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The Republican Party of Texas

- Women's History Month -

Elizabeth “Betty” Andujar (1912 - 1997)

Many people may allow great accomplishments to increase the size of their ego, but not this trailblazer. Accomplished as a politician and a stalwart for the



Betty Andujar

medical field, Elizabeth “Betty” Andujar, simply referred to herself as a ‘housewife’ when listing her occupation.¹

This great display of humility complemented her tenacity as she fought through the challenges of leukemia for the last 26 years of her life, including during her political service.² Regardless of the personal challenges, she did not stop her public quest to make society better.

She was born Katharine Elizabeth Richards in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on November 6, 1912. After attending Wilson College and completing a B.A. degree in 1934, she would marry physician John Jose Andujar in 1935. Shortly afterward, they moved to Texas (1937), due to his job.

This move would bless Texans, and especially the people of Tarrant County because this trailblazer would eventually make her mark politically and also from a medical perspective, which Texans still benefit from today. Politically, she was well

known during her time as she served Senate District 12 from 1973-1982.³ Her political résumé highlights the following accomplishments:

- Republican National Committeewoman in 1964.
- Delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1968.
- In 1972, she became the first Republican elected to Texas Senate since Reconstruction.
- The first Republican woman in the Texas Senate (1972).
- The first Republican from Tarrant County to be elected to the Texas Senate (1972).
- Honored as “Governor For A Day” on May 7, 1977.⁴
- Elected President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate for the 65th legislative session.
- Listed in the “Who’s Who in American Politics” and shared the title of “Female Newsmaker of the Year” in 1972.⁵

In 1998, the Texas Society of Pathologists proudly named its “Citation of Merit” in honor of Sen. Andujar’s husband John. They were sure, however, to mention her as they noted, “He and his wife, Ret. Sen. Betty R. Andujar, contributed significantly to the advancement of medicine and pathology in Texas, as well as nationally and internationally...”⁶ In 1996, Sen. Andujar became the first non-physician to receive the Citation of Merit from this organization due to her legislation requiring county coroners to be certified pathologists.⁷

Undoubtedly, her position as senator served the medical community well, leaving a lasting impact. As a team, Dr. and Sen. Andujar would identify problems in the field of pathology and sought to fix them. Texas now has county offices of medical examiners, thanks to Dr. & Senator Andujar. He lobbied for the change from justices of peace determining the cause of unattended deaths to medical examiners doing so, and his wife Sen. Andujar would introduce and carry the bill in the Texas Senate.⁸ Ultimately, she would leave a legacy in both the political and medical community, yet would remain forever humble, regardless of the accomplishments, contributions, or recognition.

As always, there is so much more which can be learned from the rich history of Texas Republican politics. It is therefore paramount, that the lessons of the past be sought, thus ensuring a more prosperous and more sound future for generations to come. Thank you for taking the time to take embark upon this journey through history. Remember, *History Matters!*

Endnotes

¹ Craig, Maddison. Andujar, Elizabeth Richards [Betty] (1912-1997). Texas State Historical Association. Handbook of Texas.

² Ibid.

³ Andujar, Elizabeth (Betty) Richards. UTA Libraries Texas Disability History Collection.

⁴ Craig, Maddison. Andujar, Elizabeth Richards [Betty] (1912-1997). Texas State Historical Association. Handbook of Texas.

⁵ Andujar, Elizabeth (Betty) Richards. UTA Libraries Texas Disability History Collection.

⁶ Texas Society of Pathologists. Awards. Citation of Merit. Retrieved from texpath.org.

⁷ Craig, Maddison. Andujar, Elizabeth Richards [Betty] (1912-1997). Texas State Historical Association. Handbook of Texas.

⁸ Williams, Madeline. *Business Press*. 06/27/97, Vol. 10 Issue 9, Tarrant medicine p9A.