

# **GOP: On the Right Side of History**



## **First Woman in Congress**

Jeannette Pickering Rankin (June 11, 1880 – May 18, 1973) was an American politician and women's rights advocate, and the first woman to hold federal office in the United States. She was elected as a Republican to the U.S. House of Representatives by the state of Montana in 1916, and again in 1940. She is to date the only woman elected to Congress from Montana.

Rankin was also instrumental in initiating the legislation that eventually became the 19<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, granting unrestricted voting rights to women. She was proudest of being the only woman who was able to vote in Congress for the women's right to vote. She championed the causes of gender equality and civil rights throughout a career that spanned more than six decades.

By 1917, women had been granted some form of voting rights in about forty states, but Rankin became a driving force in the movement for unrestricted universal enfranchisement. She was instrumental in the creation of the Committee on Woman Suffrage, and became one of its founding members. In January 1918, the committee delivered its report to Congress, and Rankin opened congressional debate on a Constitutional amendment granting universal suffrage to women. The resolution passed in the House but was defeated by the Senate; in 1919 a similar resolution passed both chambers. After ratification by three-fourths of the states, it became the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. (source: Wikipedia)