

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Wilma J. Webb

PERSON

**Webb, Wilma J., 1943-**

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Wilma J. Webb;

**Life Dates:** May 17, 1943-

**Place of Birth:** Denver, Colorado, USA

**Residence:** Denver, CO

**Occupations:** State Representative

## Biographical Note

Wilma Webb, the First Lady of Denver, Colorado, was born in that same city in 1943. Webb's mother, Faye, was a nurse's assistant and her father, Frank Gerdine, worked for the Federal Government.

When she married Wellington Webb in 1969, Webb was already active in school reform and was a co-

founder of the Committee on Greater Opportunity. In 1973, Webb became a Democratic Committeewoman and served as the Democratic Party secretary; the editor of the Democratic State Newsletter; and the chair of the Democratic Committee on Housing.

Webb became a member of the Colorado Legislature in 1980; while in office, she became the first minority woman on the Colorado Joint Budget Committee. Webb sponsored forty-four bills, eleven of which passed, including the Comprehensive Anti-Drug Abuse Program; Elderly Frail People to Receive Care at Home as Opposed to Nursing Home Placement; and Improvement of Living Conditions for Troubled Youth. In one of her hardest battles, Webb fought for four years before the State of Colorado adopted the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday.

Webb worked hand in hand with her husband in a historic grassroots mayoral campaign in which the couple walked all over the city, resulting in Wellington Webb becoming the first African American mayor of Denver in 1991. Denver's First Lady worked tirelessly on anti-drug abuse programs and youth and family issues. Webb's efforts to promote the arts resulted in the creation of the Denver Art, Culture, and Film Foundation in 1994. In 1998, Webb became the first woman to serve in the U.S. Department of Labor as the primary official for Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming; her duties included the administration and enforcement of federal statutes governing workplace activities, including pension rights, health benefits, and job training.

Webb traveled widely in North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa and held a graduate degree from the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government. Webb was honored with several hundred national and statewide commendations, including the National Education Association's Carter G. Woodson Award for Human and Civil Rights; the Association for Retarded Citizen's Legislator of the Year Award; and

the Colorado Banking Association's Political Award. Webb also held memberships in the Zion Baptist Church; Delta Sigma Theta sorority; and the Links. Webb and her husband also raised four children.

## Related Entries

**Whittier ECE-8 School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Cole Junior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Manual High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**diploma**

**University of Colorado Denver** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A. in English**

**Harvard Kennedy School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Masters in Public Policy**

**Whittier ECE-8 School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Colorado Democratic Party** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1973 to 1980]

**Co-Captain, Captain, State Party Secretary**

**Colorado House of Representatives** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1980 to 1993]

**Representative**

**City of Denver** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1991 to ?]

**First Lady**

**United States Department of Labor** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1997 to 2000]

**Secretary's Representative**