

DRAFT #1
8/24/95

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF
THE 75th ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
JACKSON, WYOMING
AUGUST 26, 1995

I can think of no better place to be than Jackson, Wyoming on the 75th anniversary of women's suffrage.

Wyoming was not only the first place in the United States to grant women the right to vote, but also the first state to give our nation a woman governor (Nellie Taylor Ross). Jackson was the first city to elect an all-woman city council, and we are honored to have with us today the relatives of two of those councilwomen.

During this week of stories, speeches, and commemorations, I have learned a little bit more about why the West was so crucial to the enfranchisement of women in our country. And I think it speaks to the basic values of the people in this state and this region -- your pioneering spirit, your willingness to seek out new opportunities, your independence and, of course, your resilience in the face of change and uncertainty.

One of the most endearing and enduring figures in Wyoming history -- a woman whose name I only recently came to know -- is Mrs. Esther Morris. Like so many of the earliest settlers here, she followed her husband and son to Wyoming in the middle of the 19th century.

She had once heard a speech by Susan B. Anthony and was so inspired that she began speaking about suffrage here in Wyoming. Legislators and community leaders were so impressed with what she said that they pledged their support.

Not only did the state pass a suffrage bill, Mrs. Morris became the first woman to be named justice of the peace in this country. Furthermore, not one of the 40 cases she handled was ever reversed by a higher court.

She was one of many courageous people who made suffrage possible here in Wyoming. It took state representatives -- all men, of course -- to vote in favor of it; a bachelor governor to resist vetoing the suffrage bill; and a state legislature that did not cave in to threats from Congress that statehood would be denied because women in Wyoming were allowed to vote.

So, given the history of this great state, I think it can safely be said that Wyoming has led the way for a very long time in strengthening the voice of women in the political arena throughout our country. Thank you for including us in your celebration.

This anniversary of women's suffrage affords us a chance to celebrate the courage and commitment of Americans whose sacrifices have enabled women across our country to make their ideas, concerns, and experiences count in public life.

It also gives us an opportunity to measure our progress and to reflect on the challenges that remain before us.

For that reason, I would like to talk briefly about an event that holds great promise for the 135 million women of America -- as well as hundreds of millions of women around the world.

It is an event that incorporates many of the aspirations and goals of the suffrage movement -- and holds similar hopes for improving the economic, social, and political opportunities for women.

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, which will begin nine [ck] days from now is about investing in people. Investing in the potential of human beings to make the world a better place.

It is also a celebration of the family. We all know that the family is the foundation of our lives as individuals; families are also the building blocks of any healthy, productive society.

The conference will focus world attention on the challenges and burdens women face in trying to improve their own lives and the lives of their children and families.

Above all, it will give a voice to women wherever they are - - women whose burdens, stresses and contributions too often go unnoticed.

It will give a voice to hard-working women in our own country who are trying to raise children on jobs that pay \$4.25 an hour. . . women who are worrying about how to cover the medical bills when their child has an ear infection or needs a vaccination . . . women who are taking care of aging parents as they cope with other family and professional responsibilities. . . . women who are bumping up against a glass ceiling every time they seek a promotion at work . . . women who are living in terror because of violence in their own homes.

As I have said in the past, there is often a tendency to dismiss so-called women's issues as "soft" or marginal to

economic, social and political progress.

In fact, these issues lie at the center of our most pressing challenges at the end of one century and the dawn of another.

Simply put, if women and girls don't flourish, families won't flourish. And if families don't flourish, communities and nations won't flourish.

The international women's conference represents a rare opportunity for women to come together to address concerns of economic insecurity, inadequate educational opportunities, lack of affordable health care, political exclusion and an absence of legal protections.

Because the United States has long played a leading role in protecting the human rights of women, in expanding the political rights of all citizens, and giving women greater control over their economic futures, the voices of American women must be heard at this conference.

Let me state very clearly that the goal of our delegation will be to advance the interests of families and to help promote policies that provide women with the tools they need to fulfill their potential as members of the human family.

[ending to come]