

## Recognizing Wisconsin Women

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***Senator Smith recognizes March as Women's history month with how women in his life have shaped his views on being an advocate for women and their advancement in society.***

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MADISON - March is Women's History Month – it's a time for us to recognize women's achievements, honor women's history and reflect on the work that still needs to be done. At an early age, I was most inspired and influenced by the women in my life. I'm fortunate to have had these relationships throughout my life. Women have motivated me in so many different ways and have shaped me to be the person I am today.

I met my first best friend, Linda, when my family moved into my childhood home in Eau Claire. As kids, social norms taught us boys that we were supposed to play with boys and girls with girls. Despite these norms, and the taunts from the other kids in school, Linda and I played together.

Linda's friendship taught me the importance of questioning social norms. If we had listened to the others in our classroom, I would've missed out on many memories, a great friendship and

an even greater lesson.

Time and time again girls were at the top of our class. I learned to respect the efforts and work of the girls around me, especially the times when I fell short.

As I grew older, I continued to develop new friendships with the young women in my high school, which I still treasure to this day. In my adult life, that never changed. It was always clear to me that women in my life were motivated and knowledgeable in so many different aspects.

This includes the most important women in my life - my wife, Sue, along with our daughters, Emily and Sarah. They've pushed me to be well-rounded and inspired me to be who I am today. Whether it be at home, at the office, or even on the campaign, I've seen how the women around me stay committed and get things done.



From early on, I learned the importance of working with women. Without these relationships I wouldn't be as aware of the diverse life perspectives in my community or the importance of listening to others while I've served as State Senator.

Our society relies on decision-makers spanning from local elected offices to Congress in which women have been underrepresented for years. Even today, in Wisconsin, women make up less than one-third (30.3%) of our legislature. Over the last 24 years there has only been a 6.8% gain in the gender-gap for our state legislature, demonstrating that Wisconsin has a lot of room for improvement.

Despite Wisconsin being ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> nationally for the amount of women serving in the legislature, we have seen some encouraging trends. Especially of note is our Wisconsin Supreme Court. Six of seven Supreme Court Justices are women in Wisconsin and 50% of our statewide elected constitutional officers are women. It's incredible to watch talented Wisconsin women serve our state in all elected offices.



I understand that we all have busy schedules and a lot of things going on in our lives; however, we must remember to value the concerns and experiences of others, including the girls and women of our state. I've learned so much growing up with strong women surrounding me. These relationships are a reminder for me to stand up, support others, and advocate for issues that may not personally affect me.

As we continue to celebrate Women's History Month, let's make a better effort to celebrate the women in our lives by developing new friendships, connecting with others, and strengthening the voices around us.

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*Senator Smith represents District 31 in the Wisconsin State Senate. The 31st Senate District includes all of Buffalo, Pepin and Trempealeau counties and portions of Pierce, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson and St. Croix counties.*

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