



### **History of the Bipartisan Women's Caucus**

The Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues was founded in 1977 and later changed its name to the Bipartisan Women's Caucus (BWC). When it was founded, the Caucus included 15 of the 18 women who served in the House of Representatives. Today, nearly one-third of the House are women members.

With its founding, the Caucus offered a clear space for women members to speak in public and with each other about women's policy issues with the goal of developing, initiating, and promoting bipartisan legislation and public policies for women.

Early Caucus priorities included eliminating sex discrimination and expanding employment opportunities for women in the federal workforce.

Past accomplishments of the Bipartisan Women's Caucus include:

- The Pregnancy Discrimination Act (1978)
- The Retirement Equity Act (1984)
- The Civil Rights Restoration Act (1987)
- The Women's Business Ownership Act (1988)
- The Breast and Cervical Cancer Mortality Prevention Act (1990)
- The Child Support Enforcement Act (1992)
- The Mammography Quality Standards Act (1992)
- The Family and Medical Leave Act (1993)
- The Violence Against Women Act (1994)
- The Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering, and Technology Development Act (1998)

Over the years, the Caucus has advanced women's policy issues through a variety of means, from letters to Administration officials and appropriators to must-pass legislative agendas and legislative priorities that guided the work of bipartisan women Members. Issues that the Caucus has historically championed include women's health, women veterans, women in STEM, and women in the workforce.

Most recently, in 2023, the Bipartisan Women's Caucus Leadership authored a letter to then HHS Secretary, Xavier Becerra, about prioritizing women's cardiovascular health.

### **About the Women's Congressional Policy Institute**

There is a unique relationship between the Bipartisan Women's Caucus and the Women's Congressional Policy Institute (WCPI), as WCPI was formed out of the Caucus in 1995 when the House of Representatives voted to abolish several legislative service organizations, including the Women's Caucus. This effectively eliminated funding for Caucus staff and office space on the Hill. Following the vote, Congresswomen reorganized themselves into an informal caucus by the same name to continue their bipartisan advocacy on behalf of women, but without staff, the Caucus was no longer able to provide the highly respected information services Members had come to depend on.

As a result, with the encouragement of Congresswomen on both sides, two former members of Caucus staff formed a new nonprofit organization called Women's Policy, Inc. (WPI). Founding Board Members included Representatives Constance Morella (R-MD) and Nita Lowey (D-NY), the Co-Chairs of the Caucus in the 104th Congress.

Women's Policy, Inc. later changed its name to WCPI in 2021.

WCPI now exists as a nonpartisan public policy nonprofit whose mission is to bring together a community of bipartisan women policymakers and trusted partners to advance issues of importance to women, develop the next generation of women leaders, and foster a more effective and representative democracy.

WCPI programming includes, but is not limited to, spotlighting all women-related congressional legislation through our [Weekly Legislative Update](#), providing guidance to congressional staff and Members of the Bipartisan Women's Caucus, offering young girls the opportunity to engage with women in leadership on Capitol Hill on our Take Our Daughters to Congress Days (TODS), promoting women's involvement in congressional leadership through our Women Chiefs of Staff program, and providing support for multiple women per year through Congressional Fellowships.

WCPI works in tandem with the Bipartisan Women's Caucus to develop and pursue legislative priorities for women, notably through hosting congressional briefings alongside the Caucus.