

Women In History

Campaign Wives Influence Political Careers ™

by Jeffrey Lewis

(NAPSA)—Throughout the years, wives have contributed to their husbands' presidential campaigns in many ways—with their opinions and their actions—and this election is no different.

Here are a few highlights:

Then: During the 1916 campaign of President Woodrow Wilson, the fundraising and public service efforts and keen insights contributed by his second wife, the determined and intelligent Edith Bolling Galt, helped to reelect him. Galt, who had experience managing her family's jewelry business, was happy to play an active role.

In the 1960 presidential campaign, Jacqueline Kennedy did more than earn attention for her style. Her charm and ability to connect with people and her fluency in languages made her a great campaign asset.

In the 1980 primaries, Nancy Reagan helped her husband during several televised debates, consulting with his advisers on how to best present him. Her suggestions helped improve his ratings.

As women have assumed a larger role in public life, candidates' wives have become more comfortable expressing their opinions publicly, although these have not always been met with respect.

In 2004, Teresa Heinz Kerry, already a director of foundations with more than \$1 billion in assets and an active environmentalist, campaigned with her husband for the presidential run of John Kerry.

While she had spent a decade studying issues related to women's health and fighting for change in public and private sector pension systems, she was labeled an "opinionated woman" in this campaign, as if it were some sort of character fault.

Today, America is fortunate to have more women—and one man—who have spent time as strategists, creative policy advisers, parents and groundbreakers. Regardless of party and age, they have staked out a distinctive path, and have with real ideas, real vision and real sense.

Now: Not only are candidates' wives expressing opinions that reflect their own personal, professional and academic accomplishments, one of the candidates, for the first time in history, formerly a campaigner for her husband's presidential campaign, is now campaigning in her own right.

For more information on spouses during presidential campaigns in the past, visit www.firstladies.org.

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