

# WISCONSIN WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

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### JUDY GREENSPAN

1952

City: Madison, Milwaukee

County: Dane, Milwaukee

Judy Greenspan is a lifelong activist, known for being one of the first out lesbian political candidates in the United States.

Judy Greenspan was born on July 21, 1952, and raised in New Jersey. In 1971, Greenspan moved to Madison to attend the University of Wisconsin. They were excited by the university's politically active student body. Also, moving far from everyone they knew gave them the opportunity to comfortably come out as a lesbian.

Once in Madison, Greenspan attended their first Gay Liberation Front (GLF) meeting. The GLF was an organization where gay people socialized, offered each other support, and planned protests as part of the larger gay rights movement. Greenspan hoped to find other lesbians there, but they were one of the few women in attendance. Consequently, they organized their own group, Madison Gay Sisters (which became Madison Lesbians). Madison Gay Sisters marked the start of Madison's political lesbian movement, prioritizing the unique experiences faced by lesbians that were often overlooked by other movements.

In 1972, a teacher and students at Madison East High School invited Greenspan to lead a workshop on sexual identity and orientation. When the principal discovered this, it was cancelled. The principal proposed a policy to ban LGBTQ+ speakers from Madison schools and keep LGBTQ+ students and teachers from coming out. The school board approved the ban on June 7.

In response, Greenspan ran for school board in the spring of 1973, making them one of the first publicly out lesbian political candidates in the United States. Greenspan wanted to remain an activist, not become a politician, so the campaign was used to address issues the school board ignored. Greenspan advocated for the protection of LGBTQ+ people, especially students' and teachers' right to be out without fear of suspension or job termination. They also fought for women's rights and the passage of a bill of rights for high school students.

Greenspan lost the election as expected, but their campaign still had an impact. They increased community awareness of issues facing women and LGBTQ+ people, mobilized allies to become active participants in the fight for liberation, and set a precedent for future out LGBTQ+ political candidates to run for office.

After the election, Greenspan dropped out of school to become a full-time activist. They worked in Brooklyn as a receptionist for a law firm that handled cases of political prisoners, and they also participated in political organizing groups. They moved to Milwaukee in 1977, where they led local protests and boycotts. They also helped plan the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979. In March 1988, while living in Washington, D.C., they got a job surveying how people with HIV/AIDS were treated in prisons throughout the country.

Greenspan moved to California in 1991 and continued advocating for the rights of incarcerated people with HIV/AIDS. They joined San Francisco's chapter of ACT UP and later founded the HIV/AIDS in Prison Project of Catholic Charities of the East Bay. In 1991, Greenspan visited Wisconsin to join a protest at the Capitol against the state's mistreatment of people in prison with HIV.

Greenspan went back to school and received their bachelor's degree in elementary education in 2004 from the New College of California. Today, Greenspan lives in California with their friend and substitute teaches. They remain a dedicated activist.

To learn more, visit [womeninwisconsin.org/profile/judy-greenspan](http://womeninwisconsin.org/profile/judy-greenspan)