

For immediate release

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Public Invited to Help Honor Women in Government

Hundreds of people are expected to converge on Helena April 16 to honor women, past and present, who have been elected to serve the state of Montana.

Among them will be about a dozen descendants of Emma Ingalls, one of the first two women elected to serve in the Montana Legislature. Ingalls, a Republican from Flathead County, was elected in 1916, only two years after Montana women earned the right to vote and four years before national suffrage. Maggie Smith Hathaway, a Democrat from Ravalli County, was elected the same year.

The ceremony, entitled “Celebrating Women Elected to Serve the State of Montana,” will be at 9 a.m. in the Capitol Rotunda. It’s sponsored by the Capitol Complex Advisory Council, Montana Historical Society, Legislative Services Division, and Women’s Foundation of Montana.

The public is welcome to attend, but seating will be limited.

The bipartisan event will commemorate women who have served in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government, as well as at the 1972 Constitutional Convention.

Former and current female officials and their families are expected to attend.

Ellen Baumler, author and historian with the Montana Historical Society, will be the keynote speaker. Other speakers will be:

- Karla Gray, former chief justice of the Montana Supreme Court
- Diane Barz, former Supreme Court justice and District Court judge
- Carol Williams, 2009 Senate minority leader
- Margaret Campbell, 2009 House majority floor leader
- Dee Brown, 2009 House minority whip
- Dorothy Eck, former legislator and Constitutional Convention delegate
- Betty Babcock, former first lady, legislator, and Constitutional Convention delegate
- Janet R. Kelly, director of the state Department of Administration and chair of the Capitol Complex Advisory Council

Secretary of State Linda McCulloch and former legislator Marjorie Fisher will unveil a bronze plaque commemorating women who served in the Legislature between 1895 and 1995. The plaque will hang outside the main door to the Senate chambers.

A reception will follow the ceremony.

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