Grace Stone, Fern Lee, and Brynhild Haugland in 1973 sought to further erode sex discrimination in the state’s political party system by adding a vice chairwoman as an office to district and state committees. In 1975 Corliss Mushik, Terry Irving, and Cheryl Watkins sponsored a bill banning pay toilets in public establishments. Such facilities were viewed as discriminating against women as
well as the elderly, the poor, and youth.\footnote{North Dakota Legislative Council, Corliss Mushik's Testimony on HB 1363, State and Federal Government Committee Minutes, 12 February 1975, 2.} Stella Fritzell in 1977 and Ruth Meiers in 1979 sponsored bills addressing the issue of discrimination in interment and insurance practices. In 1979 Jean Herman and Aloha Eagles sponsored a bill prohibiting discrimination in employment because of sex, race, religion, national origin, age, or marital status, and Eagles and Corliss Mushik sponsored a measure providing for a women's detention facility in conjunction with the state penitentiary.

Beginning in 1973 and continuing throughout the decade, the North Dakota legislature debated the broadest measure aimed at prohibiting sex discrimination, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which stated, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."\footnote{Hartmann, 106.} First introduced to the United States Congress in 1923, the ERA was finally approved by Congress on March 22, 1972, and was sent to state legislatures for ratification.\footnote{Sara M. Evans, Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 291.} In 1973 Aloha Eagles and Elynor Hendrickson sponsored a House resolution calling for North Dakota's ratification of the amendment. This and a comparable Senate resolution failed
to pass. When the legislature approved ratification of the ERA in 1975 the resolution originated in the Senate with no female sponsors. Also coming out of the Senate that session was a resolution requesting a study of the effects of the proposed amendment. The resolution, which failed, was sponsored by Fern Lee. Resolutions rescinding the state's ratification of the ERA were introduced in the Senate in 1977 with Shirley Lee as a sponsor and in the House in 1979 with Fern Lee as a sponsor. These failed as well, and the seventies ended with North Dakota among those states supporting the adoption of a federal equal rights amendment.

**Summary and Conclusion**

When the seventies began five women were serving in the North Dakota legislature, all in the House. By the end of the decade twenty women were serving in the legislature, seventeen in the House and three in the Senate. This substantial increase in the number of female legislators signaled other broad changes in the collective profile of "political woman" as she emerged as a force in the state's legislature in the 1970s.

While female legislators continued to be concentrated in the House, some inroads were made in the Senate. Whereas two women served in the Senate between 1923 and 1969, four took their places in the upper chamber during the seventies. As Democrats continued their challenge of Republican control of the legislature, Democratic women occupied legislative
seats with greater frequency. Though women elected from the eastern half of the state continued to outnumber those elected from the west, urban women came to outnumber rural and small town women, reversing a geographic pattern established in the five decades prior to 1970. While a majority of the women elected between 1923 and 1969 were single-term legislators, the seventies brought a reversal in this pattern as well.

The background characteristics of women entering the legislature in the seventies were similar in some ways to those of the women who preceded them and different in others. While the median age of first-term women legislators decreased only slightly, the range of their ages broadened to include more women in their sixties and the first women in their twenties. Though married women continued to predominate, the marital profile of beginning women legislators broadened to include divorced women. While the percentage of beginning women legislators with no active child rearing responsibilities remained high, more women with young children sought and won election to the legislature. Though some women continued to delay their political ambitions until after their children were grown and those with young children commonly experienced guilt and other difficulties, being a mother of young children was less of a deterrent to would-be female legislators in the seventies than it had been in the previous five decades.
One of the most significant shifts was in the occupational profile of beginning women legislators. Whereas a majority of the women who served between 1923 and 1969 were employed part or full-time in occupations generally considered nontraditional, women entering the legislature in the seventies were more likely to be full-time homemakers or employed in traditional occupations such as teaching and nursing. Nontraditional for their time in several respects, including profession, North Dakota's pioneer female legislators paved the way for women with more conventional occupational pursuits. The seventies also brought a broadening of the occupational profile of incoming women legislators to include students and retired persons.

Like their predecessors, women first elected in the seventies commonly sought post-high school education. With greater frequency, they earned undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The 1970s brought a shift in ethnic background as well. More ethnically diverse than the women who served prior to 1970, the new crop of female legislators included women of French, Dutch, Czech, Italian, Russian-German, German, British Isles, Scandinavian, and Native American ancestry. Scandinavians, previously the dominant ethnic group among incoming female legislators, were outnumbered by women of British Isles ancestry.

While the ethnic makeup of beginning women legislators broadened, their religious background remained consistent.
Protestants, most of them Lutherans, continued to outnumber members of other religious groups.

Several changes occurred in relation to family political connections and prior political experience. Prior office holding, a common stepping stone to the legislature for women serving before 1970, was rare among those women first elected in the seventies. They were more likely to pursue other opportunities in politics that prepared them to bid for legislative seats, including paid employment in government. While nearly two-thirds were active as campaign and general party workers, just over one-third held leadership positions in their respective political parties. It continued to be common for women legislators to have a relative, most typically a father or husband, who preceded them in elective public office.

Like the women who came before them, women entering the legislature in the 1970s were active in a wide range of political and other organizations. Membership in the League of Women Voters, which led at least one pioneer female lawmaker to the legislature, figured in the prelegislative experience of over a quarter of the women newly elected in the seventies.

Though education and public welfare continued to be the interests most commonly shared by North Dakota's female legislators, women first elected in the seventies, like their predecessors, were concerned about a wide range of issues. Among these were environmental protection and
resources development, two of the issues which dominated the decade. The shift toward higher female representation on traditional male committees begun after legislative reorganization in 1947 continued in the seventies. While women legislators, newcomers and veterans alike, continued to be assigned with considerable frequency to those standing committees dealing with education and welfare, there was a notable decline in the percentage of women assigned to Education. The committee women were most often assigned to was the social welfare committee.

Though women legislators in the seventies were underrepresented in leadership positions, they did make gains over their predecessors. While only one woman chaired a standing committee during the decade, eight women served as vice chairs. Four women had served as committee chairs and two as vice chairs during the previous five decades. Whereas Minnie Craig was the only woman to be elected to a leadership position other than committee chair or vice chair prior to 1970, three women rose to other leadership positions in the legislative hierarchy in the seventies.

Although women serving in the legislature in the seventies had a higher rate of legislative sponsorships than the women who served before 1970, they, like their predecessors, concentrated their bill and resolution-making activity in those policy areas traditionally viewed as male. Just over 30 percent of their legislative sponsorships addressed issues traditionally viewed as female, while 7
percent spoke to issues and concerns affecting women as a class. The actual number of bills and resolutions sponsored in this category by women during the seventies was thirty. During the previous five decades, eleven such pieces of legislation were sponsored by women. In other words, women legislators were addressing the particular concerns of women three times as often as they had previously. A number of these bills and resolutions addressed "new" issues such as domestic violence and displaced homemakers. Some dealt with two of the most controversial issues before the legislature in the 1970s--abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment.

While owing a debt to those pioneer female legislators who proved that women have a legitimate place in the legislature, the women who served in the seventies advanced the work of their predecessors by making their increased presence felt on committees, in leadership positions, and through their sponsored legislation. Through their service, these thirty-one women proved that "political woman" as described by Kirkpatrick and others not only existed, but was a force for change in the North Dakota legislature.
CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL WOMAN, AN ESTABLISHED FORCE: THE 1980S

Twenty years ago we could say with Simone de Beauvoir, "The free woman is just being born." Today she has become a force.

Eleanor Holmes Norton, 1982

How, then do we as women make a difference? As a political woman I firmly believe we have to be in positions where we can affect change--we have to seek out and accept roles of leadership where decisions are made. . . . Women in public life are already making a difference. Why do you think that such issues as day care facilities, nursing home care, battered wives' programs, displaced homemakers' programs, and others are finally surging forward in the nation's consciousness--because women's groups are addressing these problems--because women are lobbying for change--because women care.

Lieutenant Governor Ruth Meiers, 1986

Historical Background and Overview

The 1980 elections were distinguished by more than Ronald Reagan's rise to the presidency and the victory of a

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movement which had come to be referred to as the "New Right." They signaled continued change in the pattern of women's participation in politics.

Political analysts, accustomed after the seventies to reviewing election returns for evidence of shifts in the electoral behavior of female voters, observed and reported two related developments in the aftermath of the 1980 elections. The first of these was significant differences in how women and men voted for candidates and on issues. The term "gender gap" was coined to describe this development. A second development was that women voted at the same rate as men for the first time in peacetime. The 1980 elections also marked the first time that the platforms of the two major political parties differed significantly on women's issues.³

Though their gains were less dramatic than in the previous decade, women continued to be elected to public office at a steady rate in the 1980s. Women's representation in state legislatures saw an increase in every election during the decade. In 1981, 908 women were serving in state legislatures, making up 12 percent of the total. By 1989, the 1,262 women serving nationwide in state legislatures represented 17 percent of the total. The vast

³Hartmann, 153-54.
majority of these women (1,002) held seats in the lower House of the state legislature seats.\(^4\)

Progress in terms of numbers was less steady for North Dakota's women legislators in the 1980s. Whereas twenty women had served in the last session of the previous decade, the number of women serving in the 1981 session dropped to eighteen, where it stayed for the next two sessions. The 1987 session saw a return to the twenty mark and the Centennial session in 1989 brought twenty-four women to the legislature. At this point, women accounted for 15 percent of all North Dakota legislators, an all-time high.

The total number of women serving in the North Dakota legislature in the 1980s was forty-one. Fifteen of these women began their service prior to 1980 and twenty-six began their service during the eighties. Although the seventies also brought twenty-six new women to the legislature, only five female legislators carried over from the previous period. The significant increase in carry-over women in the eighties evidenced the growing seniority of female lawmakers in the legislature.

With a few exceptions, major economic and political trends observed in the seventies continued to play

themselves out in the eighties in North Dakota. The farm economy remained weak and the number of farms decreased steadily. Energy industries, which had boomed in the previous decade, followed agriculture into a bust cycle after worldwide oil prices declined in 1981. In politics, Democrats continued to challenge Republican control of state offices and the legislature. In 1980 they lost the governorship only to regain it in 1984. House Democrats outnumbered House Republicans for the second time in the state's history in 1983. In 1987 Democrats took control of the state Senate for the first time. The eighties, the decade in which two-party politics finally took hold in North Dakota, ended with Republicans controlling the House and Democrats controlling the Senate.  

The more equal balance of power between Republicans and Democrats in the legislature in the eighties was reflected in the numbers of first-term women legislators elected from the two parties. Though Democratic women had served with greater frequency in the seventies than in the previous period, their gains among beginning female legislators in the following decade were unprecedented. Of the twenty-six women entering the legislature between 1980 and 1989, fourteen (54 percent) were Democrats and twelve (46 percent) were Republicans. Because eleven (73 percent)

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of the fifteen carry-over women were Republicans, Republican women continued to outnumber Democratic women in the legislature.

While women legislators continued to be concentrated in the House in the eighties, their inroads into the Senate continued as well. Twenty-three (88 percent) of the twenty-six beginning women legislators were initially elected to the House and three (12 percent) to the Senate. In 1986 one of these newcomers, Donna Nalewaja, gave up the House seat she had held for two sessions to run for the Senate. Her bid was successful. After serving six terms in the House, veteran legislator Corliss Mushik sought and won a seat in the upper House in 1984. With these migrations, a total of eight women came to occupy Senate seats during the eighties, four times the number that had served between 1923 and 1969 and twice the number that had served in the seventies. During the 1989 session five women served in the Senate, a record number.

In keeping with the geographical pattern established during the first five decades of women's service in the legislature, female lawmakers continued to be elected with greater frequency from eastern North Dakota. Seventeen (65 percent) of the women entering the legislature in the eighties were elected from counties east of a line dividing the state in half east to west (see figure 3). With no beginning female legislators elected from west of the Missouri River, this region remained largely unrepresented
Fig. 3. Post offices of women legislators serving in the 1980s.
(Base map: North Dakota Highway Department.)
by women during the eighties. Just over half of the women who began their service prior to 1980 were from the eastern half of the state.

The shift toward greater representation in the legislature by urban women than rural and small town women begun in the seventies continued in the 1980s. Fifteen (58 percent) of the twenty-six beginning women legislators were elected from the cities of Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot. As in the previous decade, well over half of these urban women were elected from Grand Forks and Fargo. Three-fifths of the carry-over women were elected from the four cities listed above. This shift in female representation in the legislature which began in the seventies predated and perhaps signaled a shift in the general population confirmed by 1987 census figures that showed more North Dakotans living in cities and towns than in rural areas.\(^6\)

Yet another pattern that underwent change in the 1970s continued in its new course in the eighties. Though a majority of the women who served prior to 1970 were single-term legislators, less than one-third of the women entering the legislature in the seventies were in this category. In the eighties single and multiple-term female legislators were split evenly, with thirteen of each.

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\(^6\) Ibid., 41.
However, over half of the women classified as single-term legislators served their first term in 1989. Each of these women has the potential of becoming a multiple-term legislator in the future.

**Background Characteristics**

As in the previous chapter, the discussion of background characteristics as well as legislative interests will focus on only those twenty-six women who began their legislative service in the decade under consideration. When the discussion turns to committee assignments, leadership positions, and sponsored legislation, the focus will broaden to include the fifteen women whose service began prior to and continued into the eighties.

As they had heralded the first seating of women lawmakers in the North Dakota legislators in the early 1920s and the dramatic increase in their numbers in the early 1970s, the press took note of the decline in their ranks in the 1980 elections. No vestiges of the press' once intense interest in the personal backgrounds of the state's female legislatures were to be found in a *Fargo Forum* article which appeared shortly after the November election. The focus of the article was numbers, as evidenced by the headline "Growth in number of N.D. women legislators comes to an end." Speculating on the reason for this reverse in trend, one male political observer was quoted as saying, "Maybe this is the number of women the voters are comfortable with." A reason cited by "prominent women in both parties"
was that "Women have yet to shake their image as homemaker," an image that for decades had been the focus of the press interest in and coverage of female legislators.  

Age, Marital Status, and Number and Age of Children at Time of First Election to the Legislature

A decrease in the number of first-term women legislators in their forties and sixties and an increase in the number of women in their twenties and thirties resulted in an appreciable decline in the median age of beginning women legislators in the eighties. Starting out at forty-eight during the period 1923 to 1969 and declining only slightly to forty-seven during the seventies, the median age of incoming female legislators dropped to forty-three during the following decade. Corresponding to this drop was a steady increase in the number of beginning women legislators in their twenties and thirties. Between the five decades before 1970 they numbered four (20 percent of the total), in the seventies they numbered seven (27 percent of the total), and in the eighties they numbered eleven (42 percent of the total).

The marital profile of beginning female legislators, which expanded in the seventies to include divorced women, continued to be dominated by married women in the 1980s.

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While twenty-one (81 percent) of the twenty-six women entering the legislature in the eighties were married, only five (19 percent) were either single, widowed, or divorced. No women entered the legislature via the "widow's route" during this decade.

One of the most dramatic shifts in the profile of the beginning woman legislator in the eighties was the significant rise in the number of women with young children. The trend in this direction began in the seventies when the number of first-term women legislators with children under the age of eighteen increased from five (25 percent of the total) in the previous period to nine (35 percent of the total). In the 1980s fourteen (54 percent) of first-term female lawmakers were mothers of children seventeen or under. Nearly three-fifths of these women served more than one term or served their first term in 1989, continuing the trend begun in the seventies.

Though a majority of the women entering the legislature in the eighties had young children, the decision to combine legislative service with active child rearing continued to be one which women considered carefully and which presented women with its own set of challenges. Carolyn Nelson, the mother of three adults, delayed running for the legislature until 1986 when she felt the two school age children for whom she was a guardian were secure enough
for her to do so. Cathy Rydell made her first bid for a seat in the House in 1984 when her three children had reached the ages of seven, eleven, and twelve and had "interests of their own." When Julie Hill first decided to run for the legislature in 1982, "her two children told her with candor that they hoped she wouldn't win if it would mean transferring to a school in Bismarck." She did win and the children adjusted to the biennial disruption of their school year. However, after serving three terms, Hill retired from the legislature to spend more time with her teenage children. Diane Larson, who entered the legislature in 1989, described what she found to be most difficult thing about legislative service:

Spending so much time away from my family. Many times even when I was home I was too busy with studying to really be contributing. My family sometimes seemed to function without me, and I felt somewhat like an observer.

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In January 1990 Larson announced her decision not to seek a second term "citing her new job and two teenaged daughters."\textsuperscript{13}

Occupation When First Elected to the Legislature and Educational Background

The occupational profile of beginning women legislators, which saw a two-part shift in the seventies, underwent considerable change again in the 1980s. The shift in the 1970s had been marked first by an increase in the number of full-time homemakers and women employed in traditional female occupations and, second, by a broadening of the occupational profile to include students and retired persons. In terms of the first part of that shift, while the number of women in traditional occupations decreased only slightly (from nine to eight) in the eighties, the number of full-time homemakers decreased significantly (from nine to two). A further broadening of the occupational profile of beginning women legislators made up for these losses. The 1980s brought six women who were either employed as high or medium level administrators or owned and operated their own business, all positions which would be considered nontraditional. The decade also brought an increase (from one to four) in the number of women

\textsuperscript{13}Mike Dorsher, "Another Bismarck lawmaker decides against re-election," \textit{Bismarck Tribune}, 17 January 1990, 4B.
legislators who were students. The number of retired female legislators remained at two.

Post-high school education, which was predominant among the women who served in the six decades prior to 1980, was part of the background of every woman who entered the North Dakota legislature in the eighties. Like their counterparts in the seventies, they sought and earned undergraduate and graduate degrees with greater frequency than the women who served in the period before them. The numbers of beginning women legislators holding an undergraduate or graduate degree increased from six in the period 1923 to 1969 to eleven in the seventies to fifteen in the eighties. The number of women with some graduate school also increased between the seventies and the eighties (from two to five).

The shift toward greater ethnic diversity among beginning women legislators which occurred in the seventies slowed in the eighties. Whereas women of German Russian, Native American, or Italian ancestry were among the new crop of female legislators in the 1970s, no women represented these ethnic groups in the 1980s. Six women represented other less dominant nationalities, including French, Dutch, and Czech or Bohemian. The other shift in the ethnic makeup of incoming female legislators occurring in the seventies, the outnumbering of Scandinavian women by women of British Isles ancestry, continued in the eighties. This decade saw the entry of 14 women of Scandinavian descent (or 58 percent
of the total) as opposed to 18 women of British Isles
descent (or 69 percent of the total). Though still fewer in
number than the two best represented ethnic groups, German
women continued to increase their representation, reaching
13 (or 50 percent of the total) in the eighties.

The pattern of religious preference established
between 1923 and 1979 continued into the eighties. While
twenty (77 percent) of the twenty-six women beginning their
legislative service in the 1980s were Protestants (most of
these Lutherans), only six (23 percent) identified
themselves as Catholic or Christian or indicated no
preference. During the seven decades covered in this study,
Protestants never made up less than 65 percent of beginning
women legislators.

Family Political Connections and Prior
Political Experience

The major shift in the pattern of family political
connections and prior political experience in the seventies
was the significant decline in the number of beginning women
legislators who had held elective office prior to being
elected to the legislature. Whereas eight (40 percent) of
the pioneer women legislators had held an elective office,
only two (8 percent) of the women entering the legislature
in the 1970s had this experience. While the eighties saw a
reversal of this trend, it was modest. Five (19 percent) of
the twenty-six women beginning their service in the 1980s
had prior experience in elective office, most commonly with
a school board. Rosemarie Myrdal, Caroline Nelson, and Beth Smette had served on school boards in Newburg, Fargo, and Edinburg, respectively. June Enget had been on the Powers Lake city council and Marie Tierney had chaired a government study committee in Great Falls, Montana.¹⁴

While prior office holding continued to lag among would-be women legislators in the eighties, involvement in precinct, district, and/or state party politics was never higher. Eighty percent of beginning women legislators worked on at least one campaign and/or as a general party worker prior to their first election to the legislature. Sixty-five percent of their counterparts in the seventies had served in one or both of these capacities. Service in party leadership positions on the state, district, and precinct levels saw a substantial increase in the eighties as well. Whereas 35 percent of beginning women legislators in the seventies held such a position, 65 percent of the women who followed them in the eighties did.

Involvement in political party women's organizations, an outlet for would-be female legislators since before women's suffrage, was part of the pre-legislative experience of slightly more than a one-third of the women entering the legislature in the eighties. Women with this background

came to the legislature in approximately the same proportion in the 1970s. Youth political organizations, which served as a training ground for at least three incoming women legislators in the seventies, figured in the prelegislative backgrounds of double that many in the eighties. For three of these women--Sarah Carlson, Connie Cleveland, and Gayle Reiten--participation in student political organizations included office holding.\(^1^5\)

Paid employment on the staff of an elected official or the legislature, an opportunity exploited by four women entering the legislature in the seventies, led Diane Larson to consider becoming a legislative candidate herself. Larson had served as a legislative page in 1969 and worked on the staff of the Senate in 1985 and 1987 prior to her election to the legislature in 1988.\(^1^6\)

Family roots in electoral politics, a heritage claimed by a majority of the women beginning their service in the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1979, was part of the background of half of the twenty-six women who entered the legislature in the 1980s. Although the most common family link continued to be a father or husband who served in public office prior to the woman's legislative service,

\(^{15}\)Women Legislators History Project surveys: Sarah Carlson, completed 17 March 1989; Connie Cleveland, completed 21 March 1989; and Gayle Reiten, completed 30 May 1989. Held by author.

\(^{16}\)Larson survey.
the eighties brought the first female legislators with maternal roots in elective politics. Rosemarie Myrdal's paternal grandmother and her mother both served on the Loraine, North Dakota, school board. Connie Cleveland's mother, who ran for the legislature in Minnesota and lost, served five terms on the East Grand Forks school board. Cleveland, who noted that she "grew up in an environment that naturally led to involvement at a very early age," had a father who served on the East Grand Forks city council.  

Other family members who preceded this group of thirteen women legislators in winning and serving in public office included fathers, husbands, a son, a grandfather, and various male in-laws. They served in a variety of elective offices, including register of deeds, state's attorney, county superintendent of schools, township officer, county auditor, and school board member. Three women, Julie Hill, Beth Smette, and Adella Williams, had relatives who had served in the North Dakota legislature, including a husband, an uncle, and a father-in-law, respectively. Marie Tierney, who ran for the Montana legislature and lost prior to her bid for a seat in the North Dakota legislature, had a husband who served in the Montana legislature. When

\[17\] Myrdal survey; Cleveland survey.
Geraldine Meyer took her seat in the Senate in 1983, she did so with her son, Dean, another freshman legislator. Like a number of the women who preceded them, several of the women who entered the North Dakota legislature in the eighties spoke of their political interest and activism in terms of an inherited family trait. Among these women was Jennifer Ring, who became active in party politics when she was six and who assisted both her mother and her father with their unsuccessful bids for legislative seats. Sarah Carlson, whose grandfather ran unsuccessfully for the legislature in the 1930s, accompanied her father to district conventions before she was eighteen. It seems that Rosemarie Myrdal, a third generation elected public official, was not the only future woman legislator to be inspired to become involved in politics by "political conversation around the family dinner table as a child."
Organizational Affiliations

The high level of organizational activity demonstrated by the women who began their legislative careers between 1923 and 1979 was evident in the prelegislative backgrounds of the women who began their service in the eighties. Over three-quarters of these women were active in four or more organizations when they were first elected to the legislature. Like their predecessors, their organizational activity was divided among a wide range of organizations, including political, professional, religious, public service and public affairs, farm, social and cultural, fraternal, and patriotic. More beginning women legislators than in the past were involved in parent-teacher organizations which corresponds with the increase in the number of women with school age children.

The eighties saw a reversal of the major organizational trend of the seventies--the growing popularity of the League of Women Voters route to the legislature with incoming women legislators. Whereas over a quarter of the women who began their service in the 1970s were active in the League at the time of their first election, only three (12 percent) of the new crop of female legislators were League members when first elected. Perhaps other future female legislators had come to the conclusion, as Catherine "Kit" Scherber did, that League membership "alone was an inadequate network without a party
connection." She sought that connection by becoming involved in district level caucuses and by eventually serving as district vice chair.  

Legislative Interests

Between 1923 and 1979 education was the top legislative interest of North Dakota's women legislators, followed by public welfare. This pattern continued in the 1980s. Nearly three-fourths of the women who entered the legislature in the eighties listed education among their major legislative interests while nearly one-half identified one or more issues relating to what three-term representative Cathy Rydell called "human needs." While the welfare of women, children, and the elderly continued to be a focus of concern, in increasing numbers, beginning women legislators turned their attention to the needs of the disabled. Among the women to do so was Dagne Olsen, who was first elected in 1981 and served throughout the eighties. Olsen was motivated to run for the legislature out of a desire "to make life better" for developmentally disabled persons, including her youngest son.  

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women beginning their legislative service in the eighties concern for the welfare of women was coupled with an interest in what they broadly termed "women's issues" and in specific issues such as pay equity or comparable worth, the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

In the 1980s, beginning women legislators continued to express interest in a wide range of other issues. Nearly one-third of these women identified one or more health care issues as a major interest. Drug and alcohol abuse and their prevention and treatment continued to be a focus of concern. Legal, agricultural, environmental, and economic issues all continued to capture the attention of incoming women legislators. Of these, interest in economic issues escalated the most. Nearly half of the twenty-six women who entered the legislature in the eighties listed one or more economic issues among their major interests. That economic development and an improved climate for business were commonly cited is not surprising given the declining nature of the farm economy and of the energy industries in North Dakota in the 1980s.

Committee Assignments

The pattern of women's service on standing committees of the North Dakota legislature underwent a significant shift in the forties and fifties when women began to be assigned in more than minuscule numbers to committees dealing with issues traditional defined as male. This shift continued in the seventies, a decade in which the percentage
of female assignments to traditional male committees was
greater than the percentage of their assignments to
traditional female committees. By the last session of the
1970s women had gained access to all traditional male
committees, including Senate Appropriations. During this
entire period women legislators continued to be frequently
assigned to education and social welfare committees, though
the percentage of female assignments to Education declined
in the seventies.

A survey of the collective committee assignments of
the forty-one women who served in the North Dakota
legislature in the 1980s shows that women continued to be
assigned with great regularity to Education and to the
social welfare committee, which after several name changes
since its creation in 1939 came to be called Human Services
and Veterans Affairs in the last decade. Of the twelve
standing committees, Human Services and Veterans Affairs was
the committee most frequently assigned to female legislators
and Education was the third, with seventeen women (41
percent of the total) assigned to the former and eleven (27
percent of the total) to the latter. The social welfare
committee maintained its first place position, assumed in
the seventies, even though the percentage of women assigned
to it dropped nine percentage points from the previous
decade. Political Subdivisions, considered a traditional
female committee because of its association with a
traditional female interest, local government, continued to
be assigned to women with less regularity. In the 1980s eight women (20 percent of the total) were placed on this committee.

The shift toward higher representation by women on traditional male committees not only continued, but accelerated in the 1980s. As table 4 indicates, whereas 55 percent of all female committee assignments in the seventies were to traditional male committees, the percentage of these assignments in the following decade was sixty-three, showing an increase of eight percentage points. Judiciary continued to be the traditional male committee most frequently assigned to female legislators, with twelve women (29 percent of the total) appointed to it. State and Federal Government continued to be favorable to female representation, with nine women (22 percent of the total) serving on it.

Table 4.--Committee assignments, 1923-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period &amp; (total N of assignments)</th>
<th>N &amp; (%) to trad. female</th>
<th>N &amp; (%) to trad. male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-1946 (52)</td>
<td>37 (71)</td>
<td>15 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-1969 (35)</td>
<td>16 (46)</td>
<td>19 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1979 (73)</td>
<td>33 (45)</td>
<td>40 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989 (98)</td>
<td>36 (37)</td>
<td>62 (63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most notable change in the pattern of women's representation on traditional male committees in the eighties was the marked increase in the number and
percentage of women assigned to important fiscal committees. While there was a slight gain in female representation on Appropriations in the seventies, it lagged far behind Judiciary with only four women (13 percent of the total) assigned to it. However, in the 1980s nine women (22 percent of the total) were appointed to Appropriations, making it the second most frequently assigned "male" committee. These gains were made in House Appropriations, not in the Senate. Only two of the nine women appointed to this committee, Stella Fritzell and Corliss Mushik, served on Senate Appropriations. Prior to her move to the Senate in 1985, Mushik had also served on House Appropriations. Of the eight women (including Mushik) to serve on House Appropriations during the decade, three (Jean Rayl, Beth Smette, and Roxanne Jenson) were appointed to Appropriations their first term. In the House, at least, Appropriations had not only become accessible to more women, but also to women with little or no seniority. The increase in the number and percentage of women assigned to Finance and Taxation was equally impressive given the low representation of women on this fiscal committee in prior decades. Where only three women (10 percent of the total) were assigned to Finance and Taxation in the seventies, eight (20 percent of the total) were assigned to this committee in the 1980s.

With the exception of Appropriations and Finance and Taxation, the committees with the lowest female representation in past decades remained those with the
lowest in the eighties. Transportation and Agriculture were assigned to six women (15 percent of the total), while Industry, Business and Labor was assigned to five (12 percent of the total) and Natural Resources to four (10 percent of the total). The three women to be appointed to Joint Constitutional Revision in the eighties (Janet Wentz, Bonnie Miller Heinrich, and Donna Nalewaja) made up 7 percent of the total and were the first women to serve on this committee.

Committee Chairs and Other Leadership Positions

Between 1923 and 1979 four of North Dakota's women legislators chaired standing committees and nine served as vice chairs. Because two of these women, Rosamund O'Brien and Anna Powers, were vice chairs for two different committees during this time period, the total number of committee leadership positions held by these thirteen women was fifteen. During this fifty-six year period, approximately 2,400 committee leadership positions were awarded to members of the North Dakota legislature. Women legislators, in other words, held just over .5 percent of all committee leadership positions during the period. Even considering that women occupied only 2 percent of all legislative seats during these six decades (123 out of 6,767), they were clearly underrepresented in committee leadership. Democratic women fared the worst, holding only 27 percent of those committee leadership positions occupied by female legislators. This is not surprising, because
these positions are typically awarded to majority party members.

Women legislators were also underrepresented in leadership positions other than committee chair and vice chair during these years. Only four women held a position in the hierarchy of the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1979. Although the fact that three of these women secured leadership positions in the 1970s shows that female representation in the legislative hierarchy increased during that decade, women legislators' access to top positions remained limited. In terms of these positions, which each party awards to its own members, it was Republican women who fared the worst. Only one of the four women who won other leadership positions before 1980 was a Republican. This was Minnie Craig, a Nonpartisan Leaguer. All three women rising to other leadership positions in the seventies were Democrats.

In the 1980s seven women chaired standing committees. Because one of these women, Geraldine Meyer, chaired two committees during the decade, the total number of committee chair positions held by this group of women was eight. Brynhild Haugland, a Republican and longtime chair of the House social welfare committee, headed that same committee for all but the 1983 session. Ruth Meiers, a Democrat, chaired it that session. Though women had been assigned with regularity to both Education and Judiciary, no woman had headed either of these committees until the eighties
when Bonnie Miller Heinrich chaired Senate Education and Janet Wentz and Geraldine Meyer chaired Judiciary. Wentz in the House and Meyer in the Senate. The other committee chaired by Meyer during the decade was Senate Human Services and Veterans Affairs. Two women came to chair Natural Resources, one of the committees not frequently assigned to women. They were Shirley Lee, who chaired this committee in the Senate for the 1981 and 1983 sessions, and Alice Olson, who chaired House Natural Resources for the 1985, 1987, and 1989 sessions.

Seven women also served as vice chairs of standing committees in the eighties. In this case, each of these women was the vice chair of but one committee, so the actual number of vice chair positions was also seven. The most notable of these appointments was Corliss Mushik's to Senate Appropriations vice chair. Only one woman, Stella Fritzell, had served on Senate Appropriations prior to Mushik, who was assigned to the committee in 1985, her first term in the Senate after having served six terms in the House. As only the second woman to serve on this almost exclusively male committee, Mushik was awarded the position of vice chair in 1987 and again in 1989. Alice Olson and Dayle Dietz served as vice chairs of two House committees on which women were traditionally underrepresented, Finance and Taxation and Transportation, respectively. Three women were vice chairs of traditional female committees. They were Burness Reed, who served as vice chair of House Human Services and
Veterans Affairs, and Rosie Black and Máríe Tierney, both of whom served as vice chair of House Political Subdivisions. Janet Wentz served one term as vice chair of Judiciary before gaining the position of chair.

Four women served in leadership positions other than committee chair or vice chair during biennial sessions of the North Dakota legislature during the 1980s. Because one of these women, Corliss Mushik, served in two positions, the total number of other leadership positions held by women was five. One woman, Shirley Lee, held the position of interim president pro tempore of the Senate during the 1983-84 interim. Lee was the first woman to hold this honorary position. Because it was an honorary position held during an interim, it is not included among those held by women during legislative sessions.

When Corliss Mushik served as second in command of the Democratic majority in the House in 1983, she became the first woman to hold the position of assistant majority leader for either party in either house. Mushik had held the position of assistant minority leader during the 1981 session as well as the last two sessions of the seventies.

In 1989 Catherine Rydell became the first woman to hold the position of Republican caucus chair in the House. Upon being elected to the post by her peers, Rydell

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described her new position as "entry-level" and commented, "I feel like I am moving into leadership roles." The same session Donna Nalewaja became the first female Republican caucus chair in the Senate.

Patricia "Tish" Kelly, a Democrat, became the second woman to preside as Speaker of the North Dakota House of Representatives in 1983, fifty years after Minnie Craig, a Nonpartisan League Republican, became the first woman to serve in that position in North Dakota and the nation. Like Craig, Kelly did not wait for the position to come to her. Immediately after the November 1982 election in which Democrats gained the majority of the House for only the second time in the state's history, Kelly began "locking up her support. One week later, the media declared Kelly 'the apparent favorite' for Speaker" and Kelly herself was fairly confident that she had the support of the Democratic House caucus. During the legislature's organizational session one month later, Kelly secured her caucus' nomination for the position as predicted. In an


unprecedented move, the Republican opposition chose not to field a candidate.\textsuperscript{29}

During the election of the second female Speaker of the House precisely a half century after the first, House members were moved to speak not only of Kelly and her new role, but also of all women legislators and their role. In nominating Kelly to the Speaker's post, Oscar Solberg, one of only two Democrats to hold that position in the past, characterized the nominee as "totally qualified and deserving of this recognition."\textsuperscript{30} In seconding Kelly's nomination, Walter Meyer noted:

Two of our three Democratic-NPL leaders are women. Women have a place in government and in our party, but she is being nominated not because she is a woman, but because of her high qualifications and because she has earned the respect of every member of this legislature and of those who work for the legislature.\textsuperscript{31}

Continuing the theme in her acceptance speech, Kelly spoke of Brynhild Haugland's long and distinguished tenure in the House, adding, "I hope she and the other women who have served here during the past fifty years see my selection as Speaker as a tribute to their service to our state." After

\textsuperscript{29} Harris, "Kelly Is Confident."


thanking her fellow House members, Kelly suggested that, "This is so much fun we really shouldn't wait fifty years."\(^{32}\)

Press coverage of the selection of Patricia "Tish" Kelly as Speaker consistently noted how she went about winning the position ("call it just plain smart" wrote one reporter) and what qualifications she brought to the job ("Kelly Is Confident and Organized," read one headline).\(^{33}\) Kelly indirectly addressed the subject of her qualifications when in commenting on the task ahead she said, "Confidence, competency, ability and experience with the legislative process probably prepares you somewhat."\(^{34}\) Newspaper articles about the second "Madame Speaker" in the history of the state invariably made references to Minnie Craig, the first. At least one editorial called attention to similarities in the political backgrounds of the two women (specifically, their Nonpartisan League roots) and in the times in which they served as Speaker ("Depressed farm prices and a nationwide depression...").\(^{35}\) One mark of the difference between these times was reflected in the press


\(^{33}\) Harris, "Kelly Is Confident."

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) "Madame Speaker the 2nd."
coverage itself that surrounded Craig's rise to the speakership in 1933 and Kelly's in 1983. Whereas descriptions of Craig's physical appearance and her domestic accomplishments were a primary focus of articles about her as the newly-elected Speaker, such descriptions were notable only by their absence in press reports about Kelly. Kelly recalled of her press coverage:

I wasn't [seen as] "Mrs. Housewife" and I think the reason I wasn't was that I had been in the House since 1975. I was a legislator in my own right. I had served on some very important committees--the Taxation Committee, the Appropriations Committee, the Industry, Business, and Labor Committee. So I was getting to be one of the veteran legislators. And I was one of the lights in the Democratic Party as far as being a good legislator. I had that reputation. And I think my press in North Dakota reflected that.

Patricia "Tish" Kelly's experience showed that by the mid-1980s a woman leader could be seen in terms of just that, a leader, without having to be portrayed as a homemaker with a gavel in one hand and a dish towel or a rolling pin in the other.

Kelly's experience as Speaker of the House differed from that of Minnie Craig in other ways. Whereas Craig attributed many of her problems as Speaker to her observation that "men don't like to follow a woman," Kelly considered most of her difficulties "a matter of partisan

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36 Patricia "Tish" Kelly, taped interview by author, 10 September 1990.

37 "Minnie Craig No Candidate."
"Politics." According to Kelly:

Probably the most difficult thing about being Speaker was that we were so incredibly close. There was only a four vote difference between the [Democratic] majority and the [Republican] minority. . . . The Republicans made it a point day after day to raise challenges to how things were being run. . . . But I didn't see it as a challenge to me as a woman, except in a few instances. I saw it as the challenge of "We're going to best the Democrats."38

Where Craig had been frustrated in her attempts to lead by her exclusion from strategy meetings, Kelly was able to develop a more active leadership style. Of that style, Kelly recalled:

I was very much involved. The other speakers before that used to disappear into an office and you never would see them. But I was visible at committee meetings. I was in on all the strategy.39

For Kelly, among the rewards of leadership were the "sheer pleasure and honor of being Speaker," her proud colleagues in the House, and her realization of "how many young women look at me as a real role model."40 Among those proud colleagues was Brynhild Haugland, who at the time of Kelly's election as Speaker "told the House a woman speaker [sic] every 50 years wasn't too much to expect."41

38 Kelly interview.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
While women legislators made significant gains in terms of leadership positions in the eighties, they remained underrepresented in top positions on standing committees and in the legislative hierarchy. Although women occupied 12 percent of all legislative seats over the decade (98 out of 786), they held only 6 percent (fifteen out of 240) of all committee chair and vice chair positions and only 6 percent (five out of ninety) of all other leadership positions. Though a woman was able to rise to one of the top two legislative leadership positions for the second time in the state's history in 1983, another woman's attempt to duplicate that success two sessions later failed when she was unable to secure the nomination of her caucus. While Democratic women were awarded committee chair and vice chair positions with greater frequency than they had in the past, they continued to be outnumbered by their Republican counterparts in these positions. On the other hand, while Republican women made slight gains in terms of other leadership positions, they continued to be selected for these positions less than half as often as Democratic women.

That women legislators continued to be underrepresented in leadership positions in the 1980s was confirmed by the comments of a number of the women who

42 Representative Alice Olson sought the Republican endorsement for Speaker after the November 1986 election. "Alice Olson plans bid for House speaker," Grand Forks Herald, 6 November 1986.
served during the decade. According to Jean Rayl, who served a single term in the House in 1983, "Women are still having difficulty obtaining leadership positions."

Three-term legislator Beth Smette, who agreed with Rayl, stated, "I don't think the women in the North Dakota legislature are given the leadership roles they deserve."

Donna Nalewaja, one of the few women to serve in a legislative leadership position other than committee chair or vice chair during the eighties, observed that women were not "gaining leadership positions in the same time period as male legislators." Part of the problem, according to Corliss Mushik, who held a total of three legislative leadership posts during the decade, was that "women still have a hard time asking for leadership positions--some don't think they have the qualifications or that they would win--maybe feeling they don't want to get involved in challenging the incumbent leader." She added, however, "But it's a whole lot better than it was when I was first elected."\(^{43}\)

In addition to their increased challenges of incumbent leaders, women legislators, according to Mushik, have become more assertive in their attempts to challenge what she

\(^{43}\)Women Legislators History Project surveys: Jean Rayl, completed 21 March 1989; Smette survey; Donna Nalewaja, completed 27 March 1989; and Mushik survey. Held by author.
called "the tight circle of the 'old boys' club.'"\textsuperscript{44} That women legislators continued to encounter the "old boys' club" in the 1980s was apparent from the comments of other women who served during the decade. Judy DeMers, who was first elected in 1983 and served for four sessions, wrote that "Women still lack the 'old boy' network which is used so effectively by men."\textsuperscript{45} She was joined in this opinion by nine-term legislator Aloha Eagles, who said in an interview toward the end of the 1983 session, "it is harder to be taken seriously if you're a woman. You don't get into the inner circle as easily. After all these years I do have access to it, but I can't say that I am a part of it even now."\textsuperscript{46} As a one-term legislator, Mary Kay Sauter found the "old boys' club" to be "still very strong," but, like Mushik, she saw "some hopeful signs"\textsuperscript{47} that this was changing. According to other women who served in the eighties, there were additional problems faced by the female minority in the legislature by virtue of their gender.

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\textsuperscript{44} Mushik survey.


\textsuperscript{47} Mary Kay Sauter, "Women Legislators History Project Survey," completed 9 September 1989. Held by author.
Among these were having to be "better than equal," having to prove one's credibility, especially if you were a young woman, being thought of as "sentimental" and "easily influenced," sexual innuendos, or, in the words of Jennifer Ring, who served her first term in 1989, "The same problems always faced by women in a male dominated profession."

**Sponsored Legislation**

As previous discussion of sponsored legislation has indicated, the twenty women who served in the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1969 were involved 576 times in sponsoring bills and resolutions and their thirty-one counterparts in the seventies were involved 738 times. In the 1980s the forty-one women serving in the legislature were involved 1,482 times in such sponsorships. These figures show that while women legislators increased their numbers by one-third in the eighties, they more than doubled their bill and resolution-making activity. One explanation for this dramatic increase was the carry-over of fifteen

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49 Carlson survey.

50 Williams survey.

51 Reiten survey.

52 Ring survey.
veteran women legislators into the new decade, each bringing with them a minimum of two and a maximum of forty-two years of legislative experience.

While the majority of legislative sponsorships made by women in the six decades prior to 1980 addressed issues and concerns traditionally thought of as male, in the 1970s the overall proportion of these sponsorships decreased nine percentage points to 62 percent of the total. Corresponding to the decrease in this category was an increase in the number and percentage of sponsorships in the remaining two categories, those addressing traditional female issues and concerns and those addressing issues and concerns affecting women as a class. In the seventies, the number of sponsorships in the former category was 225 (representing an increase of 5 percentage points to 31 percent of the total) and the number in the latter was fifty-three (representing an increase of 4 percentage points to 7 percent of the total). In the 1980s these proportions remained fairly stable, with 872 female sponsorships (or 59 percent of the total) addressing traditional male concerns, 513 (or 34 percent of the total) addressing traditional female concerns, and ninety-seven (or 7 percent of the total) addressing issues affecting women as a class. Again, legislative sponsorships outnumbered actual pieces of legislation.

Bills and resolutions introduced by women legislators in the 1980s that spoke to those issues traditionally
considered the province of men were even more wide-ranging in terms of subject matter than they had been in the previous six decades. Those policy areas addressed with frequency in the past—agriculture, election reform, licensing, and taxes being among these—continued to be addressed with regularity in the eighties. The increased attention paid to individual rights and to the environment in the 1970s carried over into the following decade. Concern for rights extended to include such groups as victims and witnesses of crimes, public employees, and the interred, while concern for the environment led to legislative proposals addressing such issues as toxic waste and public transportation. The heightened interest in economic development on the part of women legislators in the eighties was reflected in numerous bills and resolutions, including several designed to stimulate business by allowing the opening of businesses on Sunday, the sale of alcoholic beverages on Sunday, and the operation of a state lottery and other types of games of chance. The attention of women legislators turned with greater frequency to the world beyond the borders of North Dakota as they put forward legislation dealing with such issues as representation of the District of Columbia in Congress, investments in the Republic of South Africa, the release of American hostages in Iran, and the establishment of a National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution. Concern over the image of North Dakota projected to this larger world led to a
female-sponsored Senate concurrent resolution urging Congress to allow the state to change its name to the more temperate sounding "Dakota."

Female-sponsored legislation addressing the four policy areas conventionally viewed as being of particular interest to women—health, welfare, education, and children—were not only more numerous in the eighties, but also more inclusive. Health care and safety-related legislation expanded to address such issues as the mandatory use of child restraint devices and seat belts in motor vehicles, the health insurance needs of uninsured and underinsured persons, the governmental and societal impact of the incidence and cost of organ transplants, the delivery of in-home health care services, and the rights of the terminally ill to control decisions regarding the use of life-sustaining treatments. Two of the major trends in welfare-related legislation sponsored by women lawmakers in the decade were the increased attention paid to the needs and rights of the disabled, particularly the developmentally disabled, and the growing emphasis on alternatives to long-term institutional care for elderly and disabled persons. In addition, a broader range of educational issues was addressed by female-sponsored legislation, including classroom use of electronic media, such as satellite dishes, cable and public television, and video cassettes, the teaching of sex education in public schools, the special needs of gifted students, the use of corporal punishment,
the privacy rights of both teachers and students, and the right of parents to choose home-based instruction or instruction in nonapproved private schools for their school-aged children. The confidentiality of records and information related to services provided to minors, the visitation rights of grandparents of unmarried minors, and the placement of age limitations on participation in games of chance were among the "new" issues dealt with in child-related legislation sponsored by women legislators in the eighties.

In the 1970s and again in the 1980s, 7 percent of legislative sponsorships made by women legislators addressed issues and concerns affecting women as a class in their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers and in their positions in the work place, in government, and in education and other institutions. The actual number of pieces of legislation in this category was thirty in the seventies and fifty-six in the eighties. In other words, as North Dakota's women legislators doubled their bill and resolution-making activity in the last decade, they also nearly doubled the number of pieces of legislation they put forward on behalf of women as a class.

Forty-one of the fifty-six pieces of legislation affecting women as a class sponsored by women legislators in the eighties addressed issues and concerns of women in their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers. As in the previous decade, they spoke to a wide range of issues from marital
property rights, to insurance coverage for mammogram examinations, and to domestic violence. "New" issues continued to emerge, most notably surrogate motherhood.

The primary piece of female-sponsored legislation that addressed the legal status of women in marriage was the resolution sponsored by Janet Wentz in 1985 directing the Legislative Council to study the affects of a Uniform Marital Property Act and the state's existing marital property laws. When such an act was sponsored by the Legislative Council the following session, testimony in favor of the bill indicated that such legislation "would assure recognition of North Dakota women as full economic partners in marriage" and that it would recognize and acknowledge "finally, the contribution to a marriage by a spouse--usually a woman--who does not work outside the home."  

Fifteen pieces of legislation sponsored by women legislators in the eighties addressed the legal status of women at widowhood and at divorce. Division of marital property and support of children and the former spouse was the subject of the majority of this legislation, all of which sought to provide economic protection for vulnerable parties at divorce. Legislation concerning the status of

children affected by a divorce action dealt with not only the issue of support and its enforcement, but also custody, residency, and visitation. Three pieces of legislation, all cosponsored by Corliss Mushik and Alice Olson, addressed the needs of displaced homemakers, including counseling and job training. A bill sponsored by Catherine Rydell in 1987 sought to reform the probate law as it related to failure to provide by will for a surviving spouse.

Though much of the legislation described above was not gender specific in its language, it tended to affect women more than men because the woman is generally the more vulnerable party at the time of a divorce or a death, and the mother is more frequently the custodial parent when a family separates because of divorce. The same is true of a series of bills and resolutions sponsored by women legislators in the eighties dealing with the subject of abuse and neglect. Eight pieces of legislation addressed the issue of domestic violence. Specific subjects included programs and protection for victims of domestic violence, procedures for handling incidents of domestic violence, the consideration of evidence of domestic violence in determining rights to custody and child visitation, and the confidentiality of spouse abuse program records. While none of these bills referred specifically to women, they affected women to a greater extent than they affected men in that women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence. In 1989, the last year covered in this study, 96 percent of
those seeking services from domestic violence crisis intervention programs in North Dakota were women. A comparable situation exists with six pieces of legislation that address the issue of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults outside of what is defined as domestic violence. The vast majority of people in need of protection and other services due to this type of abuse are the elderly. Because there are more women than men in the elderly population, they are more often the ones in need of these particular services.

The last dozen bills and resolutions in this group addressed a wide range of issues, including several particularly controversial issues. In 1989 two bills relating to health insurance coverage for female concerns were sponsored by women legislators. The first, which was sponsored by Judy DeMers, Rosemarie Myrdal, Bonnie Miller Heinrich, Donna Nalewaja, and Corliss Mushik, required all health insurance policies to provide coverage for mammogram examinations for women who met certain age requirements. The second, sponsored by Geraldine Meyer, related to maternity benefit health insurance coverage for complications of pregnancy. A bill sponsored by Sarah Carlson, Diane Ness, and Jennifer Ring required that diaper

changing tables be installed in rest rooms in state buildings. In 1989 Janet Wentz and Geraldine Meyer cosponsored a bill calling for the adoption of the Uniform Status of Children of Assisted Conception Act. This bill, which addressed the issue of surrogate motherhood, would not, according to Wentz, "outlaw payment to surrogate mothers or their use, but it would prevent courts from enforcing surrogate mother contracts." The bill elicited some controversy and an illustrated editorial about "North Dakota's secret weapon: Nordic Women." Eight pieces of legislation sponsored by women in the eighties addressed the issue of abortion. In all cases they sought to limit the access to abortion in the state.

Fourteen of the fifty-six pieces of legislation affecting women as a class sponsored by North Dakota's women legislators in the eighties addressed issues and concerns of women in their positions in the work place, in government, and in education and other institutions. While none of these legislative proposals spoke specifically to the foundering Equal Rights Amendment, two bills, both sponsored by Rosie Black, provided for a human rights act to declare a state policy against discrimination on the basis of race,


color, religion, sex, national origin, or marital status in a broad range of public arenas, including the workplace. A bill sponsored by Catherine "Kit" Scherber in 1989 sought to close a loophole in the North Dakota Human Rights Act which exempted employers of nine or fewer employees from employment discrimination restrictions.

Half of the pieces of legislation in this group addressed problems of employed women. One bill related to benefits of part-time employees and another to wages of individuals providing companionship services to the aged or infirm. The majority of workers in each of these cases are women. Two legislative proposals sponsored by women addressed the issue of wage-based sex discrimination. Despite the many antidiscrimination laws passed by Congress and state legislatures in the sixties and seventies, women's wages continued to lag behind those of men and women continued to be concentrated in female occupations in the eighties. These two pieces of legislation, the first sponsored by Geraldine Meyer in 1985 and the second sponsored by Janet Wentz, Judy DeMers, and Corliss Mushik in 1987, sought to address these problems through comparable worth legislation. Both pieces of legislation were motivated by the belief that comparable worth, or equal pay for work of comparable worth, "may be a more equitable

57 Hartmann, 158-9.
method of determining wage-based discrimination than equal pay for equal work."\textsuperscript{58} Three pieces of legislation addressed an additional problem faced by women employed outside the home—the care of children and other dependents. All spoke to the growing number of families with two parents employed outside the home and of single-parent families, the majority of which are female-headed. Two bills sponsored by Corliss Mushik, Donna Nalewaja, Judy DeMers, and Patricia "Tish" Kelly in 1987 and 1989 addressed the issue of what Mushik called "the search for affordable child care"\textsuperscript{59} by providing for an individual income tax deduction for child and dependent care expenses. A bill cosponsored by Catherine "Kit" Scherber and Byrnhild Haugland in 1989 provided for uncompensated family leave, an issue that, according to Scherber, "is one of the most important issues to be considered in this Legislature."\textsuperscript{60} Under the bill, employees would have the opportunity to use leave to care for a child, spouse, or parent with a serious health condition with their employment and benefit rights protected. Testimony in favor of the bill by a spokesperson

\textsuperscript{58} Senate Concurrent Resolution 4016, 1987.

\textsuperscript{59} North Dakota Legislative Council, Corliss Mushik's Testimony on SB 2432, Senate Finance and Tax Committee Minutes, 24 January 1989.

\textsuperscript{60} North Dakota Legislative Council, Catherine "Kit" Scherber's Testimony on SB 2310, Senate Human Services and Veterans Affairs Committee Minutes, 9 February 1989.
for the American Association of University Women focused on the impact of the legislation on women since "women are often the prime caregivers and often the sole wage-earners." A bill sponsored by Catherine Rydell in 1985 sought to recognize the increased number and importance of women in the work force by providing for a change in the name of the Workmen's Compensation Bureau to the Workers' Compensation Bureau.

The final bill in this category addressed discrimination against women in government, specifically governmental boards. The legislation, which was cosponsored by Corliss Mushik, Catherine "Kit" Scherber, Catherine Rydell, and Janet Wentz, provided for gender balance in the appointment of members of state boards, commissions, committees, and councils. Speaking on behalf of all of the bill's sponsors, Mushik stated in her testimony on the legislation:

We do not mean to make gender balance a feminist issue and it should not be. It is simply a matter of fairness and equity. Passage of Senate Bill 2410 will give notice that North Dakota has a policy of fairness and that both men and women will be active participants in the discussion and determination of public policy."

61 North Dakota Legislative Council, Marie Brown's Testimony on SB 2310, Senate Human Services and Veterans Affairs Committee Minutes, 9 February 1989.

The same could be said of a long line of such pieces of legislation sponsored by North Dakota's women legislators before the emergence of the modern women's movement beginning with bills sponsored by pioneer women lawmakers to bring fairness and equity to the leadership structure of political parties and the jury selection process.

Summary and Conclusion

Though their numbers dropped in the first legislative session of the 1980s after the upsurge experienced in the 1970s, North Dakota's women legislators finished the decade in a stronger position than they had ever held. Substantive changes in the collective profile of these political women were an integral part of this development.

Though women legislators continued to be concentrated in the House, eight from their ranks won election to the Senate in the 1980s. This is twice as many as served in the upper house in the seventies. While Republican women continued to outnumber Democratic women in the legislature, over half of the women who began their legislative service between 1980 and 1989 were Democrats. As in the previous six decades, women legislators were elected with greater frequency from the eastern half of the state. In keeping with the trend begun in the seventies, urban female legislators outnumbered their rural and small town counterparts. The trend toward more multiple-term women legislators also begun in the seventies persisted in the eighties.
The background characteristics of beginning women legislators continued to change in the eighties. One of the most significant changes was the drop in the median age of beginning women legislators to forty-three. The median age in the seventies had been forty-seven. Legislative service had become more accessible to younger women in the last decade. It also became more accessible to women with young children. In the 1970s beginning women legislators with one or more children under the age of eighteen increased their ranks until they made up 35 percent of the total. In the 1980s this trend continued to the extent that women with young children comprised more than half of all incoming female legislators. Youth and young children became less of a deterrent to would-be women legislators in the eighties than in the previous six decades. Though single, divorced, and widowed women continued to be among the ranks of beginning women lawmakers, the dominance of married women persisted.

The occupational profile of beginning female legislators also underwent change in the past decade. The seventies had seen an increase in the number of women employed in traditional professions and a broadening of the occupational profile to include students and retired women. In the eighties this broadening continued to include women administrators and women who owned and operated businesses. Corresponding to this influx of women employed in what conventionally would be considered nontraditional
occupations was a drop in the number of full-time homemakers. The number of incoming women legislators employed in traditional female occupations or retired stayed about the same, while the number of women students increased.

Post-high school education, which had been a common background characteristic of women entering the North Dakota legislature between 1923 and 1979, came to dominate the educational profile of beginning women legislators in the eighties. While all of these women attended college, over half had earned an undergraduate or a graduate degree.

The ethnic profile of incoming women legislators, which had become more diverse in the 1970s, shifted toward less diversity in the eighties. Women of British Isles, Scandinavian, and German descent continued to outnumber women of other ethnic backgrounds, with women of British Isles ancestry retaining the lead they acquired in the seventies. The dominance of the Protestant religion among incoming women lawmakers, which was established in the first years women came to serve in the legislature, continued.

The pattern of family political connections and prior political experience continued to shift in the eighties. Prior office holding, which had declined among beginning women legislators in the 1970s, became slightly more common among women entering the legislature in the 1980s. While involvement in precinct, district, and/or state party politics at all levels was higher than ever, the most
substantial increase was in the number of beginning women legislators who had served in party leadership positions. Family roots in electoral politics continued to be a common feature of the background of incoming women legislators. The 1980s brought the first women who could claim female elected officeholders in their family trees.

Women entering the legislature in the eighties were, like their predecessors, highly active in a wide range of organizations prior to their first election. The last decade saw a reversal of the major organizational trend of the seventies--the notable increase in the number of women active in the League of Women Voters prior to running for public office.

Beginning in the early years of women's participation in the legislature and continuing through the 1980s, education and public welfare have been the major legislative interests of beginning female lawmakers. Like the women who preceded them, women entering the legislature in the past decade were interested in a wide range of other issues as well. While health care issues continued to capture the interest of a considerable number of newcomers, economic issues came to elicit more concern than ever before.

As in the previous six decades, women legislators, both beginning and experienced, continued to be assigned with great regularity to committees dealing with education and public welfare, committees traditionally viewed as female. The shift toward higher representation by women on
traditional male committees, which had begun after legislative reorganization in the 1940s, continued at an accelerated pace in the eighties. Nearly two-thirds of all female committee assignments in the last decade were to traditional male committees. While Judiciary continued to be the "male" committee most frequently assigned to women, there was a notable increase in the number of women assigned to Appropriations and Finance and Taxation. The vast majority of women's advancement on Appropriations was in the House.

While women remained underrepresented in leadership positions in the eighties, their gains were substantial. Whereas only one woman chaired a standing committee in the 1970s, seven women did so in the eighties. In terms of vice chair positions, eight women served in this capacity in the 1970s and seven in the following decade. Where women held three other legislative leadership positions in the seventies, they held five such positions during biennial sessions of the legislature during the last decade. In addition, one woman held the honorary position of interim president pro tempore of the Senate during a legislative interim. For the second time in the state's history, a woman was chosen to preside as Speaker of the House. The woman, Patricia "Tish" Kelly, served her term as Speaker in 1983, precisely fifty years after Minnie Craig became the first woman to serve in that capacity. Even with these gains, women legislators held only 6 percent of all
committee chair and vice chair positions occupied during the decade and only 6 percent of all other leadership positions.

Women serving in the North Dakota legislature in the 1980s initiated twice as many legislative sponsorships as their predecessors had in the seventies. The proportion of these sponsorships in the three established categories varied only slightly. In the eighties, 59 percent addressed traditional male issues and concerns, 34 percent addressed traditional female issues and concerns, and 7 percent addressed issues and concerns affecting women as a class. As a result of the substantial increase in bill and resolution-making activity, the actual number of pieces of legislation sponsored by women in this category during the 1980s was fifty-six, nearly double the number sponsored by women in the seventies. While they continued to address issues such as displaced homemakers and domestic violence, issues brought to the legislative agenda by their predecessors, they also spoke to "new" issues affecting women as a class in the 1980s, including surrogate motherhood and comparable worth.

Building on the work of the women who came before them, the women who served in the North Dakota legislature in the 1980s proved they were now an established force. They did so through their notable gains in leadership positions, their continuing presence on both traditional and nontraditional standing committees, and their increased efforts at initiating legislative sponsorships.
Perhaps Ruth Meiers best epitomized the legislative woman of the eighties in North Dakota. Meiers began the decade as a legislator from District Four in the northwestern corner of North Dakota and four years later had become the state's first woman lieutenant governor. As the first female legislator to use her legislative position and experience as a springboard to higher office, she represented the potential now within the grasp of her contemporaries. As a spokesperson for women in public life, she did not hesitate to identify herself as a "political woman" as the quote which opens this chapter shows. Nor did she hesitate to assert that women like herself, women in government and other areas of public life, were making a difference. And as she pointed out in her address to the Girls' State Convention in 1986, they were making a difference because they cared.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This study opened with a question. Who, collectively, were the seventy-two women who served in the North Dakota legislature between 1923, when women were first elected to that body, and 1989, the state's Centennial year? The answer to that question has changed over time. It began also with a hypothesis: not until the 1970s did women legislators as a group "post" themselves with the strength and confidence suggested in Minnie Craig's early advice to women considering politics. The findings of this study suggest a modification of that hypothesis. It was in the 1980s that collectively the state's women legislators came of age.

The first group of women focused on were those who served in the legislature between 1923 and 1969. Only twenty women served during these five decades. They were viewed with curiosity by the press, and presumably their male colleagues. They were subjected to a considerable amount of inquisitiveness regarding how they fulfilled the traditional roles as mother and homemaker.

As a group, these women were typically middle-aged, married, and without active child rearing responsibilities. They were well educated, many of them having attended
teachers' colleges. Women of Scandinavian and British Isles ancestry predominated, as did women of the Protestant religion. The majority of these women were employed in nontraditional occupations, including banking, insurance, and journalism. Just under half had served in elective office prior to their election to the legislature. Most of these served either as a school board member or as a superintendent of schools. About the same number had a relative, always a male relative, who preceded them in elective office. They were clubwomen, who participated in a wide range of political and other organizations.

Republican women far outnumbered their Democratic counterparts, as did small town and rural women their urban counterparts. Most of these twenty women were elected from the eastern half of the state and served in the House. More often than not, they served a single term.

The major interests that this group of twenty women brought to the legislature were education and social welfare. While these interests took precedence, a wide range of other interests also captured their attention. Their committee assignments reflected their major interests, particularly in the three decades before legislative reorganization in 1947. The committees that they were most frequently assigned to were Education and Social Welfare. In the fifties and sixties women legislators were assigned with more frequency to committees dealing with subjects conventionally considered the province of men.
During this period, a handful of women served in legislative leadership positions. All but one of these women served as a committee chair or vice chair. The exception was Minnie Craig, who served as Speaker of the House in 1933. Perhaps as much an aberration as an exception, Craig would remain the only woman to have served in this position in the United States until the mid-1950s. After winning the Speaker's post, a position she actively sought, Craig was to find herself a leader of men—men who did not, according to Craig, like to follow women. Minnie Craig resigned after her tenure as Speaker of the House, having proved that it was not impossible for a woman to penetrate the highest ranks of the legislative hierarchy.

The period produced another exceptional woman legislator—Brynhild Haugland. Haugland, who was first elected in 1939, served a total of twenty-five sessions in the House. For a number of those sessions, she was the lone reminder that women did have a place in the legislature.

While their legislative sponsorships addressed a wide range of policy areas, the majority of which were in areas not traditionally considered "female," just under a dozen of the bills and resolutions sponsored by women during the period spoke to issues and concerns affecting women as a class. This legislation addressed among other things the right of a married woman to serve as a guardian and the responsibility of women to serve on juries.
As small in number as they were, North Dakota's first women legislators created a foundation for the women who were to follow them. They did so by proving that women did have a place in the legislature. Rarely did they have the opportunity to demonstrate women had a place in leadership as well.

The second group of women under study served in the 1970s, when women emerged as a force in state legislatures around the country. Thirty-one women, five veterans and twenty-six newcomers, served during this period. Largely due to their increased presence, they were viewed by the press as less of a curiosity than their predecessors had been.

The women who began their legislative service in the seventies changed the collective profile of North Dakota's women legislators. Though like their predecessors, they were typically middle-aged and married, they had within their ranks significantly more women with young children. They also included a divorced woman for the first time and were more ethnically diverse. In contrast to the women who served in the previous five decades, these women were more likely to be employed in traditional female occupations or to be full-time homemakers. They were less likely to have served in an elective office prior to their election to the legislature, but took advantage of several "new" routes to the state house. Like their predecessors, they commonly had paternal family roots in elective politics and a penchant
for organizational activity. Participation in the League of Women Voters led a number of these women to seek public office.

Though Republican women continued to outnumber Democratic women in the ranks of the newcomers, Democratic women were elected more frequently in the seventies. Though still concentrated in the House, beginning women legislators served with slightly greater frequency in the Senate. Women serving multiple terms came to outnumber those serving single terms and urban women outnumbered women elected from small towns and rural areas.

Like the women who served before them, the twenty-six women who entered the legislature in the 1970s shared a common interest in education and social welfare. Together with the five veterans from the previous period, these women continued the trend toward higher female representation on traditional male committees. As they did so, they came to address with greater frequency "male" as well as "female" policy domains. While women made slight gains in their representation of important fiscal committees, the largely male legislative leadership still hesitated to let loose of what Minnie Craig had called "their exclusive right to handle the cash."¹

¹Craig autobiography.
While in the seventies women legislators served in leadership positions with greater frequency than they had in the past, they were still vastly underrepresented. The highest position a woman rose to during the decade was that of assistant floor leader. While some women pointed to the "old boys' club" as an explanation for the relative absence of women in leadership positions, others spoke to the continued reluctance of women to actively seek these positions.

As women legislators increased their bill and resolution-making activity in the 1970s, they came to address with greater frequency issues and concerns affecting women as a class. While overall their legislative sponsorships in this category remained significantly fewer than those in the other two categories, the actual number of female-sponsored bills and resolutions sponsored on behalf of women were three times as many as in the previous period. They continued to introduce "new" issues to the legislative agenda, including domestic violence and displaced homemakers. Increasingly, they advanced legislation designed to improve the status of women in the home and in the public arena.

The thirty-one women who served in the North Dakota legislature in the seventies were able inheritors of the foundation prepared for them by their predecessors. More numerous, more diverse, and in some ways more traditional than the women who served before them, these women raised
from that foundation a framework on which their successors would continue to build.

The final group of women studied were the forty-one who served in the legislature in the 1980s. Twenty-six of these women were newcomers, and fifteen were veterans of one or both of the previous periods. With their increased numbers and seniority, this group constituted more of a force than their predecessors had.

The women who began their legislative service in the eighties brought further changes in the collective profile of North Dakota's women legislators. They had within their ranks enough women in their twenties and thirties to cause the first appreciable drop in the median age of beginning women legislators. Their relative youth was also reflected in the fact that a majority of these women were the mothers of young children. Never had legislative service been as accessible, nor apparently as attractive, to young women with children as it was in the last decade.

Even better educated than their well-educated predecessors, this group of women expanded the occupational profile of beginning female legislators to include professional administrators and business owners. To a much greater extent than the women who served before them, these newcomers held leadership positions within their political parties prior to running for the legislature. They turned less to groups such as the League of Women Voters for their initiation into politics and more to their precinct and
district party organizations. Among them were the first women legislators to be able to claim maternal roots in electoral politics.

The trend toward increased representation by Democratic women that began in the seventies culminated in the eighties when, for the first time, Democratic beginning women legislators outnumbered their Republican counterparts. The trend toward greater representation by women in the Senate collected some momentum when the number of women winning election to the upper house doubled over the decade of the seventies.

Education and social welfare continued to be the major legislative interests of incoming women legislators. While remaining steadfast in their service on committees devoted to education and welfare issues, beginning and veteran women legislators of the eighties came to serve with even greater frequency than their predecessors on traditional male committees. Notable increases in the number of female assignments to important fiscal committees indicated a willingness on the part of the still predominantly male leadership to loosen their once exclusive control of the legislative purse strings.

Though they continued to be underrepresented in the legislative hierarchy in the eighties, women sought and obtained leadership positions with greater success than ever before. Women experienced substantial gains in terms of chair and vice chair positions, winning leadership spots on
such prestigious committees as Appropriations and Judiciary. After fifty years, a woman once again rose to the top leadership position in the House. Like Minnie Craig, Patricia "Tish" Kelly sought and won the speakership in the House on her own initiative. Unlike Craig, she was elevated to the post by legislative colleagues willing to accept and follow a female leader. If the women who served before them proved that women had a place in the legislature, the female legislators of the 1980s proved that women had a place in the legislative hierarchy. While women lawmakers continued to name the "old boys' club" as a source of difficulty, at least one long-term female legislator serving in the eighties saw an increasing willingness on the part of women to challenge that "tight circle."

In terms of legislative sponsorships, women serving in the last decade more than doubled the bill and resolution-making activity of their counterparts in the seventies. Because the proportion of sponsorships in the three designated categories varied only slightly, the result was a two-fold increase in the number of pieces of legislation affecting women as a class. While introducing to the legislative agenda such "new" issues as surrogate motherhood and comparable worth, women legislators substantially increased the amount of proposed legislation addressing the issue of violence against women.

If the pioneer women legislators laid a foundation upon which the female lawmakers of the seventies raised a
framework, the women who served in the eighties took up the equally difficult task of building upon and refining that which they inherited. With numbers and seniority greater than that of their predecessors, they undertook this task as a group of women more able than those who came before them to "post" themselves, to establish their own opinions, and to build on their knowledge and confidence. As the women who ultimately fulfilled Minnie Craig's vision of what a "lady" in politics could do and be, the women legislators of the eighties prepared the way for their counterparts in the 1990s who will play a role in moving the state's chief lawmaking body into the next century.

The seventy-two women who served in the North Dakota legislature during the first one hundred years of statehood are far from well-known. Collectively and individually they go unmentioned in the major histories of the state, including Elwyn Robinson's *History of North Dakota*, a standard by which other histories are measured. Even Minnie Craig, a "first" not only in the state, but also in the nation, does not make so much as a footnote in Robinson's study. Lack of knowledge of the history of these few, but important women has resulted in the spread of misinformation about them. For example, when Shirley Lee was named Outstanding Legislator of the Year by the National Republican Legislators Association in 1984, press coverage of her award referred to her as "the first woman chairman of
a Senate standing committee."² In fact, Lee was the third, not the first woman to chair such a committee. A source for this and other information about North Dakota's women legislators has been lacking. This collective biography is meant to fill that gap.

While this exploratory study has sought to answer a wide range of questions about the backgrounds and the experiences of women legislators in North Dakota, many questions remain for future research, including the following. How have women legislators been similar to and different from their male counterparts in terms of background characteristics, legislative interests, and routes to the state house? How have their perspectives on policy issues compared with those of male legislators? Have female lawmakers played a role in inspiring and supporting the candidacy and election of other women to the legislature? How closely do the experiences of women legislators in North Dakota parallel those of women in other states? How successful have women legislators been in getting their legislative proposals enacted? What role did women's organizations play in motivating and supporting female legislative candidates during the past seven decades? Women's organizations in North Dakota in this century in general and the League of Women Voters in particular are

related topics worthy of future research. So too are the individual careers of such outstanding female political leaders as Minnie Craig, Brynhild Haugland, Patricia "Tish" Kelly, and Ruth Meiers. When told, their stories will inspire and guide a new generation of "ladies" considering politics.
## APPENDIX A

### NORTH DAKOTA WOMEN LEGISLATORS, 1923-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Post Office</th>
<th>Party*</th>
<th>Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amsberry, Lavina</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Wheelock</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>'29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backlin, LuGale (now LuGale Schirber)</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Bismarck</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>'73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauclair, Sister Mary</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Carrington</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>'77</td>
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<td>Benedict, Pauline</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Berthold</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>'77-'79</td>
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<td>House</td>
<td>West Fargo</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black, Rosie</td>
<td>House</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>'77-'83</td>
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<td>House</td>
<td>Fargo</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>'75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carlson, Sarah</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Grand Forks</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>'89</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cleveland, Connie</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Grand Forks</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>'85-'87</td>
</tr>
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<td>Craig, Minnie</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Esmond</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>'23-'33</td>
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<td>DeMers, Judy</td>
<td>House</td>
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<td>House</td>
<td>Dunseith</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>Wahpeton</td>
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<td>House</td>
<td>Fargo</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>House</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>House</td>
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* Party affiliation does not reflect factions.
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* Party affiliation does not reflect factions.
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<th>Party*</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>'77-'81</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>'81</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ring, Jennifer</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>'89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rydell, Catherine</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>LaMoure</td>
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* Party affiliation does not reflect factions.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Party*</th>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>'69-'73</td>
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<td>Tierney, Marie</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>'79-'81</td>
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<td>Fargo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>'73-'75</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>'75-'89</td>
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<td>Williams, Adella</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Lidgerwood</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>'83-'89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Party affiliation does not reflect factions.
APPENDIX B
NORTH DAKOTA WOMEN LEGISLATORS BY SESSION
1923-1989

1923
Minnie Craig
Nellie Dougherty

1925
Minnie Craig
Laura Sanderson

1927
Minnie Craig
Mary McGinnis

1929
Lavina Amsberry
Minnie Craig
Mabel Lindgren

1931
Minnie Craig

1933
Minnie Craig
Mary Rathbun

1937
Nellie Olson

1939
Byrnhild Haugland
Susie Ista

1941
Byrnhild Haugland

1943
Byrnhild Haugland

1945
Byrnhild Haugland

1947
Nettie Ellingson
Byrnhild Haugland

1949
Byrnhild Haugland

1951
Agnes Geelan
Byrnhild Haugland

1953
Agnes Geelan
Byrnhild Haugland
Rosamund O'Brien

1955
Byrnhild Haugland
Rosamund O'Brien

1957
Byrnhild Haugland
Rosamund O'Brien
1959
Brynhild Haugland
Sybil Kelly
Rosamund O'Brien

1961
Brynhild Haugland
Sybil Kelly
Anna Powers

1963
Brynhild Haugland
Sybil Kelly
Anna Powers

1965
Frances Froeschle
Brynhild Haugland
Anna Powers

1967
Aloha Eagles
Helen Claire Ferguson
Brynhild Haugland
Fern Lee
Grace Stone

1969
Aloha Eagles
Brynhild Haugland
Grace Stone

1971
Aloha Eagles
Brynhild Haugland
Fern Lee
Corliss Mushik
Grace Stone

1973
LuGale Backlin
Aloha Eagles
Stella Fritzell
Brynhild Haugland
Elynor Hendrickson

Marjorie Kermott
Violetta LaGrave
Fern Lee
Shirley Lee
Alice Olson
Grace Stone
Cheryl Watkins

1975
Kay Cann
Aloha Eagles
Stella Fritzell
Brynhild Haugland
Pam Holand
Terry Irving
Tish Kelly
Marjorie Kermott
Fern Lee
Shirley Lee
Ruth Meiers
Corliss Mushik
Alice Olson
Anna Powers
Cheryl Watkins
Janet Wentz

1977
Sister Mary Beauclair
Pauline Benedict
Rosie Black
Aloha Eagles
Stella Fritzell
Brynhild Haugland
Jean Herman
Tish Kelly
Marjorie Kermott
Fern Lee
Shirley Lee
Joann McCaffrey
Ruth Meiers
Bonnie Miller
Corliss Mushik
Alice Olson
Anna Powers
Burness Reed
Janet Wentz
1979
Pauline Benedict
Rosie Black
Florenz Bjorson
Dayle Dietz
Aloha Eagles
Stella Fritzell
Brynhild Haugland
Bonnie Miller Heinrich
Jean Herman
Carolyn Houmann
Tish Kelly
Marjorie Kermott
Fern Lee
Shirley Lee
Ruth Meiers
Corliss Mushik
Alice Olson
Burness Reed
Elaine Vig
Janet Wentz

1981
Rosie Black
Dayle Dietz
Aloha Eagles
Stella Fritzell
Brynhild Haugland
Carolyn Houman
Tish Kelly
Shirley Lee
Ruth Meiers
Dorothy Moun
Corliss Mushik
Dagne Olsen
Alice Olson
Burness Reed
Gayle Reiten
Marie Tierney
Elaine Vig
Janet Wentz

1983
Rosie Black
Judy DeMers
Aloha Eagles
Stella Fritzell
Brynhild Haugland
Julie Hill
Tish Kelly
Shirley Lee

Ruth Meiers
Jerry Meyer
Bonnie Miller Heinrich
Corliss Mushik
Donna Nalewaja
Dagne Olsen
Alice Olson
Jean Rayl
Janet Wentz
Adella Williams

1985
Connie Cleveland
Judy DeMers
June Enget
Brynhild Haugland
Julie Hill
Tish Kelly
Jerry Meyer
Bonnie Miller Heinrich
Corliss Mushik
Rosemarie Myrdal
Donna Nalewaja
Dagne Olsen
Alice Olson
Cathy Rydell
Mary Kay Sauter
Beth Smette
Janet Wentz
Adella Williams

1987
Connie Cleveland
Judy DeMers
Patricia DeMers
June Enget
Brynhild Haugland
Bonnie Miller Heinrich
Julie Hill
Tish Kelly
Jerry Meyer
Corliss Mushik
Rosemarie Myrdal
Donna Nalewaja
Carolyn Nelson
Dagne Olsen
Alice Olson
Cathy Rydell
Catherine "Kit" Scherber
Beth Smette
Janet Wentz
Adella Williams
1989

Sarah Carlson
Judy DeMers
Patricia DeMers
June Enget
Kathi Gilmore
Brynild Haugland
Bonnie Miller Heinrich
Roxanne Jensen
Tish Kelly
Karen Kresbach
Diane Larson
Jerry Meyer
Corliss Mushik
Rosemarie Myrdal
Donna Nalewaja
Diane Ness
Dagne Olsen
Alice Olson
Jennifer Ring
Cathy Rydell
Kit Scherber
Beth Smette
Janet Wentz
Adella Williams
APPENDIX C

WOMEN LEGISLATORS HISTORY PROJECT SURVEY

Name __________________________________ __________________
Last First Middle Maiden

Address __________________________________________________
Street City State Zip

Home Phone #________________ Office phone #_________________

First I would like to ask about your background, placing particular emphasis on your life circumstances when first elected to the legislature.

1. Place of birth:____________________ Date of birth:___________

2. Type of community in which you were raised: Farm________
Small town________ City_________

3. Ethnic heritage: Mother's side_______________________________
Father's side_______________________________

4. Religious preference:_______________________________________

5. Highest level of education you have completed: (circle number)
   1 No formal education
   2 Some grade school
   3 Completed grade school
   4 Some high school
   5 Completed high school
   6 Some college
   7 Completed college--specific major ______________________
   8 Some graduate school
   9 A graduate degree--
      specific degree and major ______________________

6. Present occupation:_________________________________________

7. Occupation when first elected to legislature: _________________

8. Present political party affiliation: ___________________________

9. Political party affiliation when first elected to the legislature:


10. Present marital status: (circle number)
    1 Single
    2 Married
    3 Divorced
    4 Separated
    5 Widowed
11. Marital status when first elected to the legislature: (circle #)
   1 Single
   2 Married
   3 Divorced
   4 Separated
   5 Widowed

12. If married when first elected to the legislature, your spouse's occupation at the time of your election:

13. If you have children, the number and ages of your children when you were first elected to the legislature:
   Number__________ Ages________________________

14. Your age when first elected to the legislature: ______________

15. Organizations in which you were active when first elected to the legislature and those in which you are currently active:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Active Then</th>
<th>Active Now</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. How and when you first became involved in party politics:

17. What roles you have played in local, district, state, and/or national political party structures:

   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
18. Public office(s) for which you ran before you were elected to the legislature, indicating those to which you were elected:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

19. Public office(s) for which members of your family (spouse, parents, grandparents, etc.) have run, indicating those to which they were elected:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

20. Appointed or elective offices you now hold (excluding legislator):

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

21. Political campaigns on which you worked prior to being elected to the legislature, briefly describing campaigns:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

22. Legislative district out of which you were elected: Dist._____
General nature of district: Farm_____ Small town_____ City_____
# of years you had resided in this district when 1st elected_____

23. Number of terms you have served in the ND Legislature:

_____ terms in House of Representatives _____ terms in Senate

24. Legislative committees, including interim committees, on which you have served: ("*" those which you have chaired; indicate with an "X" those for which you have served as vice-chair)

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
25. In general, how supportive were the following groups and individuals of your candidacy for the legislature? (utilize the following scale: 5=very supportive; 4=somewhat supportive; 3=neutral; 2=somewhat unsupportive; 1=very unsupportive)

_____ spouse _____ parents _____ children _____ friends
_____ district party leadership _____ state party leadership
_____ co-workers _____ women's organizations
_____ other organizations _____ others—specify ______________

Now I would like to ask some open-ended questions about the role of women in the legislature and your experience as a legislator.

26. Your reasons/motivations for running for the legislature:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

27. Person(s) who inspired you to become involved in politics and/or to run for the legislature: (please explain briefly)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

28. Your major areas of legislative interest:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

29. Do you tend to agree or disagree with the following statement? "Women legislators have a special responsibility to represent the interests of women." (circle number of answer)

1 Agree
2 Disagree

Please explain: ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
30. Areas in which you believe you are/were able to exert the most influence and why:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

31. What you believe are/were your major accomplishments as a legislator:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

32. What you find/found to be most rewarding about serving in the legislature:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

33. What you find/found to be most difficult about serving in the legislature:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

34. What special qualities, if any, you believe women bring to the legislative process:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
35. What special problems or concerns, if any, you believe women face as legislators:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

36. If you are no longer a legislator or your service was interrupted, what ended or interrupted your legislative service:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

37. Your plans, if any, for continued or future involvement in politics:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

38. Please use this space for any additional comments you would like to make concerning what serving as a legislator has meant to you:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this survey. Your contribution to this effort is greatly appreciated. If you would like a summary of results, please indicate this at the end of your release form.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY AND RELEASE FORM TO:

Ann Rathke
930 North 7th Street
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501
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