



- *Activist*
- *Politician*

TIMELINE

- 1914** - Leads successful women's voting drive in Montana
- 1916** - Voted to U.S. Congress—first woman ever
- 1916** - Casts "no" vote against bill proposing U.S. entry in WWI
- 1918** - Loses bid for senate
- 1918** - Moves to Georgia; works

Jeannette Pickering Rankin

1880–1973

Inducted 2005

Born on a ranch in Missoula, Montana, Jeannette Pickering Rankin was described as an "active, vigorous child, physically fearless, aware of her own competence and strong in her self-confidence." The development of these qualities helped make her the first woman ever to be elected to the U.S. Congress. In 1914, Jeannette led a successful drive to secure voting rights for women in Montana.

In 1916—four years before women gained the right to vote, nationally—she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Entering Congress as a member of the Republican Party, Jeannette helped draft the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote. The amendment was originally defeated in the Senate, but was enacted in 1919. Jeannette's first vote in Congress was a defining one, as she voted against U.S. entry into World War I.

" Few members of Congress have ever stood more alone while being true to a higher honor and loyalty."

- President John F. Kennedy on Jeannette Pickering Rankin's opposition to WWI

Though she was accompanied by 50 other members of Congress who also cast "no" votes, it was her ballot that became the focus of the pacifist discussion.

In 1918 Jeannette lost a bid for election to the Senate. That same year she moved to Watkinsville, Georgia—a small, comfortable farm community where she worked diligently to strengthen her platform of peace. Though she voted in Montana and owned a small farm there, her biographer, Norma Smith, explains that Jeannette "was a guest in Montana... Georgia was home." While living in Watkinsville, Jeannette became field secretary for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She campaigned on behalf of the National Council for the Prevention of War, and with her help Carl Vinson's \$616 million naval construction bill—a bill that she believed wasteful and unnecessary—was defeated. Vinson was Georgia's Sixth Congressional Representative. From her new home in Georgia, Jeannette also worked for the National Consumer's

with several organizations for peace and women's and children's rights

1928 - Founds Georgia Peace Society

1940 - Elected to Congress for second term

1942 - Votes "no" to bill calling for U.S. to enter WWII

1943 - Returns to Georgia; continues work for peace

1968 - Leads 5,000-woman march on U.S. capitol protesting Vietnam War

1976 - Jeannette Pickering Rankin Foundation formed to help low-income adult women afford higher education

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League, lobbying extensively on behalf of women's and children's rights. Believing strongly that everyone should be exposed to the idea of pacifism, through the many organizations she was affiliated with Jeannette worked to educate people across the country.

In 1928 she founded the Georgia Peace Society, and through it organized the Georgia Conference on the Cause and Cure of War.

In 1940, Jeannette won a seat in the House of Representatives for a second time. She again voted against war. But this time she was the sole dissenter against the resolution for the U.S. to enter World War II. Her "no" vote sealed the fate of her second term in office, and she did not seek re-election in 1942. After traveling extensively to visit family and friends, Jeannette returned to her farm in Georgia. There, she continued to work for peace for decades to follow.

In 1968 she led a group of 5,000 women in a march on Capitol Hill to protest the Vietnam War. The march was her final public forum, at the age of 87. Upon her death, Jeannette left a portion of her Georgia estate to assist "mature unemployed women."

The Jeannette Rankin Foundation was chartered in 1976 with the purpose of helping low-income women over the age of 35 return to college. Since 1978, the foundation has provided educational grants to more than 387 women throughout the United States. Through her life's work and her foundation, Jeannette Pickering Rankin's legacy of humanitarianism and feminism continues while helping women achieve their goals through education.

Additional Resources

The Jeannette Rankin Foundation

White, Florence Meiman, *First Woman in Congress: Jeannette Rankin*, New York: Julian Messner, 1980

Berson, Robin Kadison, *Marching to a Different Drummer: Unrecognized Heroes of American History*, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994