

## **‘Equal rights’: Wyoming was first state to grant women the right to vote decades ahead of 19th Amendment**

**Annie Todd, Special to USA TODAY**

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Women in Wyoming are filled with grit. Whether it's withstanding long, lonely winters on the homestead when your nearest neighbor is miles away or rising above the death of your husband and running a successful election campaign to become the first female governor like Nellie Tayloe Ross, Wyoming women have shown their strength, tenacity and leadership many years.

Wyoming has long celebrated that it was the first state in the nation to grant women the right to vote with no restrictions in 1869. It's even in the state motto: "equal rights." Months after the law was passed, women were allowed to serve on juries, and Louisa Swaine became the first woman to vote in Laramie. Esther Hobart Morris became the first woman in the nation to hold public office as a justice of the peace in South Pass City. For 150 years, women in Wyoming have proved time and time again that they have a seat at the table.

This year, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, when American women won the legal right to vote, the USA TODAY Network is naming 10 women from every state, plus the District of Columbia, as "Women of the Century." These women have made significant contributions to their communities, states and country with documented achievements in areas like arts and literature, business, civil rights, education, entertainment, law, media, nonprofits and philanthropy, politics, science and medicine, and sports.

The 10 women below are a snapshot of the long list of women throughout the state who inspire those around them and their communities. Women who didn't make the final list were dynamic, such as Nina McConigley, an award-winning writer focusing on cowboy culture and East Indians' place in the American West, and Betty Woolsey, the captain of the first Olympic women's ski team in 1936. It was almost impossible to choose a final group of women based on all that these women had accomplished.

**Ann Redman** has become a mentor for many young girls as the founder of the Wyoming Latina Youth Conference is a nonprofit dedicated to mentoring and educating young Latina women and girls.

Breaking stereotypes for Latinas living in the U.S. in the 1950s, Redman went to college and got an office job. Years later, Redman worked for the state of Wyoming, including being an International Trade Assistant and Protocol Officer. She worked for the state for 22 years and worked with many former governors. She was on the planning committee for the state's centennial celebration. In 2017, Redman received the Woman of Influence Lifetime Achievement Award from the Wyoming Business Report.

To empower the Hispanic community in Wyoming, Redman also launched the Hispanic Organization for Progress and Education (HOPE), which supports Latinx students wishing to go to college with scholarships to Laramie County Community College.

<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/life/women-of-the-century/2020/08/13/wyoming-woman-equal-rights-first-state-women-voting-rights/5021228002/>