

March 10, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

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

#### Sources:

- **Biographic Directory of the US House of Representatives** (<http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/14512>)
- **O'Dea Schenken, Suzanne** (1999), *From Suffrage to the Senate: An Encyclopedia of American Women in Politics, Volume One.*
- **Wasniewski, Mathew Andrew** (2006), *Women in Congress, 1917-2006.*

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## Women's History Month 2015

*Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.*

### Cecil Murray Harden (1894-1984)

Cecil Murray Harden was born in Covington, Indiana, in November 1894. She served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1949 to 1959, and was the only Republican woman to do so until recently when Susan Brooks (District 5) and Jackie Walorski (District 2) became U.S. Representatives from Indiana. Harden took an active interest in politics after President Herbert Hoover appointed her husband, Frost Revere Harden, postmaster of Covington. After President Franklin Roosevelt appointed a Democrat to that position a year later, she became involved in the local Republican committee. As an ardent politician, Cecil Harden said early in her public career,

*There is no game more fascinating, no game more important, than the great game of politics as we play it here in America. The more interest you take in politics, the more you meet your responsibilities as a citizen.*

In 1932, she served as a precinct vice committeewoman, a position she held until 1940. In 1938, she became the vice chairperson of the Fountain County GOP, which she held until 1950 and was made vice chair of an Indiana congressional district. Harden then became Republican national committee woman for Indiana from 1944 to 1959 and was an At-Large delegate to the Republican National Conventions in 1948, 1952, 1956 and 1968. After Indiana Representative Noble Johnson resigned in 1948 to accept a federal judgeship, Harden won the Republican nomination for the general election that fall. With little public recognition, Harden decided to canvass the district in her station wagon on a seven-day-a-week speaking tour and to buy space on roadside billboards. She narrowly won the election with only 483 votes. Congresswoman Harden went on to serve five terms as U.S Representative of Indiana District 6.

Harden was an early advocate of women's rights. She believed women had an important part to play in politics, particularly in local organizations and volunteer groups, which would provide the kind of experience they needed to move into higher offices. She once wrote,

*"...Before we women start making any real progress in politics, we must somehow develop a genuine conviction of our own worth to the world... We must feel in our hearts that women are as competent to assess problems and meet situations as men."*  
(*Washington Post*, 5 March 1949)

Representing the same district as Virginia Jenckes, the first female Representative from Indiana, Harden obtained widespread support by paying close attention to its economic needs. She promoted flood control for the Wabash Valley and secured funding for a dam and recreational facility. After losing her attempt for a sixth term, Harden was the special assistant for women's affairs to the postmaster general from 1959 to 1961. She served on the National Advisory Committee for the White House Conference on Aging in 1970. Afterward, she retired to her home in Covington and died on December 5, 1984.