



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Empowering Women in Government; Past, Present and Future

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS June 8, 2010

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In the New York State Legislature there are a total of 212 elected positions, currently only 51 women are members of either chamber, while women make up the larger portion of New York's population. This statistic emphasizes our need to recognize the women that have made significant contributions in the past and present while motivating more women to participate in government or become active in their individual communities in the future.

June 9<sup>th</sup> will mark the 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the passing of Victoria Claflin Woodhull, a women's rights activist and longtime New York State resident, who is recognized as the first female candidate for President of the United States. While Woodhull was not victorious in her bid, she paved the way for women all over the country to run for office.

The last few weeks have presented me with the opportunity to recognize the past, present and inspire the future generations of women leaders.

Several weeks ago I nominated one of Yonkers' own Helen Henkel to be a New York State Senate Woman of Distinction. Helen's commitment to the City of Yonkers and County of Westchester are unparalleled and truly embodies the spirit of female empowerment. Helen was honored with a ceremony in the State Capitol in Albany along with women from each of the other sixty-two Senate districts. The New York State Senate's Women of Distinction are

the leaders in each of our communities that currently make New York truly special.

More recently, I was honored to give the keynote speech at the [White House Project](#)'s annual "Go Run" civic and political leadership training for women. My speech was aimed at encouraging young women to run for office and to inspire them to be the future generation of leaders in our state.