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Women in Politics**By: Kennedy Aikey, Hailey Trimpey, and Andrea Hoffman****Introduction:**

Just over a century ago, women were given the legal right to participate in politics by earning the right to vote. Up until that point, women found creative ways to participate in public affairs. A century later, however, women are still underrepresented among public officials. This can be traced back to two main reasons—aversion to electoral politics by women and voter bias. Nonetheless, many notable Ohio women have contributed to robust representation in public office.

Question #1 The history of women in politics

The 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote in 1920, however women have been involved in politics since long before. Prior to obtaining the right to vote, women formed voluntary organizations, lobbied, organized petition drives, and raised money in order to participate in politics. In doing so, they were able to influence both social movements and civic life. The idea of women's suffrage was first proclaimed in July 1848 at Seneca Falls in New York. There was a two day convention to discuss the idea; the second day included men in the discussion. In 1870, women in Utah and Wyoming were the first to see the influence of the convention when they cast ballots in general elections for the first time.

Women's political activism began to see large improvements in the 1960s when the Women's Rights Movement commenced. This movement sought equal rights and opportunities for women and is known as the second wave of feminism, the first being focused on the legal rights of women. In 1971, the National Women's Political Caucus was founded and dedicated itself to increasing women's political participation. What was intended to be the year of women soon became the decade of women. This organized activism paved the way for participatory inclusion and can be credited for the progress today in women's rights. Women have been elected or appointed in all levels of political life except for the role of president of the United States.

Question #2 Why are women underrepresented in politics and what is being done to fix this?

Currently in the United States, women holding elected official positions is at an all-time high. Yet, despite composing 51% of the population, women only make up 19% of all members of Congress and less than 25% of all state legislatures. This is the case even though women are more likely to vote in elections than men. There are two main reasons that women are underrepresented in politics. The first reason is election aversion. This means that women often don't run for office because they have different political ambitions, compared to their male counterparts. Also research shows that women are frequently underestimated regarding their qualifications, while men's qualifications are overestimated. The second main reason is due to voter bias. Even though there is much being done for women's equality, many Americans continue to be reluctant to support female candidates largely based upon their gender.

The United States has progressed a long way with getting women in elected office. America currently has our first female vice-president and there are more women in office than ever before. There are still more things that can be done to yield greater equity regarding women running for political office. First, steps can be taken to recruit more women to run for office. By encouraging women and minorities to run, this would likely yield more strong candidates and increase funding for their campaigns. It is also important that the role of 'big money' is reduced during elections. Running a campaign is extremely expensive, but research demonstrates that it is more expensive for women to run a campaign. Also, we need to improve work-family policies. It is argued that if elected positions were more accommodating to a family friendly work environment, more women would be willing to take on a role in politics.

Question #3 Who are some notable women in politics from Ohio?

Ohio has many notable women who have served in politics on a variety of levels of government. Florence Ellinwood Allen, Mary Ellen Withrow, Nancy Hollister, and Jennette Bradley have served the state of Ohio in varying capacities and their legacies have left an impact on the women who serve after them.

Florence Ellinwood Allen was the first woman assistant county prosecutor in the United States and the first woman elected to a judicial office in Ohio. In addition, Allen also was the first woman in the nation to be elected to the court of last resort - Supreme Court of Ohio - and the first woman to be appointed to a federal appeals court judgeship.

Mary Ellen Withrow was the first female to serve at the local, state, and federal level in her position as Treasurer. Withrow served as Marion County Treasurer, Ohio State Treasurer, and was appointed by President Clinton as the U.S. Treasurer. While Withrow was serving as the Ohio State Treasurer, she was recognized as one of the best state officials in the United States. During her time as U.S. Treasurer, Withrow redesigned the five, ten, twenty, fifty, and hundred dollar bills.

In the early 1980s Nancy Hollister began her political career by serving on the Marietta City Council, then as Mayor of Marietta. Recognized for her time as mayor, Hollister was appointed as the director of the Governor's Office of Appalachia, where she advised the Governor on how to improve the lives of those in Appalachian counties in Ohio. Under Governor George Voinovich, Hollister became the first female Lieutenant Governor. When Governor Voinovich resigned to become one of Ohio's United State Senators, Hollister became the first female Governor of Ohio, where her term lasted 11 days. Following her time as governor, Hollister went on to serve in the Ohio House of Representatives.

Lastly, Jenette Bradley became the first African American woman to be elected to Columbus City Council in 1991. In 2002, Bradley served as the first African American woman to hold the office of Lieutenant Governor. Following her term, Bradley went on to serve as the Treasurer for the state of Ohio.

Conclusion:

While women have made progress in their rights to participate in politics, they still have room to grow. Women make up 51% of the population, yet hold less than one quarter of elected offices at the state and national levels. We are facing unprecedented times as we currently have the

first female Vice President elected to office. It is important that we continue to work toward equal participation and representation among all people.