

# A Brief History of the Arkansas Federation of Republican Women

In 1948 a small group of Arkansas Republican women shared a vision and a determination to overcome obstacles, intimidation and economic hardship in order to forge a viable state organization specifically for Republican Women. Although Democrats still maintained an almost monolithic hold on the elected offices at each level of government, these women were undaunted. They launched an organization for Republican women that would one day become the Arkansas Federation of Republican Women (AFRW).

On October 5, 1955, the group's State President Louise Rohan decided it was time for this Republican organization to join the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW). Rohan had just returned from attending the NFRW National Convention in New Orleans, and she had renewed enthusiasm for the Arkansas Federation of Republican Women. The women, led by Mrs. Rohan endured a long and painful struggle to meet the requirements to affiliate with the NFRW. Brave, determined women survived this struggle with an enormous amount of special aid from the NFRW. The affiliation was consummated and notable progress began. At the next Federation State Convention, she was re-elected to her second term as State President.

The greatest struggle was to establish a local club with each of the U.S. Congressional Districts. With ten unit clubs scattered across Arkansas, our fledgling state federation had the distinction of having more units than nine other states. The ten units that comprised that original group included:

- \*Pulaski County Republican Women
- \*Garland County Republican Women
- \*Washington County Republican Women
- \*Boone County Republican Women
- \*Union County Republican Women
- \*Baxter County Republican Women
- \*Searcy County Republican Women
- \*Clark County Republican Women
- \*Faulkner County Republican Women
- \*Hot Springs County Republican Women

As we marvel at the incredible accomplishment in the face of an apparent insurmountable struggle, the answer is embedded in the profile of our past leaders. Since 1955, we have enjoyed the strong and dedicated leadership of 23 presidents. Some are still with us, and continue to provide important counsel. Those who have gone leave a spirit of their legacy which provides us with an important source of courage to continue our mission.

AFRW holds a Biennial Convention every two years during odd-numbered years. The next AFRW Biennial Convention will be held in April 2025. Our next Legislative Day at the Capitol in Little Rock will be held in the spring of 2024. General meetings are held quarterly usually in January, April, July and November.

AFRW members from across the state participate in the NFRW Biennial Convention. This year it will be held in OKC, OK Sept. 28-Oct 1, 2023.

AFRW is officially represented on the Republican Party of Arkansas (RPA) State Committee, a status not very State Federation in the United States enjoys. Our Club President is a voting member of the State Committee and the AFRW also serves on the RPA Executive Committee. Our Club First Vice Presidents represent their club at the District Meetings.

Members of the Federation work tirelessly to help elect Republicans to public office. In addition to logging hours during election campaigns, the Federation donates to candidates every two years.

From its founding to the present, AFRW has embraced a firm belief that Arkansas could and should become a two-party state. We have now seen the Arkansas Republican party become the majority party in Arkansas politics.

With such an illustrious past, it is our hope that AFRW continues to thrive and grow clubs in all parts of this great state.

(These notes are taken from several sources, found in past records, most notably the AFRW 40th Anniversary brochure, AFRW Handbook 2003, and current information about AFRW)

## PAST ARKANSAS FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN PRESIDENTS

1955-1959	1st	Louise Rohan
1959-1963	2nd	Marian Smith
1963-1967	3rd	Leona Troxell
1967-1971	4th	Dorothy Webb
1971-1975	5th	Jerri Prune
1975-1977	6th	Evelyn Thomas
1977-1981	7th	Suzanne Wernick
1981-1985	8th	Kitty Jean
1985-1989	9th	Doris Holke
1989-1993	10th	Toni Phillips
1993-1997	11th	Mary Harvey
1997-1999	12th	Joyce Phillips
1999-2001	13th	Janet Finley
2001-2005	14th	Nina Carelock
2005-2009	15th	Anne Britton
2009-2010	16th	Tricia Greene-Turner
2010-2013	17th	Julie Harris
2013-2015	18th	Melonaie Gullick
2015-2017	19th	Dara Samuel
2017-2019	20th	Becky Shepard
2019-2021	21st	Sharon Stuthard
2021-2023	22nd	Jennie Felling
2023-2025	23rd	Sharon Lloyd

