



Women's History Month

LUNCHEON & PANEL

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America250PA Celebrates Women's History Month with Conversation Featuring Pennsylvania's First Ladies and Dr. Jill Biden

HARRISBURG, PA – On Wednesday, March 25, **America250PA** hosted a special Women's History Month Luncheon and Panel at the **Whitaker Center for Science & the Arts**, featuring distinguished women in public life discussing service, leadership, and the civic values guiding Pennsylvania's future.

The event brought together **Pennsylvania's First Ladies**—past and present—**Lori Shapiro, Frances Wolf**, and **Michele Ridge**, along with **Dr. Jill Biden**, former First and Second Lady of the United States and a proud Pennsylvania native. The conversation was moderated by actress and author **Melissa Fitzgerald**, another Pennsylvania native best known for her role on *The West Wing*.

"I was honored to join this incredible group of First Ladies who have served our Commonwealth and our country. Pennsylvania women have made a huge impact on our communities and been driving forces for positive change—going back to the founding of Pennsylvania and Hannah Penn, who played a major role in building and leading this Commonwealth," said Pennsylvania's First Lady Lori Shapiro. "During Women's History Month, we honor the generations of Pennsylvania women who laid the foundation for the work we do today. As First Lady, I'm inspired by the women I meet all across the Commonwealth who are bringing people together and making a difference in their communities."

Panelists reflected on stepping into the role of First Lady and the opportunity to use that platform to champion initiatives that strengthen communities. The conversation highlighted the importance of advancing issues that affect women and families, including education, health, and access to opportunity. Speakers also discussed how mentorship, motherhood, and personal experience shape women's leadership and public service.

The event was held during **Women's History Month**, a time to recognize the generations of women whose contributions have helped shape Pennsylvania over 250 years of American history.

"Today we heard from leaders who have served Pennsylvania and our nation with grace, determination, and compassion," said **Cassandra Coleman, Executive Director of America250PA**. "We're grateful to our extraordinary guests for inspiring the next generation of Pennsylvania women to believe in public service, trust their own voice, and support one another."

Proceeds from the luncheon will support **America250PA's Semiquincentennial Scholarship Program**, which will award **\$250,000 in scholarships** to Pennsylvania high school seniors attending in-state colleges and universities during the **2026–2027 academic year**.

The scholarship program has already drawn strong participation from students across the Commonwealth. **More than 1,800 applicants from all 67 counties** submitted entries reflecting on civic values and how the meaning of citizenship has evolved from **1776 to 2026**. Scholarship recipients will be announced in **April 2026**.

About America250PA

The Pennsylvania Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial (America250PA) was established by the General Assembly and Governor in 2018 to plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the United States, Pennsylvania's integral role in that event, and the impact of its people on the nation's past, present, and future. The Commission is made up of current and past Pennsylvania leaders, celebrating the rich history and diversity of the state.

That shared history gives us context, pride, and perspective. America250PA is partnering with communities in all 67 counties so every Pennsylvanian can take part in this once-in-a-lifetime milestone and help shape what 2026 looks like across the Commonwealth. Our work is guided by four themes: Educate, Preserve, Innovate, and Celebrate.

For more information, visit www.america250pa.org.

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