



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Women's History Month – STEM Education Focus

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON March 14, 2012

| ISSUE: **WOMEN**

On June 18, 1983 NASA launched the Challenger for a six-day mission. [Dr. Sally Ride](#) was a member of the Challenger's crew and became the first American woman in space. It is amazing to think that just three decades ago, little girls looked up into the sky wondering what it would be like to fly into outer space, never actually thinking it might be possible for them to make that dream a reality.

As we celebrate [Women's History Month](#) this March, we remember and honor brave women like Dr. Ride, who chose to major in physics during an era when careers in science were not promoted to women. Women in science have come a long way since Dr. Ride journeyed into space, but they still have a long distance to travel.

Organizations rooted in efforts to empower women through information, experience, and education, like the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL), have been working to promote increased opportunities for women and girls in science and engineering.

As NFWL embarks on its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the elected women who serve in the Foundation's leadership have realized the importance of supporting policies and programs that will empower the next generation of women leaders to not just reach for the stars, but to grab them.

This year, the theme of Women's History Month is "Women's Education – Women's Empowerment." According to the National Science Foundation, women today currently earn 41% of PhD's in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), but make up only 28% of tenure-track faculty in those fields. This is especially important when promoting the economic empowerment of women because women in STEM jobs earn 33% more than those in non-STEM occupations and the wage gap between men and women in STEM jobs is smaller than in other fields.

The importance of educating our youth about the achievements of ground-breaking women like Dr. Sally Ride should not be overlooked. Her contributions and the life stories of so many other pioneers will be part of the permanent exhibition within the soon-to-be-built, world-class [National Women's History Museum](#). Legislation that will provide a permanent site for the building near the National Mall alongside our nation's most iconic museums has been languishing in Congress. NFWL has been working with women leaders nationwide toward successful adoption of the needed legislation and I hope you will consider calling those who represent you in Congress to let them know you support the establishment of a National Women's History Museum in DC!

While reflecting on the great strides extraordinary women have made and learning from their experiences, let's not forget the young women who are still looking up to the sky and reaching for the stars and let's give them the tools they need to get to where they want to go - let's give them a ticket to fulfill their dreams by supporting educational initiatives that will truly make a difference.