

First Ladies of America



During her tenure as First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush involved herself in numerous issues and in a variety of projects, but her most memorable legacy, by far, is education. When studying Mrs. Bush's early years, it's clear that a passion for education was an important part of her life, even before she knew a future president of the United States personally.

Mrs. Bush grew up in an upper-middle class home where her education was a top priority for both of her parents. As an adult, Mrs. Bush recalled that despite her parents' limited education, they began saving for her own college education almost immediately after she was born. And, with a mother who fostered a love for books and reading in her daughter, Mrs. Bush became enamored of learning and teaching at an early age. During a speech to the 2000 Republican National Convention, she remembered the times she spent playing school as a child.

"Growing up, I practiced teaching my dolls," she said. "Years later, our daughters did the same thing. We used to joke that the Bush family had the best educated dolls in America."

In 1972, she graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a master's degree in library science. Before her husband's career drew her into politics, she worked as both a second grade teacher and a school librarian.

George W. Bush and Laura Bush were married on Nov. 5, 1977. After her marriage, Mrs. Bush left her library career to manage her home and help advance her husband's political career. The birth of twin daughters Barbara and Jenna in 1981 was further reason for her to devote more time to family.

However, with her father-in-law's election to the presidency in 1988 (George H.W. Bush) and her husband's election to the Texas governorship in 1994,

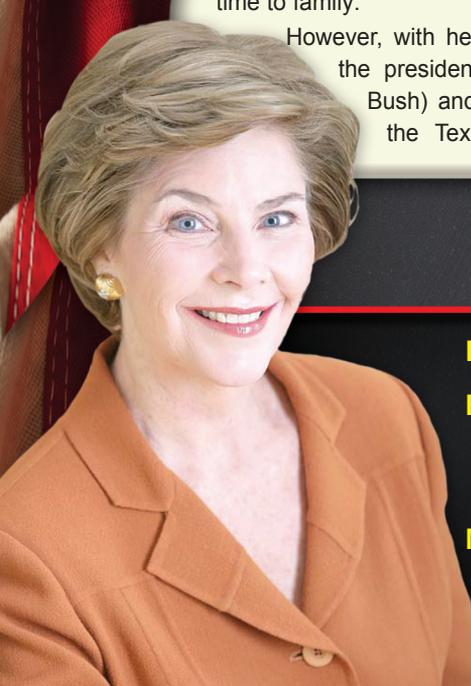
Mrs. Bush found her life deeply invested in politics. She found her own voice as Texas First Lady by lobbying for state funding for early childhood reading and early childhood development programs. Her most notable achievement during this time was establishment of the annual Texas Book Festival, an event that helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy books for public libraries throughout the state.

The experience that Mrs. Bush gained as Texas First Lady served her well as the U.S. First Lady by paving the road for her education work at the national level. One of her biggest accomplishments was the federal initiative "Ready to Read, Ready to Learn," which focused attention on early childhood education. She also worked with the Library of Congress to organize the first National Book Festival in 2001.

Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, she reached out to American parents on television, radio and public forums, offering support and suggestions for helping the nation's children cope with the trauma. A couple of months later, Mrs. Bush made history by substituting for President Bush during the weekly radio address reserved for the chief executive. Her address focused attention on the brutal treatment of women and children at the hands of the al-Qaida terrorist network and the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

As both a wife and first lady, Mrs. Bush demonstrated courage and initiative. She was the stabilizing influence that helped her husband stop his heavy drinking in the earlier years of their marriage. And, when President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act came under heavy political attack during his presidency, Mrs. Bush was among his most vocal defenders.

**George W.
Bush
Administration,
2001-2009**



Laura Welch Bush

Born: November 4, 1946, in Midland, Texas

Education: Robert E. Lee High School, Midland, Texas; Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas; University of Texas at Austin

Marriage: 1977 to George Walker Bush

Children: Fraternal twin daughters, Barbara and Jenna, born in 1981