

# CELEBRATING 85 YEARS OF MILESTONES FOR WORKINGWOMEN

## 1910s

- 1919: **Business and Professional Women/USA** (BPW/USA) is founded in July 1919 in St. Louis as an outgrowth of the U.S. Government's Women's War Council that organized the resources of professional women during World War I.

## 1920s

- 1920: Women win the right to vote after passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- 1920: The Women's Department of the Department of Labor is established.
- 1920: **BPW/USA** adopts the Collect for Women written by BPW/USA member Mary Stewart for use at meetings.
- 1921: The **BPW/USA** Emblem consisting of a Torch, Wand, Ship of Commerce, Scroll and Nike Symbols within a Golden Circle is selected.
- 1923: With the support and efforts of **BPW/USA**, the War Classification Act, establishing a uniform salary for each grade and class of work in the Federal Civil Service, is enacted.
- 1928: With the theme, "Better Business Women for a Better Business World," **National Business Women's Week™** (NBWW) is established by **BPW/USA** to celebrate women's accomplishments and their contribution to the workforce and the economic success of the nation.

## 1930s

- 1932: Hattie Caraway becomes first woman to be elected in her own right to the United States Senate.
- 1932: Ruth Nichols is the first woman hired as a pilot for a commercial airline. Amelia Earhart is the first woman to fly across the Atlantic alone.
- 1933: Frances Perkins becomes first woman Cabinet member.
- 1935: Mary McLeod Bethune organizes the National Council of Negro Women, a coalition of black women's groups that lobbied against job discrimination, racism and sexism.
- 1936: The federal law prohibiting the dissemination of contraceptive information through the mail is modified and birth control information is no longer classified as obscene.
- 1937: **BPW/USA** is one of the first women's organizations to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment and continues to be a leader in working for passage of the Constitutional Amendment ever since.

## 1940s

- 1940: **BPW/USA** issues a pamphlet, "Women Need Their Jobs" to guard against the age-old trend of pressing women into service during a war and then sending them home when the emergency is over. **BPW/USA** also presses the War Department for equal pay for women called to do "men's jobs" as part of the civilian workforce.
- 1941: Florence Seibert, a biochemist, develops an effective skin test for tuberculosis.
- 1942: First Lt. Annie G. Fox, Army Nurse Corp, is the first woman to receive the Purple Heart. She died during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Later she was also awarded a Bronze Star.
- 1945: **BPW/USA** helped shape the future political agenda for women by organizing a conference on "Postwar Career Problems of Service Women," that included all of the commanding officers of the women's service organizations.
- 1945: The "Women's Pay Act of 1945" - the first legislation to require equal pay - is introduced in the U.S. Congress. It takes another 18 years before an equal pay bill makes it to the President's desk to be signed into law.
- 1945: Women make up half the U.S. labor force, forever changing attitudes toward women and work.

- 1948: The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 grants women permanent status in the Regular and Reserve forces of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps as well as in the newly created Air Force

## 1950s

- 1950: There are 18.4 million women in the work force.
- 1955: Women earn an average of 63 cents for every dollar earned by men.
- 1956: **BPW/USA** creates the **BPW Foundation** to provide scholarships, research, information and career development programs for workingwomen.
- 1956: **BPW/USA** moves its headquarters from New York City to Washington, DC.
- 1958: Julia Child is the first woman to be designated a full-fledged "chef."

## 1960s

- 1960: The Food and Drug Administration approves birth control pills.
- 1963: The first **BPW/USA** National Legislative Conference is held in Washington, D.C. It later develops into BPW/USA's current Policy & Action Conference, where members lobby Congress and the Administration on issues of importance to workingwomen.
- 1963: The establishment of "Status of Women" commissions in the United States is due largely to **BPW/USA** efforts.
- 1963: President Kennedy recognizes **BPW's** leading role in securing passage of the Equal Pay Act by giving **BPW/USA's** President the first pen he used when signing the Act into law.
- 1964: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act bars discrimination in employment on the basis of race or sex is passed. At the same time, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is established to investigate complaints and impose penalties.
- 1964: **BPW/USA** President Virginia Allan initiated the "Young Careerist" Program to develop the business and presentation skills of young women between 25-35 years of age.
- 1966: The National Organization for Women (NOW) is founded.
- 1966: The first six women qualify for U.S. Space Program.
- 1967: Legal provisions placing a two percent cap on the number of women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces and a ceiling on the highest grade a woman can achieve are repealed.
- 1967: Muriel Siebert becomes the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.
- 1968: Shirley Chisholm of New York is the first black woman elected to Congress. Four years later, she campaigns for the Democratic Party presidential nomination.
- 1969: The **BPW Foundation** establishes Career Advancement Scholarships to provide educational assistance for workingwomen who need further training for a promotion, to move to a more promising career field, or reenter the job market.



Business and  
Professional  
Women/USA

For 85 years, Business and Professional Women/USA has promoted equity for all women in the workplace through advocacy, education and information.

## 1970s

- 1972: The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is passed by the U.S. Congress and sent to the States for ratification. Only 35 of the necessary 38 States ratify the ERA by 1982. **BPW/USA** and its members continue to work towards ratification of the ERA today.
- 1973: Title IX of the Education Amendments banning sex discrimination in schools is passed. **BPW/USA** members are instrumental in the lobbying effort supporting the legislation.
- 1972: Susan Lynn Roley and Joanne E. Pierce become the first female FBI agents.
- 1973: The Civil Service Commission eliminates height and weight requirements that have discriminated against women applying for police, park service, and fire fighting jobs.
- 1973: As a result of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court establishes a woman's right to safe and legal abortion, overriding the anti-abortion laws of many states.
- 1974: Ella Grasso is the first woman elected Governor in her own right (Connecticut).
- 1975: The U.S. Supreme Court rules that women cannot be excluded from juries because of their sex.
- 1974: The Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibits discrimination in consumer credit practices on the basis of sex, race, marital status, religion, national origin, age, or receipt of public assistance.
- 1976: Sarah Caldwell is the first woman to conduct the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.
- 1978: The Pregnancy Discrimination Act bans employment discrimination against pregnant women.
- 1979: The **BPW** Political Action Committee (**BPW/PAC**) is formed to endorse federal candidates. **BPW/USA** intensified efforts to eliminate discrimination based on sex and marital status in credit, capital, and insurance practices.

## 1980s

- 1980: By changing "women" to "individuals," **BPW/USA** revises its bylaws to permit men as members. This was well before many men only organizations were forced to open their membership through court action.
- 1981: Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 1983: Elizabeth Bailey is the first woman to head a major graduate business school at Carnegie Mellon University.
- 1983: Sally Ride, becomes the first American woman in space.
- 1984: Geraldine Ferraro accepts Democratic Party vice presidential nomination.
- 1986: In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, the Supreme Court finds that sexual harassment is a form of illegal job discrimination.
- 1987: Wilma Mankiller is elected the first woman chief of the Cherokee Nation.
- 1986: San Francisco is the first U.S. city to approve a pay equity referendum. **BPW/USA** had spotlighted "comparable worth" by calling on newspapers to stop the occupational segregation in classified ads (clustering of women in a few restricted occupations of low-paying, dead-end jobs). Numerous state and municipal governments revamp their pay scales, recognizing dissimilar jobs may not be identical, but may be comprised of tasks, educational requirements, experience and other characteristics that are equivalent or comparable.
- 1988: **BPW/ USA** begins the "Red Purse Campaign" to draw national attention to wage disparity. Using the "BPW" letters to represent Better Pay for Women, **BPW** focuses national media attention on the issue via the red purse.

## 1990s

- 1991: Delores Richard Spikes, the first black graduate of Southern University of Louisiana, is chosen as the first woman to head a university system (Southern University system).
- 1991: Desert Storm is the first war with women in combat, flying in supplies, maintaining equipment, running communications systems, and firing Patriot missiles. Eleven women are killed, and two taken prisoner.
- 1992: A record number of women run for public office and win. Twenty-four are newly-elected to the House of Representatives and six to the Senate. It is declared the "The Year of the Woman."
- 1993: The Family and Medical Leave Act is passed and signed into law, allowing workingwomen to balance their personal and professional duties. **BPW/USA** grassroots members across the country lobbied hard for the legislation's passage.
- 1993: Ms. Foundation for women sponsors the first "Take Our Daughters to Work Day," designed to build girls' self esteem and broaden the possibilities they saw for their own lives.
- 1993: Janet Reno becomes the first female U.S. Attorney General.
- 1994: Oprah Winfrey is the highest paid person in television and an international role model. She is one of a few women who own their own production studios.
- 1997: Madeline Albright becomes the first female United States Secretary of State.
- 1999: Eileen Collins, a veteran of three space flights, is the first woman shuttle commander on the Columbia.

## 2000s

- 2001: Condoleezza Rice becomes the first woman National Security Advisor to the President of the United States.
- 2001: There are 66 million workingwomen in the United States.
- 2001: The average American woman was paid 76 cents for every dollar made by a man.
- 2002: Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi is elect Democratic Leader of the House of Representatives, becoming the highest ranking woman in the U.S. Congress and the first woman to lead a major political party.
- 2003: The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of National Business Women's Week™ is kicked off with a **WOMENomics** Forum in Washington, DC on October 20, 2003. During the next six months 50 more Forums are held in communities across the country.
- 2003: On October 21, 2003, **BPW/USA's** President Carolyn Grady rings the Closing Bell at the New York Stock Exchange in celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Business Women's Week™.
- 2004: **Business and Professional Women/USA** celebrates its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

**Business and Professional Women/USA (BPW/USA), founded in 1919, promotes equity for all women in the workplace through advocacy, education, and information, With 1,500 Local Organizations across the country and members in every congressional district, BPW/USA is the leading advocate for millions of workingwomen on work-life balance and workplace equity issues. For more information see [www.bpwusa.org](http://www.bpwusa.org) or call 202-293-1100.**