



Lady Willie Forbus

Quick Facts

Birth: August 24, 1892
Mississippi

Death: April 27, 1993
Seattle, Washington

Occupation: Attorney

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Years served: 1943-47

Office: Senator

District: 44 (King County)

Personal:

- Born on a Mississippi plantation that her father managed
- Married Alvaro Shoemaker, an editorial writer for the Post-Intelligencer, in 1921 and she kept her maiden name. They had two daughters together. They divorced in 1936 but remained close friends
- Ran for prosecuting attorney in 1922, and ran for Superior Court judge in 1932 and 1934
- She set up a scholarship fund in her name at the University of Washington. "Recipients should be disadvantaged students including Native Americans, blacks, Chicanos, and foreign students.

Education:

- University of Mississippi
- University of Michigan Law School

Community Service:

- Democratic precinct committeewoman for the Magnolia district
- She made a name for herself when in 1922 Seattle police officer Charles O. Legate was shot to death in his car. The police department ruled it a suicide. The evidence seemed to prove that the case was a murder and not a suicide so she demanded a grand jury. She was able to get the ruling changed so that his widow would be awarded her husband's pension.
- Led the fight for the adoption of the child labor amendment in 1933

Affiliations:

- Magnolia Community Club, president
- Florence Crittenton Home for Unmarried Mothers, president of the board of directors
- Financial District Women's Business Club
- American Civil Liberties Union
- Board of Lawyers Alliance Against nuclear Arms
- King County Democratic Club, vice-president
- Women's Democratic Club, chairperson
- Friends of Discovery Park board
- American Civil Liberties Union of Washington

Awards

- Women's Funding Alliance for "grassroots activism"

Legislative & State Service:

- She was an assistant attorney general for the Department of Labor and Industries from 1940-42, and for the Fisheries Department from 1944-46
- Washington State Child Labor Committee, Secretary

Committees: Cities of the First Class, chairman; Judiciary, chairman; Cities, Towns and Counties; Constitutions, Elections and Apportionment; Elections and Privileges; Fisheries; Insurance; Judiciary; Labor; Legislative Apportionment; Liquor Control; Public Utilities; Revenue and Taxation; State Charitable Institutions

Senate Bills Sponsored:

(1943 session)

119-Defining powers and duties of the Washington State Patrol

Read first and second time and referred

144-Relating to the investment of funds of cities and towns

Signed by the Speaker but not by the Governor

202-Providing for payment of attorney fees and costs in divorce actions

Signed by the Speaker but not by the Governor

(1945 session)

20-Relating to court reporters

Reported out of committee and died

22-Describing contents of a certificate of birth

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

23-Relating to vital statistics

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

24-Relating to the registration of deaths and stillbirths

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

36-Relating to compensation of bailiff's in superior courts

Voted on final passage

63-Relating to civil actions for personal injuries

Reported out of committee and died

101-Establishing a board of park commissioners in Class A Counties with power to prescribe civil service rules for employees

Reported out of committee and died

104-Relating to local improvements in cities and towns

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

124-Relating to probate and providing for the proof of wills

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

127-Relating to official court reporters

Signed into law

140-Relating to adoptions

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

143-Relating to county property acquired for delinquent taxes

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

149-Relating to non-profit hospitals

Read first and second time and referred

152-Prescribing the duration of certain inheritance tax liens against an estate

Reported out of committee and died

161-Relating to costs in actions

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

176-Relating to revenue and taxation

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

181-Relating to inheritance

Reported out of committee and died

184-Relating to housing authorities

Signed by the Speaker and not by the Governor

199-Providing for the regulation and supervision of the issuance and sale of certain securities

Read first and second time and referred
 201-Relating to federal disposal of surplus property and federal aid
 Voted on final passage
 213-Relating to the investment of current funds of the State of Washington by the state finance committee
 Voted on final passage
 214-Relating to school funds
 Voted on final passage
 235-Relating to local improvements in cities and water districts
 Reported out of committee and died
 261-Relating to the management, control and disposition of property belonging to absentees
 Voted on final passage
 268-Relating to the formation, organization, operation, revocation and dissolution of non-profit hospital service corporations
 Reported out of committee and died
 277-Relating to the exemption of wages, salary or commissions for personal services, form garnishment
 Voted on final passage
 299-Relating to administrative agencies
 Read first and second time and referred
 303-Relating to costs in appeals to and other proceedings in the Supreme Court
 Reported out of committee and died
 322-Creating a Youth Correction Authority
 Reported out of committee and died
 331-Relating to revenue and taxation
 Read first and second time and referred
 332-Relating to revenue and taxation
 Signed by the Speaker but not by the Governor
 347-Relating to adoption
 Reported out of committee and died

Leadership, Positions & Appointments:

- Women’s Legislative Council of Washington, Chief Legal Council
- Women’s Legislative Council of Washington, editor of the Counsellor Legal Page starting in 1921.

Sources:

- “A Century of Vision—‘Old-Fashioned Liberal Populist Lady Willie Forbus Retains Her Commitment to Social Justice at Age 100,” *Seattle Times*, by Mary Ann Gwinn, August 30, 1992
- “Ray Moore: An Oral History,” interviewed by Sharon Boswell, Washington State Oral History Program
- “Whatever Happened to...Lady Willie Forbus,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, by Walter Evans, April 4, 1976
- “Lady Willy is Still Wily,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, by Diane Simmons, August 22, 1976
- “Lady Willie Forbus, lawyer, dies at 100,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 30, 1993
- “Lady Willie Forbus, noted pioneer who set pace for individual right,” *Seattle Times*, by Mary Ann Gwinn, April 30, 1993
- “Women of Washington,” compiled by the American Association of University Women
- “Political Pioneers, The Lawmakers,” by Kathryn Hinsch
- “Attorney Lady Willie Forbus,” *Legislative Counsellor*, Published by the Women’s Legislative Council of Washington, Volume XII, September-October 1927.