

WISCONSIN WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

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MARY EASTWOOD

1930–2015

City: Madison, Wiota

County: Dane, Lafayette

Mary Eastwood was a founding member of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and a leader in feminist legal scholarship.

Mary Eastwood was born on June 1, 1930, and grew up in Wiota, Wisconsin. She graduated from Argyle High School in 1947 and went on to attend Platteville Teachers College (now UW–Platteville) before transferring to the University of Wisconsin in Madison. She graduated in 1951 with a bachelor's degree in education. She taught high school for a few years before attending UW Law School.

After graduating with her law degree in 1955, Eastwood moved to Washington, DC, and worked for the National Academy of Sciences. In 1960, she began work in the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice. President John F. Kennedy appointed her to his Commission on the Status of Women in 1962. Through 1963, she served as the technical secretary of the Political and Civil Rights Committee of the Commission, researching court decisions involving women and the 14 Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. She continued that research with Pauli Murray, another member of the commission.

In December 1965, Murray and Eastwood published an article in the *George Washington Law Review* called “Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII.” In this article, they explain how and why Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 14th Amendment could be used to prohibit discrimination against women. Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. The 14th Amendment, in part, says that states must treat all people equally under the law. The focus of both was on banning race-based discrimination, but Eastwood and Murray argued that they could and should also be used to expand protections against gender-based discrimination in both the private and public sectors. In other words, they could ban discrimination from both the government and private businesses. The article solidified Eastwood and Murray as leading authorities in feminist legal scholarship, and lawyers began incorporating their arguments into lawsuits brought by women who faced discrimination.

In 1966, Eastwood co-founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) with Murray, Gene Boyer, Kathryn “Kay” Clarenbach, Catherine Conroy, Betty Friedan, and 21 other women. She was a member of NOW's first Legal Committee, which sued employers on behalf of women who faced gender discrimination in the workplace. The Committee's work led to NOW's picket of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's gender-segregated help-wanted ads.

Beginning in 1967, Eastwood was a long-standing member of the National Woman's Party, where she served on the board, as an officer, and as president from 1989 through 1991. She was also a founding member of Human Rights for Women and a member of Federally Employed Women, groups that worked to end sex discrimination. After many years of fighting for women's rights in DC, she retired and moved back to Wisconsin.

Mary Eastwood died on October 10, 2015, of heart failure.

To learn more, visit womeninwisconsin.org/profile/mary-eastwood