



Mary Ellen McCaffree

Quick Facts

Birth: February 25, 1918
El Dorado, Kansas

Death: June, 2014

Occupation:

Party Affiliation: Republican

Years served: 1963-71

Office: Representative

District: 32 (King County)

Personal:

- Married, 5 children, 15 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren.
- Husband, Dr. Kenneth McCaffree, Professor of Economics, University of Washington; Labor Arbitrator in Private Practice.

Education:

- Kansas State University, B.A., Home Economics, 1941

Community Service:

- Legislative Chairman, Seattle Council, Parent Teachers Association, 1957
- Parent Teacher Association, Seattle Council, Vice President, and General Chairman, Citizens (School) Levy Committee, 1958
- Senior Girl Scouts, Leader, 1958-1963
- United Methodist Church, Member
- The Clearwater School, Advisory Board
- Great Peninsula Conservancy, Treasurer
- Hansville Community Center, President, 1989-1991
- Kitsap Land Trust, Member of the Board of Directors and Treasurer
- Great Peninsula Conservancy Land Trust, Founder, Treasurer, and Member of the Board of Directors, 2000-2003

Affiliations:

- University of Washington Faculty Wives Club, 1949-1970
- President, League of Women Voters of Seattle, 1959-1962, and member of League of Women Voters since 1954.
- Associated Republican Women, 1962-1970
- Seattle King County Municipal League, 1962-1970
- Business and Professional Women's Club, University Branch, 1963-1970

- Washington State Conference for Women, Coordinating Committee, 1977 and State Delegate to National Women's Conference, Houston TX, 1977.
- University of Washington Retirement Association (with husband), since 1981

Awards:

Legislative & State Service:

Major Legislative Efforts for:

- Redistricting and reapportionment legislation, 1963-1965
- Tax reform including various changes in existing revenue and taxation laws and an income tax, 1967-1970
- Abolishment of three-person Tax Commission and establishment of the Department of Revenue
- Nineteen year old voting rights
- Pollution Control and Shoreline Management Act
- Establishment of the Community College System
- Ran for the state Senate in 1970 and lost to incumbent Pete Francis.
- Governor's Tax Advisory Council, 1962-1967
- Temporary Advisory Council on Higher Education, 1965-1967
- Legislative Council, member, 1967-1970
- Congressional Record, U.S. Senate, March 13, 1983:
 "...While a member of the House, Mary Ellen developed a comprehensive tax reform package, supported the voting rights of 19-year-olds, and wrote the legislation establishing our State's community college system, an enviable record of achievement for any legislator." (Remarks by Washington's U.S. Senator Slade Gorton)

Committees: (1963) Constitution, Elections and Apportionment, vice-chair; Education and Libraries; Local Government; State Government, Military and Veterans Affairs, and Civil Defense (1965) Constitution, Elections and Reapportionment; Higher Education; Social Security and Public Assistance; Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Revenue (1967) Revenue and Taxation, chair; Higher Education; Labor and Employment Security (1969) Revenue and Taxation, chair; Local Government; Transportation

Leadership, Positions & Appointments:

- Evergreen State College, Board of Trustees, 1967
- Staff Assistant and Consultant, Office of the Governor, The Committee for a New Tax Policy, 1971-1972
- Pollution Control Hearings Board, Shoreline Management Hearings Board, 1973-1974
- Washington State Department of Revenue, Director, 1974-1976
- Office of King County Executive, Consultant, 1977
- King County Department of Budget and Program Planning, Director, 1978-1980
- U.S. Senator Slade Gorton, Administrative Assistant, 1981-1983
- National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere, 1984-1985
- Washington State Hospital Commission, Chair, 1984-1986
- President's Child Safety Partnership, member, 1985-1987
- Hansville Water District, Commissioner, 1986-1992
- Washington Association for Social Welfare, King County Unit, co-director

Sources:

- McCaffree, Ken and Mary Ellen, *Piecing Together Our Separate Lives*, (Joint Autobiographies), Gorham Printing, 2001, pp 211. (privately printed)
- "The key to attaining political clout: Get involved," by Sally Gene Mahoney, *The Seattle Times*, September 5, 1976.
- "New revenue chief to focus on tax policy," *The Seattle Times*, June 1, 1974.
- "Evans Hires Income Tax Advocate," by Walter Wright, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 5, 1971.
- "Senate Race Lures Mrs. McCaffree," *The Seattle Times*, June 3, 1970.
- "Mary Ellen McCaffree Is Gal Who Gets Job Done," by Betty Hopper, *The Daily Olympian*, January 18, 1967.
- *Ray Moore: An Oral History*, interviewed by Sharon Boswell, Washington State Oral History Program, Office of the Secretary of State, 1999

Excerpts taken from *Piecing Together our Separate Lives*:

“I was a protégé of Dan Evans, who was one of those who had persuaded me to run for the legislature in the first place. Dan always included me as a member of the leadership team. I shall be forever grateful for the education in practical politics I received in my first session, and for the respect I received from my fellow colleagues my freshman year.”

“However, partisan politics is the basis of our democratic form of government. I believe wholeheartedly in the two-party system. It gives citizens a choice. There are differences in opinion and thought among the citizens of our country as to the proper role of government and on some major issues such as taxation, education and health care. These differences need to be exposed and discussed. Only when there is a strong two-party system competing for our votes are we able to have free and open discussions of these issues. This kind of repartee helps us decide whom to support and allows us to vote for the candidate who comes closest to our own personal philosophy.”

“A candidate learns to adjust his or her thinking to fit more closely the philosophies of the constituency without compromising his or her basic beliefs about the role of government or personally-stated stands on certain issues. No one agrees with you 100 percent of the time.”

“I do believe that I was able to demonstrate that it did not make much difference whether you are male or female in order to get a job done and get it done well. I never viewed myself as a victim of sexual discrimination, and thus I barnstormed ahead on issues of primary concern to my family and me.

I worked on issues traditionally attributed to a male, which helped me be successful in the legislature, but I was ever mindful of the women’s political dilemma and spoke often of its importance. If there was a way of encouraging more women to take an active role in politics, I’d do it. I believe that only by doing so are you able to effect what is an important influence in American society – the influence of women.

I have always felt that women have a unique sensitivity that is needed in decision-making positions, and I believe that women who do reach these positions have a responsibility to help other women seek such opportunities and to get them. I have always been an activist and a mainstream politician, and have spent little time reflecting on the quality and dimension of the sexual imbalance in politics.”

—**Mary Ellen McCaffree**

A Lady Speaker? “...Rep. Mary Ellen McCaffree of Seattle? Ahh, just the ticket. Smart, experienced, unflappable and with the added advantage of being one of a tiny handful of legislators who are so in with the governor they could have just about anything they wanted from him.

Whether she wants this is something else again, but she’d be tough to beat—she’s also one of those rarities who has no enemies...”

—**Adele Ferguson, Political Columnist**



Mary Ellen McCaffree

Republican

**Served: 1963 to 1970
House of Representatives
King County
32nd District**

**Born:
Kansas, 1918**