WIDOWS WHO SUCCEEDED THEIR HUSBANDS IN CONGRESS

47 women have been elected or appointed to fill congressional vacancies created by the deaths of their husbands, 8 to the U.S. Senate and 39 to the U.S. House of Representatives.

U.S. Senate - 8

1931-45 Hattie Wyatt Caraway (D-AR) 1978-79 Maryon Pittman Allen (D-AL)
1936-37 Rose McConnell Long (D-LA) 1978-79 Muriel Buck Humphrey (D-MN)
1948 Vera Cahalan Bushfield (R-SD) 1992 Jocelyn Birch Burdick (D-ND)
1960-67 Maurine Brown Neuberger (D-OR) 2001-02 Jean Carnahan (D-MO)

U.S. House of Representatives – 39

1923-25 Mae Ella Nolan (R-CA) 1957-63 Kathryn Elizabeth Granahan (D-PA)
1925-37 Florence Prag Kahn (R-CA) 1958-61 Edna Oakes Simpson (R-IL)
1925-60 Edith Nourse Rogers (R-MA) 1961-63 Catherine Dorris Norrell (D-AR)
1929-31 Pearl Peden Oldfield (D-AR) 1961-63 Louise Goff Reece (R-TN)
1930-33 Effiegene Locke Wingo (D-AR) 1962-63 Corinne Boyd Riley (D-SC)
1932-33 Willa McCord Blake Eslick (D-TN) 1964-65 Irene Bailey Baker (R-TN)
1934-35 Marian Williams Clarke (R-NY) 1966-67 Lera Millard Thomas (D-TX)
1938 Elizabeth Hawley Gasque (D-SC) 1972-73 Elizabeth B. Andrews (D-AL)
1940-69 Frances Bolton (R-Oh) 1973-91 Corinne “Lindy” Boggs (D-LA)
1940-49 Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME) 1973-97 Cardiss Collins (D-IL)
1940-41 Florence Reville Gibbs (D-GA) 1975-79 Shirley N. Pettis (R-CA)
1940-41 Clara Gooding McMillan (D-SC) 1979-93 Beverly Barton Butcher Byron (D-MD)
1941-43 Katharine Edgar Byron (D-MD) 1982-83 Jean Ashbrook (R-OH)
1942-43 Veronica Grace Boland (D-PA) 1983-87 Sala Burton (D-CA)
1944-45 Willa Lybrand Fulmer (D-SC) 1985-87 Catherine S. Long (D-LA)
1951-55 Vera Daerr Buchanan (D-PA) 1996-2013 Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO)
1951-63 Marguerite Stitt Church (R-IL) 1998-2013 Mary Bono (R-CA)
1951-65 Maude Elizabeth Kee (D-WV) 1998-2017 Lois Capps (D-CA)
1952-75 Leonor K. Sullivan (D-MO) 2005-present Doris Matsui (D-CA)
1954-57 Mary Elizabeth Pruett Farrington (R-HI)

In addition to the 39 widows in the House, Debbie Dingell (D-MI, 2015 – present) succeeded her living husband after his retirement, the only woman to date to do so.

1 Of the 8 women who took Senate seats after the death of their husbands, six were appointed to their deceased husband’s seats and one won a special election. In addition, Jean Carnahan was appointed to the Senate seat won posthumously by her husband.

2 Of the 39 women who filled vacancies caused by the deaths of their husbands, 37 won special elections; the exceptions were Leonor Sullivan (see below) and Elizabeth Hawley Gasque (D-SC), who was never sworn in or seated, since Congress was not in session between her special election and the expiration of her term.

3 Smith also served in the U.S. Senate 1949-73.

4 Leonor Sullivan did not succeed her husband directly, having lost the special election primary. She won the subsequent general election for the seat he held.

5 Farrington was a non-voting delegate to U.S. House of Representatives because Hawaii was not yet a state.