



Belle Reeves

Quick Facts

Birth: 1871

Quincy, Ohio

Death: January 2, 1948

Olympia, Washington

Occupation: Orchardist; Printer's
Apprentice; Reporter; Stenographer;
Teacher; Typesetter

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Years served: 1923-27, 1931-38 (H)
1938-48 (SOS)

Office: Representative,
Secretary of State

District: 56 (Chelan County) 1923
12 (Chelan County) 1933

Personal:

- Born as Anna Belle Culp, also known as Mrs. Frank Reeves
- Moved to Washington State in 1889
- Belle and her husband published the first newspapers in Ellensburg (n.d.), Wenatchee (1891), and Leavenworth (1893).
- Her husband, Frank, served as a legislator in 1915 and later as a judge. In 1933, while watching his wife speak on the floor of the House, he died from complications due to an earlier automobile accident.
- She took depositions in justice court, and recorded deeds and mining claims in Leavenworth, Washington. She also taught shorthand at night.
- Daughter, Zelma Reeves Morrison, was named 1959 Democratic Woman of the Year and served as the Democratic national committeewoman.

Education:

- Normal School, Lyons, Kansas
- "As his [Frank Reeves] practice became more successful, she quit the newspaper business and attended the University of Washington to receive her law degree." (James-Wilson, Jennifer and Brenda Owings-Klimek)

Community Service:

- North Central Washington Tuberculosis Association, district organizer
- Whitman School P.T.A.

Affiliations:

- Business and Professional Women's Club
- Daughters of the American Revolution
- Daughters of Veterans
- Good Templars

- Ladies Musical Club
- Maccabees
- North Central Pioneers of Washington, secretary
- Rathbone Sisters (now Pythian Sisters)
- Rebekahs, state president
- Soroptimist Club
- St. Luke's Guild, first secretary
- Wenatchee Garden Club
- Wenatchee Women's Club, Tourist and Literature Department
- Women Christian Temperance Union
- Women's Federation of Clubs, vice-president

Awards:

Legislative & State Service:

- Won election for the House of Representatives in 1922 as a write in candidate
- Along with Mabel Ingersoll Miller, sponsored House Bill 131, in 1925. This bill was to create a state prison for women so that they did not have to be housed under the same roof as the men prisoners. It passed the House and Senate, but was vetoed by Governor Roland Hartley. In his 1925 House Journal veto message he states, "If it is to provide an institution in which the state is to undertake the moral and physical regeneration of hapless and fallen women, the effort is futile and the undertaking doomed to failure before it is begun." He then goes on to say, "This bill presents a problem, the most serious phase of which, in my opinion, is not social but economic." After this, Belle was determined to get more women to serve in the legislature.
- As a gesture the 1931 House Democrats, in caucus, nominated Belle Reeves as Speaker of the House. But because the Democrats were in the minority with only 8 members this is never mentioned in the journal. In an editorial article written January 9, 1931 in the Seattle Times, "No one who has served in other sessions with Representative Reeves will question the propriety of paying her this honor. No doubt, in fact, some who are rated as Republicans and who know her well would be glad to vote for her election as Speaker, if they did not feel bound to one or another of the candidates who bear the same party label as themselves."
- In 1944 received the largest vote ever cast in the state of Washington for a candidate for public office up to that time
- In the legislature she made an effort to improve workmen's compensation laws, especially for working mothers during World War II.
- State Parks Committee member, n.d.
- State Land Board member, n.d.
- Did not accept any campaign donations
- Died during her term in office as Secretary of State. The first state memorial service was held in the chamber of the House of Representatives. Honorary pallbearers included Governor Mon Wallgren, former Governor Clarence Martin, all state elective officials, all members of the state supreme court, President Pro Tem of the Senate and Speaker of the House. Active pallbearers included six employees of the Secretary of State's Office, a former employee of the office, and the State Director of Parks and Recreation.

Committees: (1923) Horticulture; Medicine, Dentistry, Pure Food and Drugs; Memorials; Roads and Bridges **(1925)** Public Morals, chair; Appropriations; Education; Horticulture **(1931)** Public Morals, chair; Claims and Auditing; Highways and Automotive Transportation (Roads and Bridges); Horticulture; Medicine, Dentistry, Pure Foods and Drugs **(1933)** Claims and Auditing; Medicine, Dentistry, Pure Food and Drugs; Roads and Bridges **(1935)** Claims and Auditing; Educational Institutions; Mines and Mining; Roads and Bridges; Rules and Order **(1937)** Claims and Auditing, chair; Agriculture; Reclamation and Irrigation; Revenue and Taxation; Roads and Bridges

House Bills sponsored

(1923 session)

192—Relating to the manufacture and sale of cigarettes and cigarette papers
Died in committee

(1925 session)

38—Relating to and establishing, classifying, naming and fixing the route of a certain state highway (Stevens Pass Highway)
Went to first reading

66—Relating to assessment and taxation of farm and orchard products, and declaring that this act shall take effect immediately

Went to second reading

131— Making an appropriation for the construction and maintenance of woman's industrial home and clinic

Vetoed by Governor Hartley

134—Establishing a primary state highway in Skagit and Okanogan Counties

Went to first reading

252—Authorizing boards of regents and boards of trustees of University of Washington and other state colleges to provide dormitories and purchase of land, needed in connection therewith

Vetoed by Governor Hartley

Overrode and passed by the House and Senate with a two-thirds majority

(1931 session)

78—Relating to establishment of free county libraries

Vetoed by Governor Hartley

87—Relating to survey of a route between State Road No. 7 and the Columbia Basin Highway

Went to first reading

149—To re-district and reapportion the State of Washington into six congressional districts

Signed by Governor Hartley

202—Providing for regulation and licensing of public dances and dance halls without the limits of incorporated cities or towns

Went to first reading

212—Relating to a low-grade tunnel through the Cascade Mountains

Went to first reading

216—Relating to insane persons

Passed to second reading

256—Relating to and providing for the support of mothers with children

Went to first reading

257—Relating to notice of sale of property belonging to counties

Went to third reading

258—Relating to birth certificates

Went to second reading

289—Relating to and regulating lying-in hospitals, maternity homes, and homes for infant children

Vetoed by Governor Hartley

292—Relating to care and placement of dependent, neglected and delinquent children

Went to first reading

330—Relating to the branding, tattooing and identification of livestock

Went to first reading

336—Providing for preparation, printing and distribution of information relating to the State of Washington, its resources and industries

Went to first reading

(1933 session)

107—Making an appropriation for the relief of Charles A. Thompson

Went to first reading

134—Relating to primary elections

Referred to second reading

186—Relating to the operation of motor vehicles on the state highways

Signed by Governor Martin

187-Relating to horticulture and horticultural products

Went to third reading

364—Relating to motor carrier

Went to first reading

402—Establishing a branch of State Road No. 8

Went to first reading

430—Relating to aerial transportation

Went to first reading

445—Relating to municipally owned utilities, and to the selling of power outside the corporate limits of cities and towns

Went to first reading

(1935 session)

55—Relating to motor fuel

Reported from Senate

105—Relating to the relief of J.L. Webster
Went to first reading
106—Relating to the relief of the Leavenworth Lumber Company
Went to first reading
107—Relating to trading stamps
Went to third reading
124—Relating to community property rights
Went to first reading
190—Relating to law libraries
Went to third reading
349—Relating to burial of the dead
Passed the House
350—Relating to minors
Went to first reading
428—Relating to the department of Highways
Went to first reading
513—Relating to taxation
Signed by Governor Martin
535—Relating to small loans
Went to second reading
536—Relating to aeronautics
Went to second reading
539—Relating to primary highways
Went to second reading
551—Relating to the Cascade wagon road
Went to first reading
641—Relating to higher educational institutions
Signed by Governor Martin
642—Relating to dependent children
Went to first reading
644—Relating to blind persons
Went to third reading

(1937 session)

222—Relating to the provision of a teachers' retirement system
Signed by Governor Martin
244—Relating to state highway No. 5
Went to second reading
265—Relating to tax on gasoline and other inflammable liquids
Went to second reading
269—Relating to the sale, transportation, handling and slaughtering of livestock
Signed by Governor Martin
331—Relating to beauty culture
Signed by Governor Martin
338—Relating to judicial ballots
Went to third reading
358—Providing educational opportunities for the children of soldiers, sailors and marines who were killed in action or died during the world war
Signed by Governor Martin
397—Relating to irrigation districts
Signed by Governor Martin
446—Relating to industrial disputes
Went to third reading
454—Relating to the tax on motor vehicle fuel
Went to third reading
483—Relating to appropriation of money for the relief of Halleran Bros.
Went to first reading
490—Relating to dancing where beer and wine are sold retail
Went to second reading

House Joint Resolutions sponsored

(1925 session)

7—Relating to and providing for the amendment of Sections 1 and 2 of Article VII of the constitution of the State of Washington relative to taxation

Went to third reading

(1931 session)

5—Relating to submitting amendments to the State Constitution providing for reapportionment of the Legislature
Signed by Governor Hartley

(1935 session)

10—Relating to an amendment of the Constitution of the State of Washington
Signed by Governor Martin

17—Relating to the salaries of members of the legislature

Went to second reading

22—Relating to equal opportunities for citizens at Bonneville public works project

Went to first reading

23—Relating to the amendment of Article II of the Constitution of the State of Washington

Went to second reading

24—Relating to employment on the Coulee and Bonneville projects

Went to third reading

Leadership, Positions & Appointments:

- A delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1924 under the name Mrs. Frank Reeves. “First woman to be featured at either a Democratic or Republican national convention. In addition, her party, the Democrats, asked her to present their memorial at President Woodrow Wilson’s funeral in 1924.” (James-Wilson, Jennifer and Brenda Owings-Klimek)
- Appointed Secretary of State on February 7, 1938 by Governor Clarence D. Martin upon the death of Ernest Hutchinson
- When serving as Secretary of State, she became the first woman to serve as acting governor in the state of Washington.
- Trustee of the College of Puget Sound, n.d.

Sources:

Articles:

- “Veteran Legislator is Named to Post,” *The Daily Olympian*, February 8, 1938
- “Lady May Run Ship of State,” *Spokane Chronicle*, February 16, 1938
- Reeves, Belle, “Belle Reeves, Secretary of State, Washington, February 7, 1938-January 2, 1948,” Associated Press, biographical sketch, 1944
- “Belle Reeves, 77, Called by Death,” *Spokesman Review*, January 3, 1948
- “Mrs. Belle Reeves Dies,” *The Wenatchee Daily World*, January 3, 1948
- “State Funeral Planned Monday for Secretary of State Reeves,” *The Daily Olympian*, January 4, 1948
- “Reeves Service is Held Here,” *The Daily Olympian*, January 5, 1948
- “Tribute is Paid to Mrs. Reeves,” *Spokesman Review*, January 6, 1948
- Jones, Ivan L., “Fifty Years After They Won the Ballot, Let’s Look at the Record of Washington’s Women in Politics,” *The Seattle Times Magazine*, October 16, 1960
- Cunningham, Ross, “Historical Vignettes: Belle Reeves, Champion of Fallen Women,” *The Seattle Times*, March 27, 1978

Books:

- *Political Pioneers, The Women Lawmakers*, Elected Washington Women, Olympia, 1983
- James-Wilson, Jennifer and Brenda Owings-Klimek. *Making a Difference, A Centennial Celebration of Washington Women*. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, 1992
- *Ray Moore: An Oral History*, interviewed by Sharon Boswell, Washington State Oral History Program, Office of the Secretary of State, 1999