

Cecil Harden

Covington, Fountain County

November 21, 1894 – December 5, 1984



Photo: United States House of Representatives

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 elected until 2012. She 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 and in 1932, served as a precinct vice committeewoman, a position she held until 1940.

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 US 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. 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.

After retiring to her home in Covington, she died December 5, 1984.

- For more information about Cecil Harden, go to: <http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/14512>.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women's History Month

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