

# Hues of Blue

Women's History Month 2024

**Trails Blazed and  
HERstory Made!**

Former Congresswoman

**Cindy Axne**

Former Congresswoman

**Abby Finkenauer**

Iowa edition

**Glass Ceiling Broken!**  
Mayor Connie Boesen

**Breaking New Ground and  
Paving the Way!**  
City Councilwoman Renee Hardman

**Celebrate Trailblazers and Leaders  
for Women's History Month!**  
Celebrate Democratic Firsts!

**Major Political Dates 2024**

**Iowa Primary Election  
Calendar 2024**

# Publisher’s note

by June Owens

Greetings!

Welcome to the Women’s History Month 2024 - Iowa Edition of Hues of Blue! I am simply thrilled to publish this edition for my home state of Iowa.

As one who has served as the first person of color (male or female) to have served as Vice Chair of the Iowa Democratic Party and the first person of color to have served as a Democratic National Committee Member for Iowa, I have been blessed to be a historical first. I hope in some way I have helped to not only elect more Democrats, but also to have made more room at the table for others who have been historically underrepresented. My Shero - my mother legend, community activist and leader Charline Owens. My mother taught me about leadership, service to others and doing good when you can where you can.

This edition, you will catch up with two amazing HERstory-making pioneering Iowa women who have served in an elected capacity and continue to serve at the Federal Level - Former Congresswoman Cindy Axne and Former Congresswoman Abby Finkenauer. Not only will you hear the latest from these two phenomenal public servants, but you will also glean advice and insight on running for office and getting involved.

This edition you will also hear from two more incredible trailblazing women who serve at the Municipal Level - Des Moines Mayor Connie Boesen and West Des Moines City Councilwoman Renee Hardman. Both of these glass ceiling breaking women will share with us their goals for the Cities in which they serve and will also share words of encouragement.

Celebrate with us more historical firsts for Democratic Women who have broken down barriers both right here in Iowa as well as around the country as we amplify more women in our “Celebrate Trailblazers and Leaders for Women’s History Month! Celebrate Democratic Firsts!” Section!

There are no off-years and there are more races to watch this year in addition to the Presidential Election! Don’t forget to visit the Iowa Primary Election Calendar page, mark your calendar and make a plan to vote.

Also, visit the “Major Political Dates 2024” Page and encourage family, friends, co-workers, and others in your network throughout the country to tune in, show up and use their vote as their voice.



Please be sure to share this edition with others as well as give us a like on Facebook (facebook.com/huesofblue1) and follow us on X (@HuesOfBlue2019). If you would like to share content ideas, share names of Democrats who are doing impactful work, provide kudos and/or send a friendly hello, please feel free to email us.

A sincere thank you for all of the kind words of encouragement and notes of support regarding our Hues of Blue Black History Month 2024 Edition. Much gratitude to our Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison for his pearls of wisdom, kindness and participation. A huge thank you to Former Congresswoman Cindy Axne, Former Congresswoman Abby Finkenauer, Mayor Connie Boesen and Councilwoman Renee Hardman for participating in this edition of Hues of Blue. Your kindness is a blessing. Much love to my family and friends who are always in my corner and show so much love. As always, an abundance of thanks to you, Hues of Blue Readers! It is my sincere hope that you enjoy this edition and stay tuned for ways to support as we grow and turn communities vibrant hues of blue.

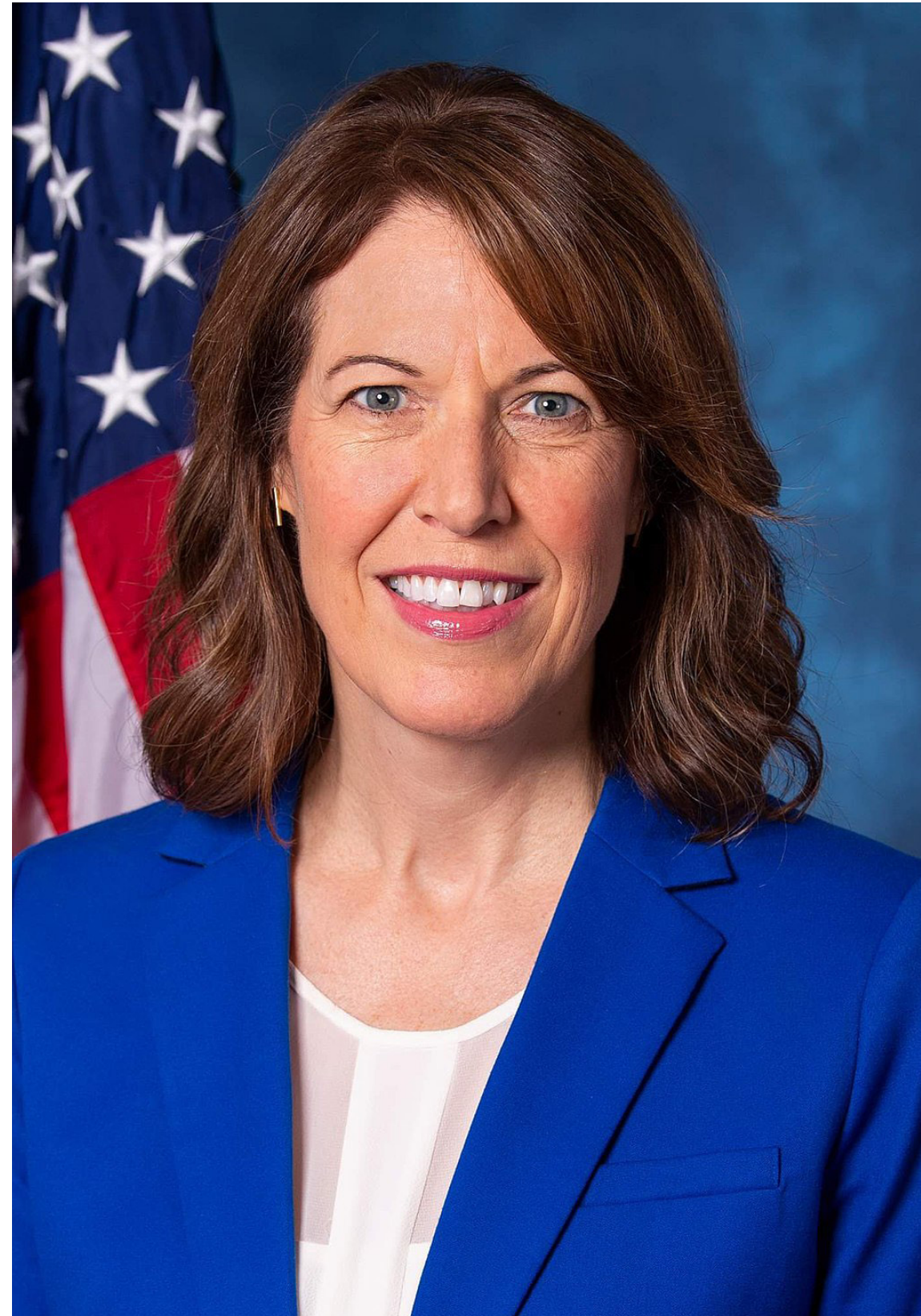
Happy Reading!  
June

-  [HuesOfBlue.org](https://HuesOfBlue.org)
-  [Facebook.com/HuesofBlue1](https://Facebook.com/HuesofBlue1)
-  [@HuesOfBlue2019](https://@HuesOfBlue2019)



# Trails Blazed and **HERstory** Made!

Former Congresswoman  
**Cindy Axne**



You were one of the first people to be elected to serve as a United States Congresswoman for Iowa. What does this mean to you and what is the historical meaning to the community?

I was the first woman elected to the United States House of Representatives from IA-03 and one of the first two women, alongside Abby Finkenauer, to be elected to the US House from Iowa. What hits me most is that it took far too long for a woman to run and win in this arena. Because of that, I'm acutely aware of the void of women, minorities and young people in the decision-making rooms across this country. It's important to keep pushing for equity and representation for all people. I hope my win and subsequent representation help move the needle on women, youth and minority participation in our elections.

Do you have a favorite Shero? If so, who is it and why?

Nancy Pelosi - She was an incredible leader in the House during some of the worst times our country has gone through. She is expert at knowing what it takes to get to a necessary outcome and how to get there. She develops personal relationships built on trust with those she serves with and is agile in adapting to changing issues. She made history as the first female Speaker of the House and showed millions of Americans that a woman can run anything as good as a man. In her case, she took her skills and parlayed that into the most consequential Speakership of the House in history.

Being the first at anything is never easy. What do/did you do to find inspiration, motivation and encouragement?

I've been blessed with good friends and family and I turn to them for inspiration and encouragement. In Congress I became extremely close to some other women who continue to be my best friends. We were and still are always there for each other. These are women who are under the same pressures to do their job, travel relentlessly, protect our country and their constituents and take care of their own families. They have been there for me and I've been there for them. No one besides them fully understands the pressures of the work and how it impacts you as a person. These women are vital to my happiness. Additionally, my husband has always been my biggest supporter and without him, I couldn't have done what I did.

What advice would you have for those who may wish to get more involved with politics or run for office?

Just do it. I got involved because I was tired of the decisions being made that weren't in the best interests of me and my family. I decided to step up; not to run for office but to help out. Eventually that led me to the halls of Congress. Don't ever underestimate the power you bring to the table from your lived experiences and don't believe anyone who thinks you're reaching for too much. The most important thing is to get involved. Our lives are deeply impacted by government at all levels and sitting on the sidelines is support for those policies. Get fired up and get moving. You never know where it will lead you.

What things are you doing in your post public servant life?

I'm still a public servant. I have a passion for helping people and creating positive change. I'm proud to serve in the Biden/Harris Administration as Senior Advisor for Rural Delivery, Engagement and Prosperity. I travel the country working with folks on the ground to bring more opportunity to rural communities and I spend time with Congressional Members advancing the priorities of rural America.

“Don't ever underestimate the power you bring to the table from your lived experiences and don't believe anyone who thinks you're reaching for too much. The most important thing is to get involved.”





Former Congresswoman

**Abby Finkenauser**

# Trails Blazed and **HERstory** Made!

You were one of the first people to be elected to serve as a United States Congresswoman from Iowa. What does this mean to you and what is the historical meaning to the community?

When I decided to run for Congress in 2017 I knew what I was about to do wasn't just improbable, on paper it looked to be impossible. Iowa, along with Mississippi, were the only two states that had never elected a woman to the US House of Representatives. Additionally, in the history of the United States a woman in her 20s had never been elected to the US House of Representatives. I was attempting to do both.

I'll forever be grateful for Iowans who believed in defying the odds and the work we had to do together. It was an honor to serve my state in Congress.

I'm also grateful that in 2018 it wasn't just one of us. We had so much history to make up for that there were two of us in both of those categories with my good friend Cindy Axne also getting elected in Iowa and my fellow 29 year old at the time, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez getting elected in New York.

Do you have a favorite Shero?

I have had the pleasure of working with and serving with some of the most incredible women both in the Iowa State House and in Congress. I will always admire the women who step up, enter the arena, and fight the good fight every day knowing full well the toll that it takes on you personally. Seeing the hard work of women like Congresswoman Cindy Axne, Senator Janet Peterson, Leader Jennifer Konfrst, Rep. Lindsay James, Rep. Liz Bennett, and so many others inspired me daily to keep fighting for what I believed in.

For me, the Sheros who have had the biggest impact on my life are the women who have the backs of other women and working families. It is easy to tear down a candidate or tell them that something is impossible because of their age, gender, or because it has never happened before. But when I think about how I got elected to Congress it was because of women like the late and great labor leader, Marcia Nichols, and the women in Dubuque and across eastern Iowa who cared and believed so deeply that we could defy the odds and make real change.

Being the first at anything is never easy. What do/did you do to find inspiration, motivation and encouragement?

My tagline in the first congressional race was “It’s personal” because it was. I was fighting for my family, friends and community who were getting left behind and screwed over in Iowa and in Congress. I wasn’t motivated by a title, I was motivated by the stories I was hearing from others.

Finally, I wasn’t afraid to lose. I believed that voters would respond to a candidate that was willing to call out the BS and be herself. Honestly? I was too young to try to be anyone else and live my life differently based on who people thought a representative or congresswoman should be. There wasn’t a handbook and I wouldn’t have read it if there was.

What advice would you have for those who may wish to get more involved with politics or run for office?

Find a support system early and take care of yourself first. Running for office can be a painfully lonely experience. When I first ran for congress I had so few connections that I was calling family members for \$25 donations just to keep the campaign moving. I remember sitting in a gas station parking lot one day in 2017 filling up my tank after just driving miles from session in Des Moines to Allamakee for an event. I watched the numbers go up and I realized, “Oh, this is why people who have money run for office and this is why people who don’t, don’t.” I almost quit that day, but leaning on my support system during tough times helped keep me going.

We also have to be honest about what it means to run for office right now. As someone who faced online hate, harassment, extremism, gender based violent threats and even death threats as a candidate and elected official, we cannot bury our heads about the impact that can have on the human side. More work must be done to protect and support candidates, because the worst outcome is that the toxicity keeps good candidates from entering the arena or forces them to exit.

What things are you doing in your post public servant life?

I am grateful to still be a public servant. I was appointed by President Biden in November 2022 to serve as the United States Special Envoy for Global Youth at the U.S. Department of State. I have had the opportunity to travel around the country and around the world from Singapore, Australia, South Africa, Cambodia, Albania, Luxembourg and everywhere in between, interacting with our global engagement programs encouraging civic engagement and pushing more young people to get involved, all while building strong connections for the United States. We are also focusing on the online harassment barrier it is creating for women and underrepresented groups to run for office or get more involved.

Domestically we are working on making foreign policy and the State Department more accessible to all Americans, not just those who grew up knowing someone in the Department.

In my free time, on the rare occasion I’m not on a plane or a different time zone, I love growing roses in my backyard garden in D.C. and rows and rows of peonies at my parents place and my favorite place in Sherrill, Iowa. I’ve found a lot of creativity and fun in gardening and roses. They also happen to be great teachers. The more roses are cut down, the stronger they become.

“I wasn’t afraid to lose.”



Women's History Month

Hues of Blue

Mayor  
**Connie  
Boesen**





# Glass Ceiling Broken!

It has been an honor to be the first woman elected as Mayor of the City of Des Moines. It took much longer than it should, but I am very pleased to be able to say I am the first female to be in this role. When I meet a group of young women and see the excitement that this position brings to them it is very rewarding to have broken that glass ceiling. My win was historic for Des Moines, but I did not run to make history, I ran to make a difference.

My journey into politics started when I saw a need. I was President of the East High School PTA, where my daughters were attending and was asked to serve on the Local Option Sales Tax committee. The goal was to increase the sales tax to help rebuild schools. I saw the need and served on the committee to help pass this measure. My work on the committee and outreach in the community led to me running for the Des Moines Public School Board, which I served for 14 years. I then saw the need to bring the city of Des Moines and the district closer together and ran for City Council. I was elected to the at-large position and served six years before running for mayor.

As I look to the future, I will put a few issues at the front of my mayorship. The first is economic development. To support all the services that our citizens deserve we need to make sure we have a strong base. We are up against a surplus of open office space. My goal is that the buildings will not be empty at the end of my tenure - instead, I hope they become excellent homes, places of entertainment, or future businesses to provide jobs for our residents.

Economic development is inherently tied to affordable, quality housing. The City has embarked on ambitious initiatives to improve our housing stock, keep residents in their homes, and build a variety of new housing that covers everyone's wants and needs.

We've been through difficult times in the past few years. During this time, we've seen an increase in instances of mental illness amongst our population, as well as an increase in calls to public safety. As a result, we must reimagine our public safety to be more responsive to the needs of our residents. As mayor, I will work to increase staffing for our crisis and CARES teams because many calls for help need risk assessment and mental health resources in addition to officers. We also will put in place a Community Advisory Board.

When I think of the future, I think of our children. I am incredibly proud of what I accomplished as an at-large council member to secure early childhood funding from our American Rescue Plan Act funds. This funding helped to improve pre-and early literacy through our wonderful public libraries and Des Moines Public Schools to open additional preschool classrooms across the city. We also have an award-winning park system that also supports our youth, an example of that commitment is the Reichardt Community Center that is being built to serve the northside community.

We all must support our kids if we want a Des Moines that's strong and vibrant for years to come. I will continue to identify ways the City can support our youth. I always tell people if you want to make a difference and if you want to see change get involved. You cannot get discouraged with how long some things take to change, you must celebrate the small wins along the journey. Do not give up, and remember that your involvement makes a community stronger.

You cannot get discouraged with how long some things take to change, you must celebrate the small wins along the journey.





City Councilwoman

**Renee Hardman**

**Breaking New  
Ground and Paving  
the Way!**

You are the first Black Woman to be elected to serve on the West Des Moines City Council. What does this mean to you and what is the historical meaning to the community?

To be the first African American women elected in the 125-year history of the City (6 years ago) was ground breaking for the City of West Des Moines. While I was happy for the outcome, I cannot say that it made me overwhelmingly happy that it took so long. My election shows the community what can be done – if you put in the sweat equity, believe in yourself and be passionate about your “Why.” Having said that, my hope is that I am paving the way for others to follow – making the path just a bit easier for those to come. I regularly talk to other women that may be interested in running for office and advise them on how to prepare and lay the groundwork that must be done. You must always be getting ready to be ready!

What are some goals, projects, initiatives and/or objectives you would like to accomplish during your term?

A passion of mine is affordable housing and was one of the platforms I ran on. While progress is slow, we are moving the needle on Affordable Housing and also providing folks the opportunity to renovate their existing homes. Additionally, I want to ensure we are a City that is a welcoming place for all residents regardless of their race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Finally, enhancing and supporting our quality-of-life initiatives is critical for a city as our residents are intergenerational and have many diverse needs and desires.

Do you have a favorite Shero? If so, who is it and why?

A Shero of mine is my mother who raised three girls as a single parent and taught each of us the value of hard work, commitment, and the value of giving back. I am a resilient woman because of my mom and the village of women who raised me. Outside of my family, I have great admiration and respect for former First Lady Michelle Obama. She showed such grace and grit during her years as First Lady and now writes about the “light” that we each have that shines a path for living our best life.

Being the first at anything is never easy. What do you do to find inspiration, motivation and encouragement?

Being first is always tough as the path has not been traveled, which can also be a blessing. Whatever you do, be authentic to who you are, be the best version of yourself and don’t be afraid to seek help and support. Being first, may come with pressure to not fail, but it also comes with the notion that you get to help mode and create the path that no one else like you has traveled. That challenge is invigorating. Be bold and courageous.

What advice would you have for those who may wish to get more involved with politics or run for office?

Show up! Volunteer. Apply to be on a local Board or Commission. Attend Council meetings and get engaged in civic work. Talk with your local elected officials - they are always looking for people to share ideas or share a different point of view. Set goals and start networking now! Running for office requires you to committed, curious, communicative, and compassionate.

I am paving the way for others to follow

Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

As stated by the late, Ruth Bader Ginsburg – “Women belong in the places where decisions are being made. It shouldn’t be that women are the exception.” I may be the first African American woman, here in West Des Moines, but I won’t be the last. The world is made of many strong, committed civic minded woman, and we deserve a seat at the table. Use that set to make a difference by letting your voice be heard, standing up for issues you care about and never allowing anyone to hold you back from your dream and aspirations for making the world a better place than you found it.



# Celebrate Trailblazers and Leaders for **Women's** **History Month!**

**Celebrate Democratic Firsts!**



Former Sioux City School Board Member

**Perla Alarcon-Flory**

First Latina elected to the  
Sioux City School Board.



Former Des Moines School Board Member

**Heather Anderson-  
Morrow**

First Latina elected to the Des  
Moines School Board.



Former Des Moines School Board Member

**Som Baccam**

First Tai Dam-American elected  
to the Des Moines School Board.



Former Representative

**Deborah Berry**

First Black Woman elected to  
represent House District 62.



Former Senator

**Swati Dandekar**

First Indian American to serve in  
the Iowa Legislature.



Former Des Moines School Board Member

**Jacquie Easley**

First Black Woman elected to the  
Des Moines School Board.



Representative

**Ruth Ann Gaines**

First Black Woman elected to  
represent House District 33.



Representative

**Mary Madison**

First Black Woman elected to  
represent House District 31.



Former Representative

**Helen Miller**

First Black Woman and First Black Person  
elected to represent House District 9.



Representative

**Megan Srinivas**

Youngest Woman of Color elected  
to the Iowa Legislature.



Former Representative

**Phyllis Thede**

First Black Elected Official from Scott  
County and First Black Iowa House  
Representative out of Scott County.



Polk County Treasurer

**Mary Wells**

First Black Woman elected Polk  
County Treasurer.





Vice President

**Kamala Harris**

First Woman and First Woman of Color as Vice President



**Hillary Clinton**

First Woman Presidential Nominee for a Major Political Party



**Michelle Obama**

First Woman of Color to serve as First Lady of the United States



**Kathy Hochul**

First Woman elected Governor, New York



**Maura Healy**

First Woman elected Governor, Massachusetts



**Janet Mills**

First woman elected Governor, Maine



**Letitia James**

First Woman and First African American Woman to elected New York Attorney General



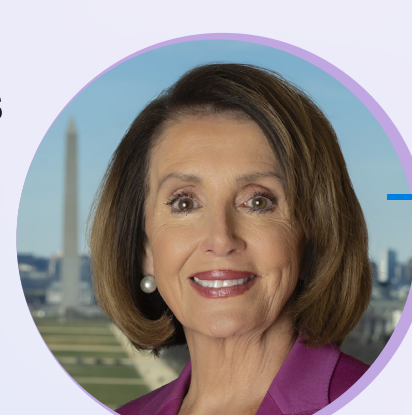
**Valerie Amezcu**

First Woman elected Mayor, Santa Ana



**Karen Bass**

First Woman elected Mayor, Los Angeles



**Nancy Pelosi**

First Woman to serve as Speaker of the United States House of Representatives



**LaToya Cantrell**

First Woman elected Mayor, New Orleans



**Tishaura O. Jones**

First Black Woman and Second Woman elected Mayor, St. Louis



**Farrah Khan**

First Muslim Woman elected to serve as Mayor of a Large City, Irvine, California



**Vi Lyles**

First Black Woman elected Mayor, Charlotte, NC



**Lily Mei**

First Woman and First Asian American Woman elected Mayor, Fremont, California



**Sheng Thao**

First Hmong American Woman elected to serve as Mayor of a Major City, Oakland, California



**Michelle Wu**

First Woman and First Person of Color elected Mayor, Boston



A man with dreadlocks, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt, is leaning over a table and signing a document. A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark jacket, is sitting at the table and pointing at the document. In the background, there are several other people standing and talking. The entire image has a blue tint. The text "Major Political Dates 2024 (as of March 1, 2024)" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Major Political Dates 2024 (as of March 1, 2024)



Date	State or Territory
March 5th (Super Tuesday)	Alaska, American Samoa, Arkansas, California, Colorado Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont and Virginia
March 6th	Hawaii
March 12th	Democrats Abroad, Georgia, Mississippi, Northern Mariana Islands and Washington
March 19th	Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kansas and Ohio
March 23rd	Alabama and Missouri
March 30th	North Dakota
April 2nd	Connecticut, Delaware, New York, Rhode Island and Wisconsin
April 6th	Alaska
April 13th	Wyoming
April 23rd	Pennsylvania
April 28th	Puerto Rico
May 7th	Indiana
May 14th	Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia

Date	State or Territory
May 21st	Kentucky and Oregon
May 23rd	Idaho
June 4th	District of Columbia, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico and South Dakota
June 8th	Guam and US Virgin Islands
August 19th-22nd	Democratic National Convention (Chicago)
September 16th	Presidential Debate (Texas State University -San Marcos, Texas)
September 25th	Vice Presidential Debate (Lafayette University -Easton, Pennsylvania)
October 1st	Presidential Debate (Virginia State University - Petersburg, Virginia)
October 9th	Presidential Debate (University of Utah - Salt Lake City, Utah)
November 5th	Election Day
December 17th	Presidential Electors Cast Their Ballots

# Iowa Primary Election Calendar 2024

March 26	First Day to request an absentee ballot
May 15	Early Voting at Election Office, Absentee Ballots Mailed
May 20	Last day to request an Absentee Ballot. Absentee Ballot Request must physically be at the Election Office by 5 p.m
June 3 Last Day to vote early in person in primary election	Last Day to vote early in person in primary election
June 4 Election Day	Election Day – Polls open 7 a.m.-8 p.m. On Election Day, absentee ballots must physically be in the Election Office by 8 p.m. Postmarks do not count. Voters in possession of their Absentee Ballots that still have them on Election Day may surrender absentee ballots at their polling location and vote in person



Women's History Month 2024

Iowa edition