

**Fourth Grade Lesson Plan**  
**Women in Texas Politics:**  
**Winning the Vote, Three Pioneers, and Serving the People**

**Introduction:** Women have served the people of Texas in many ways since the earliest days of the state's settlement. Beginning in 1893, they organized and fought for the right to vote, which is called "woman's suffrage or enfranchisement." Women won this important right in 1919, when the Texas Legislature ratified the 19th amendment to the United States Constitution. Since then, women in Texas have run for, and won, political races. Today, women in the state continue to serve the public in many positions, including as members of the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate.

**Objective:** This lesson plan introduces students to women's involvement in state politics, from their struggles to win the right to vote to their service in the state legislature. At the end of the lesson, students will have gained an understanding of how women worked to achieve voting rights and a place in the state legislature. The lesson can be covered in three class periods.

**TEKS:**

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

(B) identify the leadership qualities of state and local leaders, past and present.

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

(C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

(E) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

**Teachers' and Students' Materials:**

1. Adapted excerpt of *The Handbook of Texas Online* article "Woman Suffrage"
2. Woman Suffrage "When Did it Happen?" timeline game (two sheets, including teacher's key)

3. One-page biographies of Edith Wilmans, Barbara Jordan, and Irma Rangel
4. “Three Texas Female Pioneer Legislators: What Wilmans, Jordan, and Rangel Accomplished” essay sheet
5. “Women’s Issues and Texas Female Legislators” activity sheet
6. “Texas Legislator’s Letter to Student” activity sheet

## **Procedures**

### Day One: Woman Suffrage

The teacher:

1. discusses with the students the article based on *The Handbook of Texas Online* article “Woman Suffrage,” pointing out key dates and events leading to women’s gaining the right to vote. (The underlined items in the article are related to the time line game noted in #2 below.)
2. hands out the Woman Suffrage “When Did it Happen?” timeline game.
3. discusses questions students may have about the meaning of “woman suffrage” or “enfranchisement.”
4. works with students to complete the Woman’s Suffrage “When Did It Happen?” timeline game (posts her key on overhead projector or on PowerPoint).

The students:

1. working with the teacher, fill in the correct word on the time line to match the word with the year.

Closing: Students report back their results.

### Day Two: Three Texas Female Pioneer Legislators

The teacher:

1. hands out the one-page biographies of three female pioneer legislators.
2. reviews the biographies with the students, pointing out key accomplishments.

The students:

1. complete the essay, using the “Three Texas Female Pioneer Legislators: What Wilmans, Jordan, and Rangel Accomplished” essay sheet.
2. focus their essay on one of these legislators, comparing and contrasting the person they chose to write about with one of the other two legislators.

Closing: The students' essays should be displayed in a public place in the school, with photos of the three women alongside them that students and teachers locate via the Internet or another source.

Day Three: Women's Issues

The teacher:

1. hands out and reviews with students the "Women's Issues and Texas Female Legislators" activity sheet.
2. discusses with students the "women's issues" ideas listed on the activity sheet.
3. asks students to discuss their own ideas about "women's issues." They can generate a list of their ideas that they can vote on later (see closing below).
4. discusses with the students the illustrations and questions on the activity sheet in preparation for the letter the students will write.

Students:

1. complete the "Texas Legislator's Letter to Student" letter.

Closing: The students can participate in a voice vote on the issues they selected as important. They can post the results in the classroom for all to see.

## Woman Suffrage

Although women were involved in doing the hard work of settling the land that became Texas, for many years they were not allowed to vote to elect political leaders for the state they helped establish. Efforts were made at the Constitutional Conventions of 1868-1869 and 1875 to grant women voting rights, but without success.

In May 1893, Rebecca Henry Hayes of Galveston was the leader in organizing the Texas Equal Rights Association in Dallas (TERA). Auxiliaries of the group were organized in Denison, Dallas, Fort Worth, Taylor, Granger, San Antonio, Belton, and Beaumont. A bill to give women the right to vote was introduced in the Texas House of Representatives in 1895 but it was not reported out of committee for a vote. Hayes and the executive committee of the TERA disagreed on matters, and she not reelected to the presidency. By 1896, TERA was no longer in existence.

Houston and Galveston suffragists met in Houston in 1903 to establish the Texas Woman Suffrage Association, and elected Annette Finnigan as their president. She moved away from Texas in 1905, and the association stopped operating.

In 1907, Granbury State Representative Jess A. Baker introduced in the House of Representatives a resolution to give women the right to vote. Although such important women as sculptor Elisabet Ney and Helen M. Stoddard, who led the state Woman's Christian Temperance Union, testified for the resolution's passage, the resolution was not adopted.

Austin became the home in 1908 of a woman suffrage club, making it for a number of years the only such group in Texas that worked for a woman's right to vote. In 1912, the City of San Antonio became the site of an Equal Franchise Society, with Mary Eleanor Brackenridge serving as its president. The society succeeded in bringing much public interest to a woman's right to vote through lectures and by distributing materials. As a result, more than 100 individuals gathered in April 1913, in San Antonio to revive the Texas Woman Suffrage Association, choosing Mary Eleanor Brackenridge as president. At its 1916 convention, association members changed the name of their group to the Texas Equal Suffrage Association (TESA).

In 1918, knowing that gaining the right to vote would be a hard battle to win, women continued to push hard, sponsoring public debates, talking to residents by going from door-to-door, and writing letters to members of the state legislature.

In March 1918, State Representative Charles B. Metcalfe of San Angelo introduced a bill that would allow women to vote in primary elections. The bill was passed and Governor William P. Hobby signed it into law. Eager to participate in political races, in seventeen days 386,000 women registered to vote in the Democratic primary scheduled for July 26, 1918. They endorsed William P. Hobby for governor and Annie Webb Blanton for state superintendent of public instruction. With the election of both of these candidates, women had finally established a strong voice in Texas politics.

In June 1919, when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution was submitted for ratification to all the states, the Texas Legislature supported it. As a result, women in Texas gained the right to vote. Winning the right to vote was the first step in a long process that would have women running for, and winning, political elections.

By 1919, twenty-six years had passed from the day in May 1893, when Rebecca Henry Hayes had organized the TERA in Dallas. Four years later, in 1923, Edith Eunice Therrel Wilmans, a Dallas lawyer, would take a seat in the Texas House of Representatives, the first woman ever to serve in the state legislature. Over time other women would follow in her footsteps.

(Excerpted and adapted by Teresa Palomo Acosta from “Woman’s Suffrage” article by A. Elizabeth Taylor, *The Handbook of Texas Online*)



## Woman Suffrage “When Did it Happen?” Timeline Game



*Working with your teacher, write the correct word on the timeline dates, using the words underlined in each item below.*

Texas House of Representative Member Jess A. **Baker** introduces a resolution to enfranchise women, but it fails to win support.

Members of the Texas Woman Suffrage Association change the name of the organization to the Texas Equal Suffrage Association (**TESA**).

Rebecca Henry **Hayes** of Galveston leads the effort to organize the Texas Equal Rights Association.

Women win the right to vote in the Texas primary elections. In seventeen days, **386,000** women register to vote in the Democratic Party primary election.

A bill to give women voting rights **fails** to be reported out of committee in the Texas House of Representatives.

Woman suffragists meet in Houston to organize the Texas Woman Suffrage Association and elect Annette **Finnigan** as the president. When she moves from Texas, the group disbands.

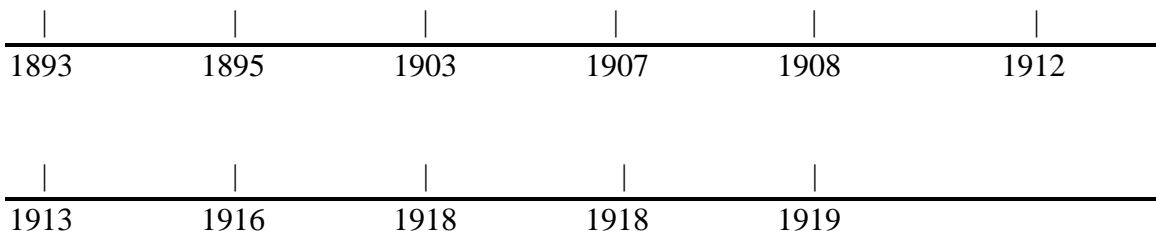
Women continue to work for voting rights by working in suffrage organizations, conducting debates and forums, going from house-to-house to talk to residents, and sending **letters** and petitions to members of the state legislature.

A woman’s suffrage club is organized in **Austin**. It is the only such club for a number of years.

An Equal Franchise Society is formed in San Antonio. Mary Eleanor **Brackenridge** is elected its president.

Texas ratifies the **19<sup>th</sup>** Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women in Texas the right to vote in all elections.

More than 100 people from seven Texas cities meet in San Antonio to **revive** the Texas Woman Suffrage Association. They elect Mary Eleanor Brackenridge to be president.





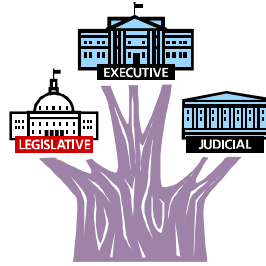
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**Woman Suffrage**  
**“When Did It Happen?” Timeline Game**  
**Teacher’s Key**

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- 1893: Rebecca Henry **Hayes** of Galveston leads the effort to organize the Texas Equal Rights Association.
- 1895: A bill giving women voting rights **fails** to be reported out of committee in the Texas House of Representatives.
- 1903: Woman suffragists meet in Houston to organize the Texas Woman Suffrage Association and elect Annette **Finnigan** as the president. When she moves from Texas, the group disbands.
- 1907: Texas House of Representative Member Jess A. **Baker** introduces a resolution to enfranchise women, but it fails to win support.
- 1908: A woman’s suffrage club is organized in **Austin**. It is the only such club for a number of years.
- 1912: An Equal Franchise Society is formed in San Antonio. Mary Eleanor **Brackenridge** is elected its president.
- 1913: More than 100 people from seven Texas cities meet in San Antonio to **revive** the Texas Woman Suffrage Association. They elect Mary Eleanor Brackenridge to be president.
- 1916: Members of the Texas Woman Suffrage Association change the name of the organization to the Texas Equal Suffrage Association (**TESA**).
- 1918: Women continue to work for voting rights by working in suffrage organizations, conducting debates and forums, going from house-to-house to talk to residents, and sending **letters** and petitions to members of the state legislature.
- 1918: Women win the right to vote in the Texas primary elections. In seventeen days, **386,000** women register to vote in the Democratic Party primary election.
- 1919: Texas ratifies the **19<sup>th</sup>** Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women in Texas the right to vote in all elections.



## Edith Eunice Therrel Wilmans (1882-1966) Texas Pioneer Female Legislator

**First Political Involvement:** Keenly interested in women's political rights, Wilmans became a leader for women in Dallas. In 1914, she helped organize the Dallas Equal Suffrage Association and later helped organize the Dallas Housewives League and the Democratic Women of Dallas County. Wilmans also served as president of the Democratic Women's Association of Texas. Wanting to improve the status of women and children, she studied law. In 1918, she was admitted to the bar.

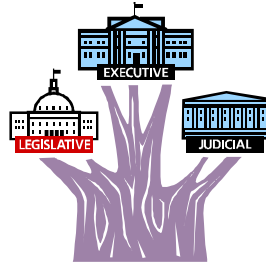
**Texas Legislature:** Edith Eunice Therrel Wilmans became in 1922 the first woman elected to the Texas House of Representatives. That year, she was one of eight women who ran for election to the legislature. She was elected to represent District 50 in Dallas County in the Thirty-eighth Texas Legislature. As a member of the legislature, Representative Wilmans introduced five bills, with only her education appropriations bill passed into law. She lost her reelection race for the legislature in 1924.

**Other Endeavors or Achievements:** Governor Pat M. Neff appointed Wilmans to the All-Woman Supreme Court in Texas in 1925, but she could not serve because she lacked the required seven years experience as a lawyer. Wilmans ran for Texas governor in 1926 and 1928, but lost. During the gubernatorial campaign, she supported prison reform, stricter child labor laws, protection of freedom of the press, and health protection for factory workers. In 1935, she attempted to return for a second term in the legislature but was defeated. Wilmans also ran unsuccessfully for the United States Congress in 1948 and in 1951.

**Personal:** Edith Eunice Therrel Wilmans was born on December 21, 1882, at Lake Providence, East Carroll Parish, Louisiana. Her parents were Benjamin Franklin and Mary Elizabeth (Grier) Therrel. The family moved to Dallas in 1885, and Wilmans attended the city's public schools. On Christmas Day in 1900, she married Jacob Hall Wilmans, and the couple had three daughters. Jacob Wilmans died in 1923. In 1929, Wilmans married Henry A. Born of Chicago; the marriage ended in divorce, and she returned to Dallas to practice law. Edith Wilmans died in Dallas on March 21, 1966.

Sources: *The Handbook of Texas Online* biography of Edith Eunice Therrel Wilmans by Edith Eunice Wilmans Malone and *Capitol Women: Texas Female Legislators, 1923-1999* by Nancy Baker Jones and Ruthe Winegarten





## **Barbara Charline Jordan (1936-1996)** **Texas Pioneer Female Legislator**

**First Political Involvement:** Barbara Charline Jordan, a Houston lawyer in private practice, became involved in politics during the 1960 presidential campaign by registering African American voters. In the early 1960s, she twice ran for a seat in the Texas Senate, losing both times.

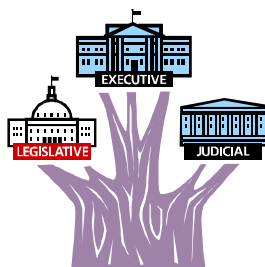
**Texas Legislature:** In 1967, Jordan became the first African American elected to the Texas Senate since 1883. Redistricting and the increase in voter registration among African American voters helped make her election possible. In the Senate, Jordan worked to improve the minimum wage and to increase voter registration. Her fellow senators respected her and unanimously elected her president pro tempore of the Senate in 1972.

**U.S. Congress:** After serving in the Texas Senate, Jordan was elected in 1972 to the United States House of Representatives. Her election made her the first African American woman from the South and the first African American from Texas to enter the U.S. Congress. Jordan cosponsored bills to establish equal credit for women, tax credits for low-income Americans, and health programs. A very talented speaker, Jordan became nationally known during the 1974 Watergate hearings as a member of the House Judiciary Committee investigating President Richard M. Nixon and the Watergate Scandal. During the hearings, she said, "My faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total. I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution." Because of her eloquence and her accomplishments, she was asked to deliver the keynote address at the 1976 Democratic National Convention. She was the first woman to do so.

**Other Endeavors or Achievements:** Jordan retired from the Congress in 1979 and began a long teaching career at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin. She held the Lyndon Baines Johnson Public Service Professorship. She published her autobiography, *Barbara Jordan: A Self Portrait*, in 1979.

**Personal:** Barbara Charline Jordan was born in Houston, Texas, on February 21, 1936, to Benjamin and Arlyne (Patten) Jordan. She attended public schools in that city. Jordan graduated with highest honors from Texas Southern University in 1956, and earned her law degree from Boston University in 1959. She died in Austin on January 17, 1996.

Sources: *The Handbook of Texas Online* biography of Barbara Charline Jordan by Mark Odintz and *Capitol Women: Texas Female Legislators, 1923-1999* by Nancy Baker Jones and Ruthe Winegarten



## **Irma Lerma Rangel (1931-2003) Texas Pioneer Female Legislator**

**First Political Involvement:** Irma Rangel became chairperson of the Kleberg County Democratic Party in 1974.

**Texas Legislature:** In 1975, after a conference on female public officers, members of the Mexican American Women's Caucus and the Texas Women's Political Caucus urged Rangel to run for office. Responding positively to their suggestion, she raised some money from women farm workers. Rangel succeeded in her quest, and in 1976, she won a seat in the Texas House of Representatives. Her election made her the first Tejana to serve in the legislature. For the next twenty-six years, Rangel represented the people of the Forty-Ninth Legislative District. She was a supporter of higher education and equal rights for the poor and for minorities. In 1993, she pushed through the South Texas Border Initiative, which provided \$450 million for colleges that served the poor in her region. From 1995 to 2003, Rangel served as chair of the House Higher Education Committee. She was also a sponsor for the law called the "Top Ten Percent Plan," which required that students in the top ten percent of their graduating class be admitted to college.

**Other Endeavors or Achievements:** Irma Rangel was recognized for her many contributions. In 1994, she was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame. In 1997, the Mexican American Bar Association named Rangel "Legislator of the Year." In 1998, she received the Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, making her only the third Texan to receive the prize.

**Personal:** Irma Lerma Rangel was born to Prescilian Martínez and Herminia (Lerma) Rangel in Kingsville, Texas, on May 15, 1931. She graduated from the Texas College of Arts and Industries, now known as Texas A&M University-Kingsville, in 1952. After a career in education in Texas, California, and Venezuela, Rangel earned her law degree from St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio in 1969, and became the first Tejana female law clerk for a federal district judge. Rangel was a partner in the law firm of García and Rangel in Kingsville. She died on March 18, 2003.

Sources: *The Handbook of Texas Online* biography of Irma Lerma Rangel by Britney Jeffrey and *Capitol Women: Texas Female Legislators, 1923-1999* by Nancy Baker Jones and Ruthe Winegarten



## Three Texas Female Pioneer Legislators: What Wilmans, Jordan, and Rangel Accomplished



After reading and discussing the biographies of Edith Wilmans, Barbara Jordan, and Irma Rangel, use this sheet to write an essay describing what the women accomplished as legislators and as leaders. Also, compare and contrast the legislator you chose to write about with one of the other two Texas female pioneer legislators. Use another sheet, if needed, necessary, to complete your essay.

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## Women's Issues and Texas Female Legislators



Texas female legislators have introduced bills that became state laws covering every aspect of state government, including agriculture, banking, technology, and taxes. Some female legislators have focused on concerns that have arisen from women's traditional roles as wives and mothers:

- Gaining equal legal rights for women.
- Improving education.
- Improving health care, child support, and child care.
- Breaking the glass ceiling that keeps women from advancing in a job.

Do you think that these four areas should concern only women? When legislators create laws, they think about the future and how men and women will contribute their skills and talents to solving problems. Study the drawings and questions below. Then, imagine that you are a legislator responding to a fourth grader who has asked you a question about their hopes and dreams. Select only one question to answer. (Use the next sheet to write your letter.)



How can you help me grow up to be a scientist and study the world's climate?



What kinds of laws can you pass to help me receive an education to become a musician?



How will you make sure Texas has enough medical schools for me to study to be a doctor and take care of children's health?



**Texas Legislature  
State Capitol  
Austin, TX  
Working to Improve the Future of all the People**



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

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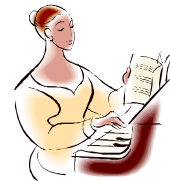
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Sincerely yours,

*Teresa Palomo Acosta created this lesson plan for the Ruthe Winegarten Foundation. The lesson plan is free to users for educational purposes.*