

Abortion AMA: How Do I Schedule An Appointment For An Abortion?

By [DANIELLE CAMPOAMOR](#)

June 4, 2018

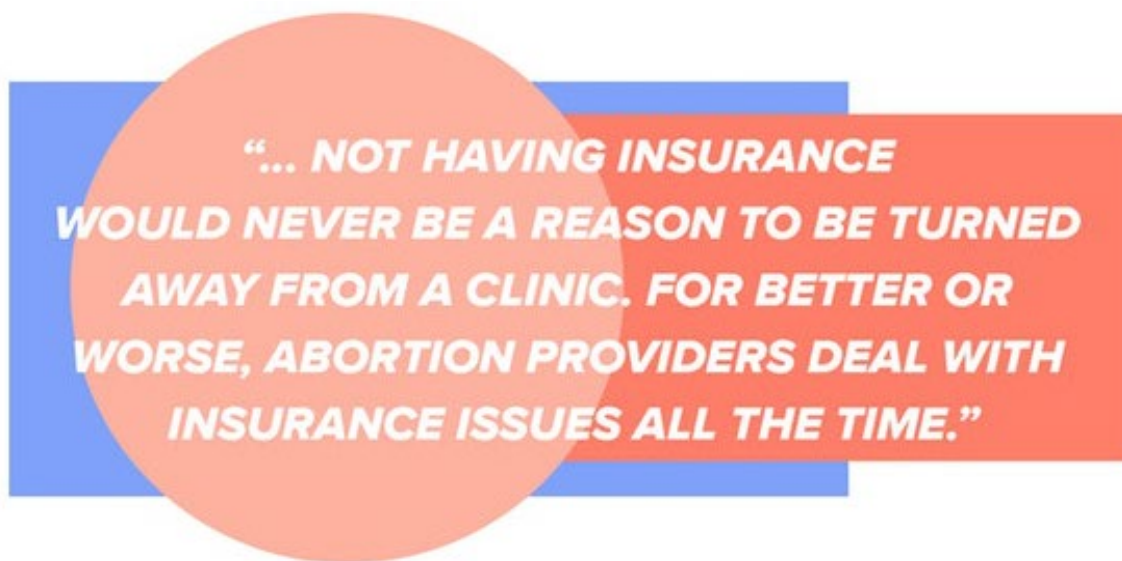
Welcome to Bustle's [Abortion AMA](#) column, where reproductive rights advocate and Romper editor Danielle Campoamor will speak to experts and medical professionals to answer people's questions about abortion in a way that is educational, unvarnished, and judgement free. Ask us anything.

Every single day I am reminded of my immense privilege, especially as a light-skinned Puerto Rican woman who often is mistaken for white, with a full-time job living in a predominately liberal community. But it is my abortion story, and more specifically the ease in which I was able to schedule and obtain an abortion, that really brings my numerous advantages into focus. I didn't have to ask myself, or anyone else, "[How do I schedule an appointment for an abortion?](#)" I knew I could call my local (really local — only five minutes away) Planned Parenthood, and, for the most part, everything would be taken care of. But this isn't the case for many women in the U.S., and scheduling this common medical procedure can sometimes be much more complicated. Thankfully, knowing what information you need to provide, and what plans you should make prior to speaking with a provider, can help ease the process along.

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[Colleen Denny](#), M.D., a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at NYU Langone Health, tells Bustle that the first step in scheduling an abortion is confirming you are, in fact, pregnant. Of course, that can be as simple as taking an at-home pregnancy test — and your pregnancy will be confirmed, again, at the clinic itself. "You'll

specifically want to know when your last period was," Denny continues, "because that helps the provider know the expected gestational age and helps them better counsel you about when to show up." According to Denny, providers treat patients with certain gestational ages on certain days, so knowing when your last period was can help make your visit more efficient.



[Finding an abortion provider in your area](#) is the next step in the process. "Planned Parenthood is a great place to start," Denny says. "If you're lucky enough to have a Planned Parenthood in your area, they have a huge referral network; they do consistent, good work; they have good facilities and good doctors; and they have their system set up pretty well." To find any Planned Parenthood health center across the country, you can visit [PlannedParenthood.org](https://www.plannedparenthood.org) and simply put in your zip code.

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Of course, not everyone lives close to a Planned Parenthood. According to a 2017 study published in the medical journal, *The Lancet Public Health*, [one in five women are forced to travel at least 43 miles](#) to reach the nearest abortion provider. And according to Think Progress, 87 percent of counties in the United States [do not have a single abortion provider](#). Googling the nearest abortion provider could bring up [crisis pregnancy centers](#) — which the American Medical Association

classifies as "organizations that [seek to intercept women with unintended or 'crisis' pregnancies](#) who might be considering abortion" — so searching for the nearest provider online requires a substantial amount of diligence. "There are great websites out there that help people find abortion providers," Denny says, and recommends potential patients turn to the [National Abortion Federation \(NAF\)'s website](#) to find a local, certified provider.

Megan Leonas, the Call Center Manager for [Planned Parenthood Southeast](#), which provides both abortions and non-abortion related gynecological health care in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, says there are a number of questions you will be asked when you make your abortion appointment, including the following:

1. What is your name, date of birth, and contact information?
2. What was the first day of your last normal period?
3. Do you know if [you prefer a medication or in-clinic abortion](#)?
4. Do you have any medical conditions or allergies? Are you taking any medications? Do you know your blood type?
5. Are you planning to use insurance for your appointment?

If you don't have insurance, or you're not sure if your insurance covers abortion, Denny says not to worry. "[A lot of insurances don't cover abortion services](#), and a lot of public insurance — like Medicaid and the military — specifically don't cover abortion," she says. "While that's frustrating, most abortion provider clinics have ways of talking to people who don't have insurance, or if they're not sure if their insurance covers abortion services, so they can give patients counseling about how they would be expected to pay." According to Denny, not having insurance would never be a reason to be turned away from a clinic. For better or worse, abortion providers deal with insurance issues all the time.

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Now let's talk about time. From start to finish, it should take roughly five minutes to schedule an abortion — if you aren't required to attend mandated counseling prior to obtaining an abortion.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive rights policy and research organization, [25 states require mandatory counseling](#) before a patient has an abortion, and [29 provide the information](#) a patient must be given by a provider. "In the state of Georgia it can take about 15-20 minutes [to schedule an abortion]," Leonas says. "This includes scheduling the actual appointment, the state-required counseling, a brief overview of what to expect from your appointment, and any financial assistance screening. In the state of Alabama, it takes about 10 minutes to schedule the counseling appointment required prior to the abortion."

You can schedule an abortion online 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but that, too, can be complicated by anti-abortion legislation. "States have different restrictions that still require a phone call or in-person visit prior to the abortion appointment," Leonas says. "For example, Georgia requires counseling to be done over the phone 24 hours prior to the appointment. So, even if you schedule online, you must still call to receive this state-required information in order to keep the appointment."

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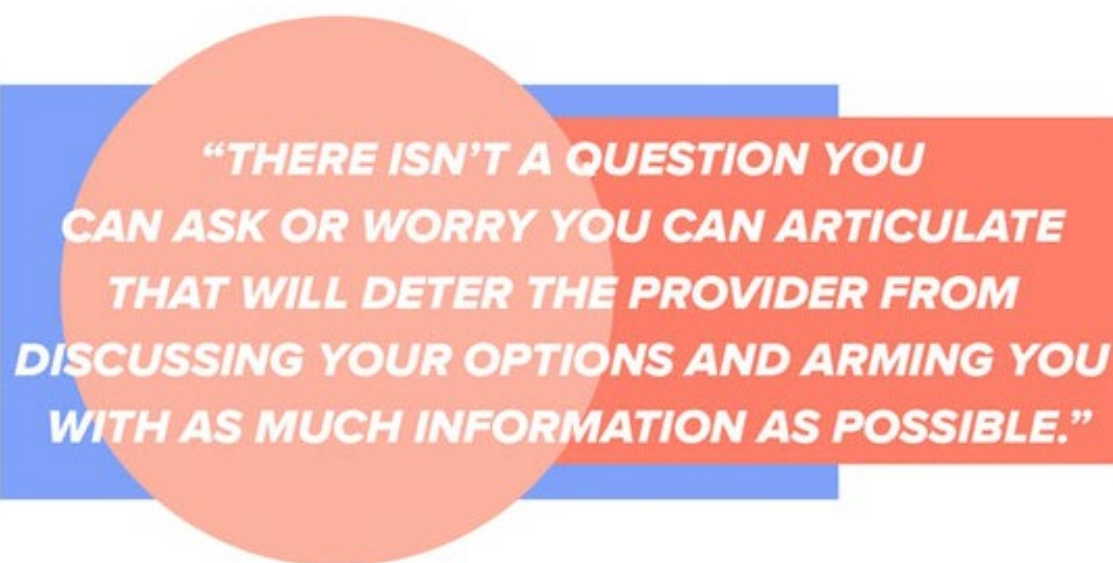
The last piece of the puzzle is the type of abortion procedure you would like, and whether or not

you will be bringing a support person with you. According to Leonas, if a patient chooses and is able to [have a medication abortion](#) — an option for most patients up to 10 weeks after the first day of their last period — they are not required to bring someone with them to and from the appointment. "It does require a follow-up visit about two weeks later, to make sure the patient is well and the abortion is complete," she says, so an extra visit to the clinic is something to consider when choosing an abortion method. "An in-clinic [or surgical] abortion does not require a follow-up appointment," Leonas says, "but may require a patient have someone bring them to and from the appointment, depending on the level of sedation they choose."



I was not required to choose which abortion service I wanted when scheduling my abortion, as it wasn't a state mandate, but I was provided with information about both options, including which option would be available depending on the pregnancy's gestational age. But not every state allows providers to offer medication abortion to their patients. Most recently, Arkansas passed a law that, according to *The Washington Post*, "requires [doctors who provide medication abortions](#) to have a contract with a specialist who has hospital admitting privileges," despite medication abortion being over 90 percent effective and incredibly safe. These unnecessary restrictions effectively bans medication abortion in the state, and leaves only one abortion clinic to serve the state's residents, since [two of the three abortion clinics in the state](#) only offer medication abortion to their patients.

One thing many young women seeking an abortion worry about when scheduling an appointment is whether they will have to get their parents' permission. I was 23 when I scheduled my abortion, so I didn't have to worry about notifying a parent or legal guardian. But for potential patients in 37 states, [parental involvement in a minor's choice to terminate a pregnancy](#) is required. According to the Guttmacher Institute, [21 of those states only require parental consent](#), three require both parents' consent, five require both parental notification and consent, 10 require identification of parental consent, and four require proof of parenthood for parental consent. "If a patient is under the age of 18, they will need their parent or legal guardian on the phone to schedule the appointment," Leonas says. "For those teens who feel they cannot notify their parents, for example those in abusive homes, we can provide them information about an alternative procedure calls 'judicial bypass,' that requires the teen to go to court and ask a judge to waive the notification requirement."



You may worry about confidentiality even if you're over 18. Fortunately, abortion providers go to great lengths to protect your privacy and ensure your safety before, during, and after your abortion procedure. "If [a patient] has a cell phone [as their main contact number], a provider will ask if it's OK to call that number, is it OK to say it's Planned Parenthood, for example, and if it's OK to

leave a message," Denny says. "They're very sensitive to the fact that not everyone has control over their own voicemail." Leonas says Planned Parenthood health centers ask patients to provide the last four digits of their social security number, or a four-digit number only they would know, to use as a security code, too. "If [a patient] calls to ask anything about their appointment or care, we will ask them to verify this to confirm their identity, along with name and date of birth."

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And in the actual clinic, according to Denny, there are methods in place to limit who is in the private space and who has access to the clinic care area. "So even the people who are welcomed by the patient aren't allowed back to the actual clinic area, for the confidentiality and comfort of the other patients."

While speaking on the phone to, well, anyone, can be an overwhelming task, in my experience when you schedule an abortion, the person on the other end of the line is kind, understanding, and informative. There isn't a question you can ask or worry you can articulate that will deter the provider from discussing your options and arming you with as much information as possible. After all, when you're scheduling an abortion, you're arranging a date and time to undergo a common medical procedure that [one in four women will choose for themselves](#) in their lifetime. That should be a relatively easy process. Always.

ABORTION AMA

Have questions about abortion? You can email them safely and anonymously to [Abortion AMA](mailto:askabortionama@bustle.com) at askabortionama@bustle.com, and we'll answer them. Together.

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The 'Mrs. America' Stars Vs. The Real People They're Bringing To The Screen

By [JESSICA LACHENAL](#)

April 15, 2020

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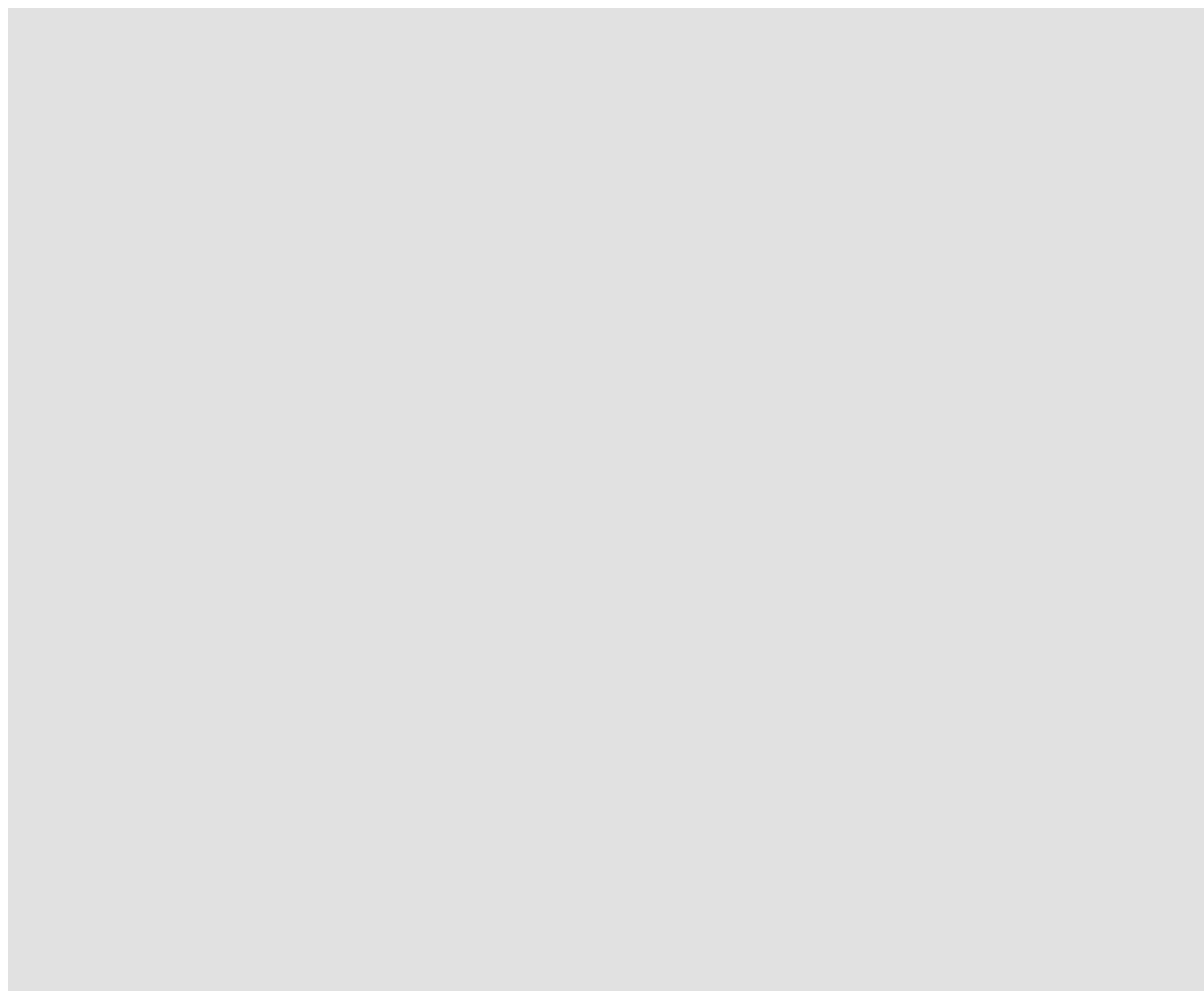
The struggle for equal rights is a constantly evolving one. Which is why it's incredibly important to know your history. That's where *Mrs. America* comes in. Granted, it's a television miniseries and not a documentary, but *Mrs. America* still paints an accurate portrayal of the women's right movement in the '70s. And the show takes great care to make sure the characters in the drama are close to the real-life women of the movement as possible. To that end, here's our own rundown of

the [Mrs. America's stars vs. the real people they're bringing to the screen.](#)

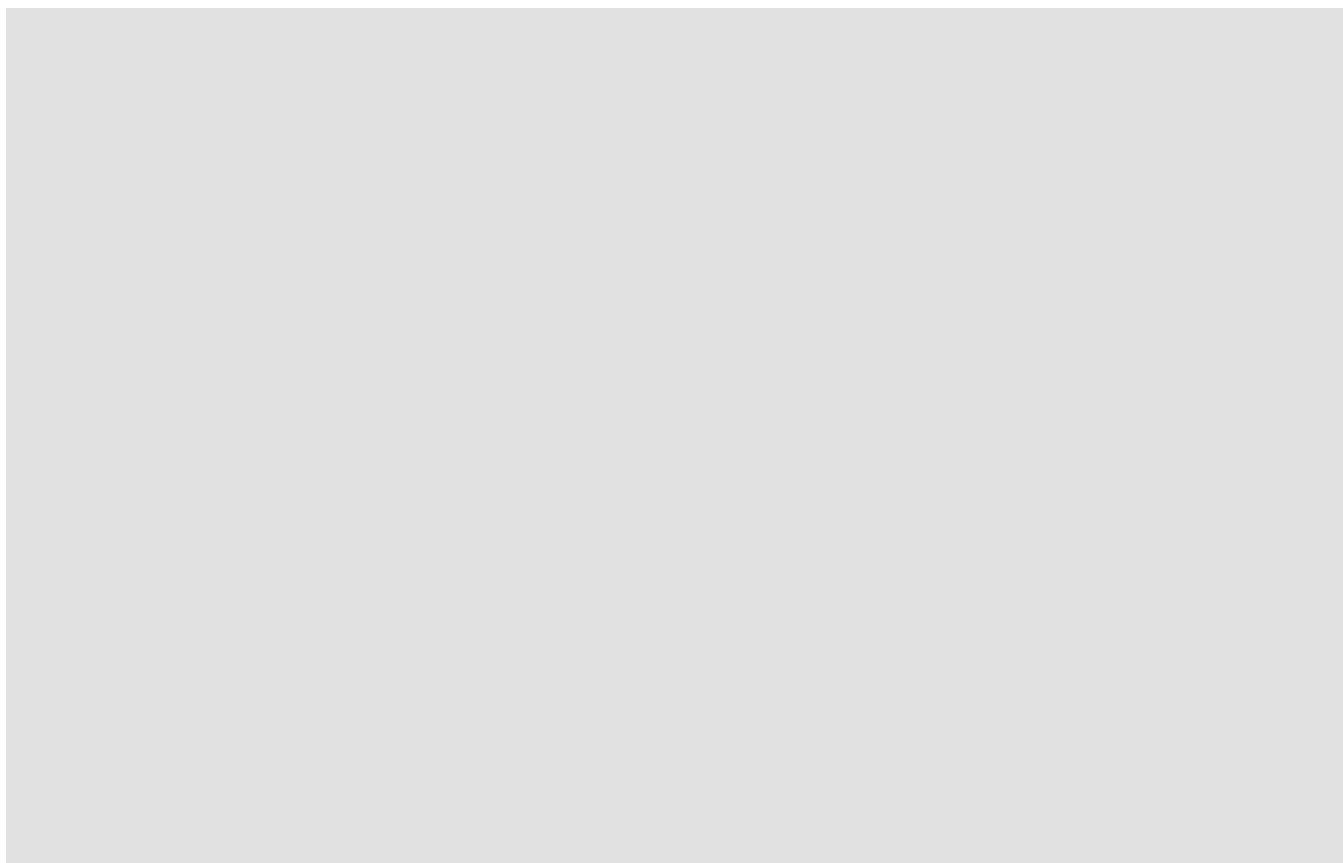
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To be more specific, *Mrs. America* covers the fight to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s. The amendment was focused on eliminating many of the inequalities that existed between men and women in matters of divorce, employment, and more. It required the approval of 38 states before it could be passed into law, and by 1972, it had won over 28 states. It was there that the amendment and its supporters met one of its staunchest opponents: Phyllis Schlafly (Cate Blanchett). Read on for more about each of the characters, below.

Cate Blanchett as Phyllis Schlafly



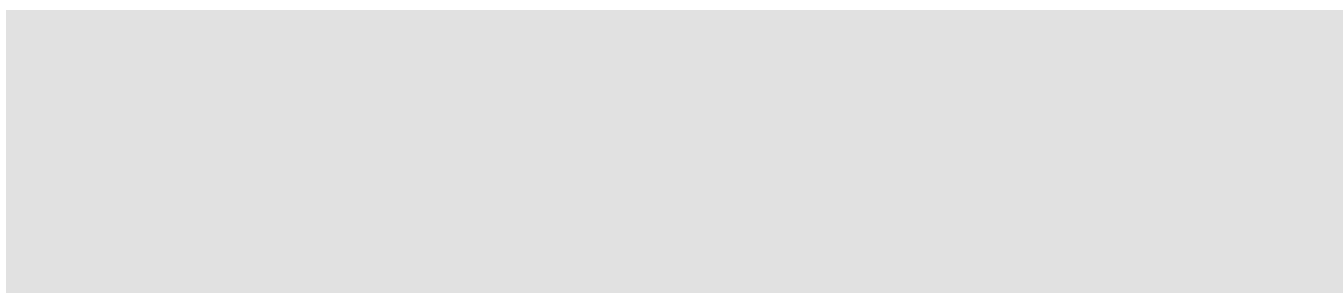
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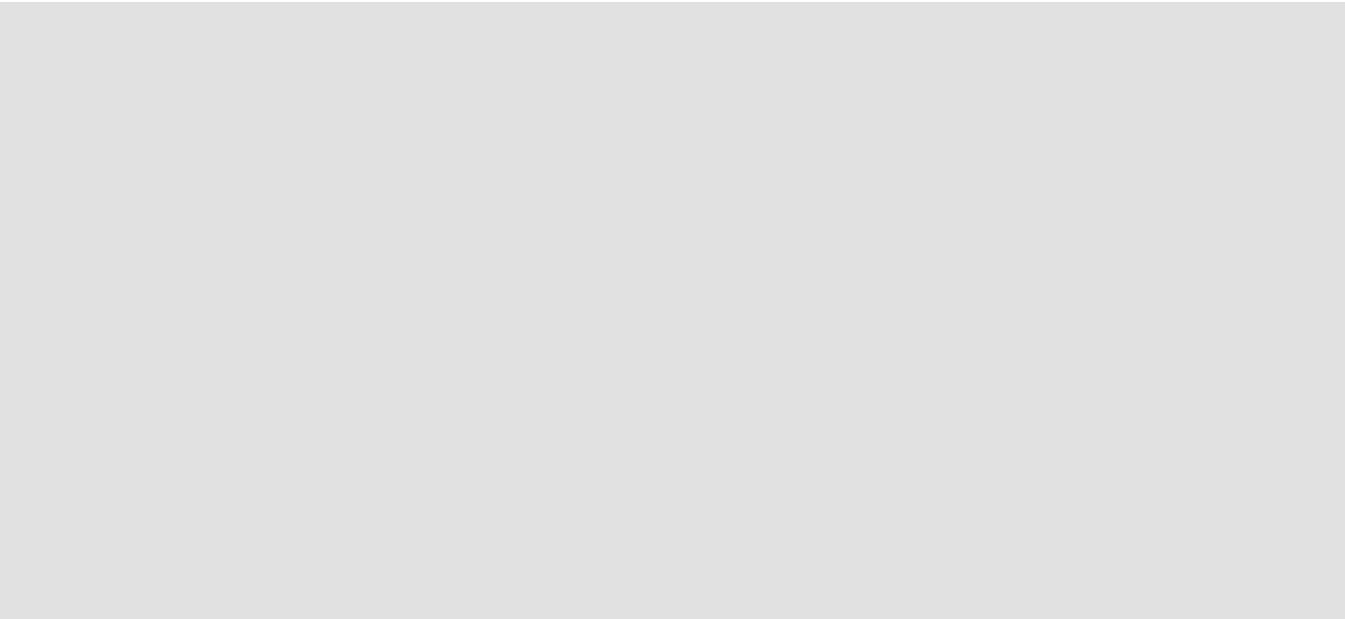


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As a staunchly conservative politician, Schlafly organized a grassroots campaign to stop the ERA from being ratified. For a time, she succeeded, getting five of the 28 states to rescind their approval of the amendment, defeating it in court.

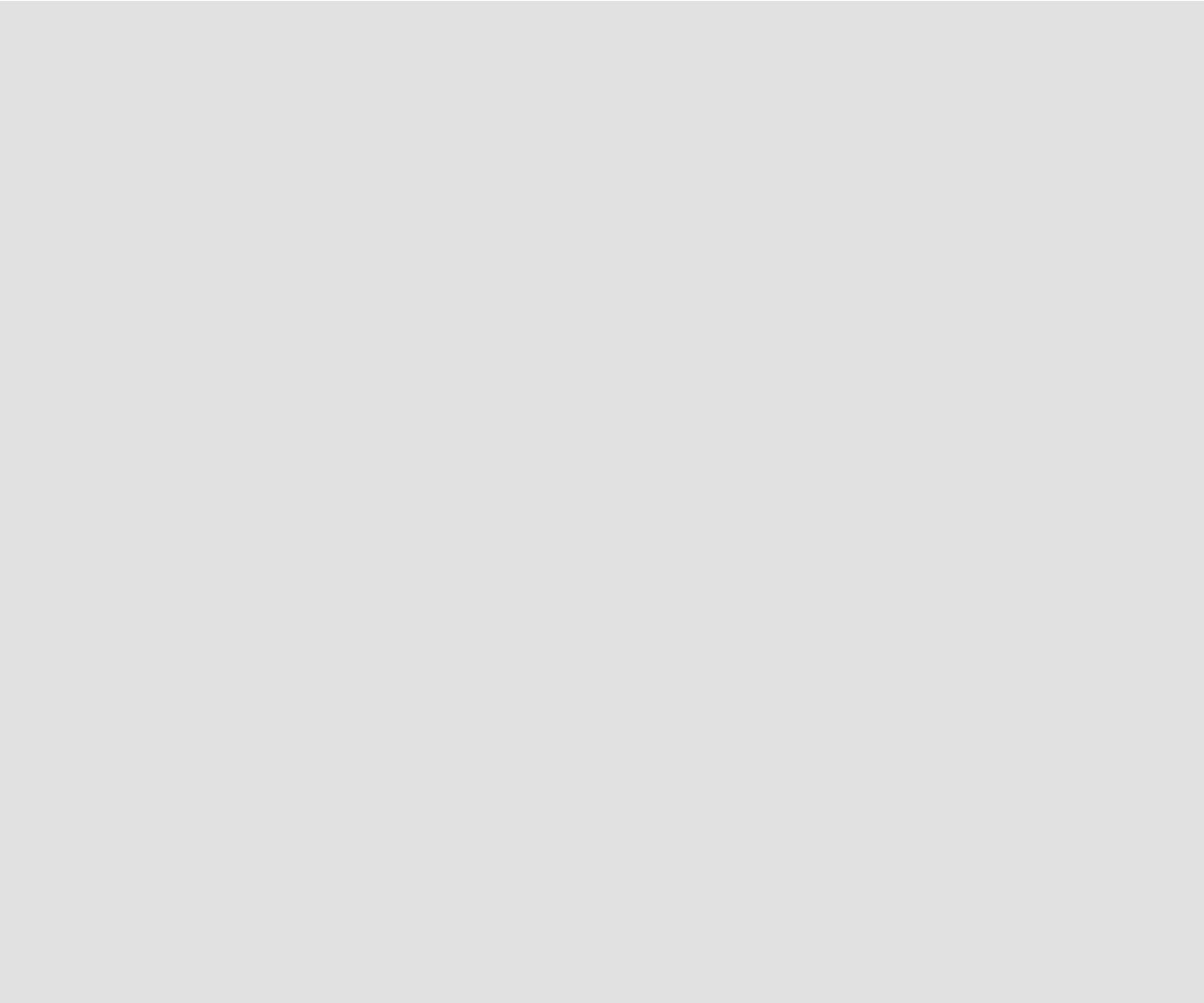
Rose Byrne as Gloria Steinem

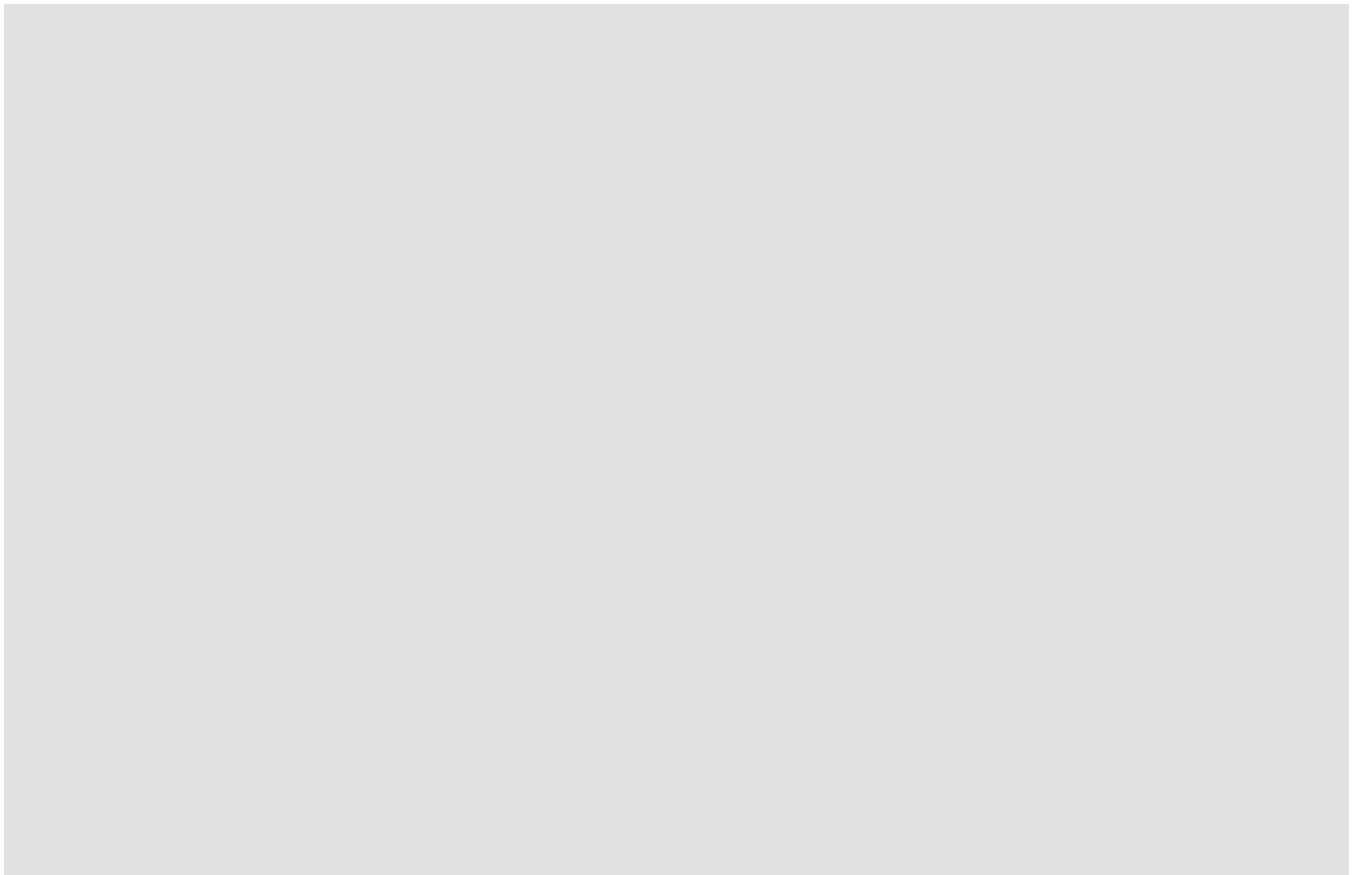




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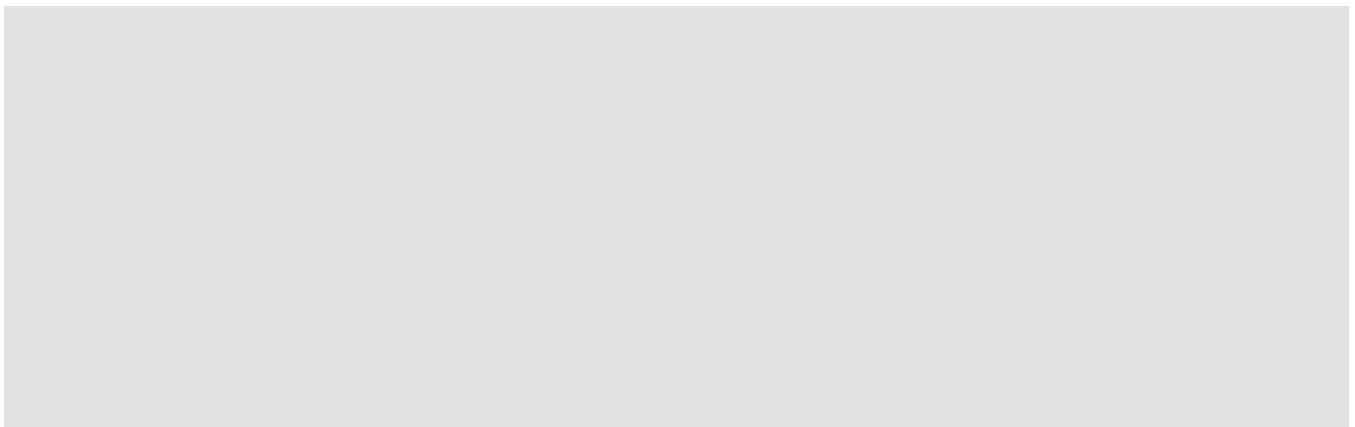


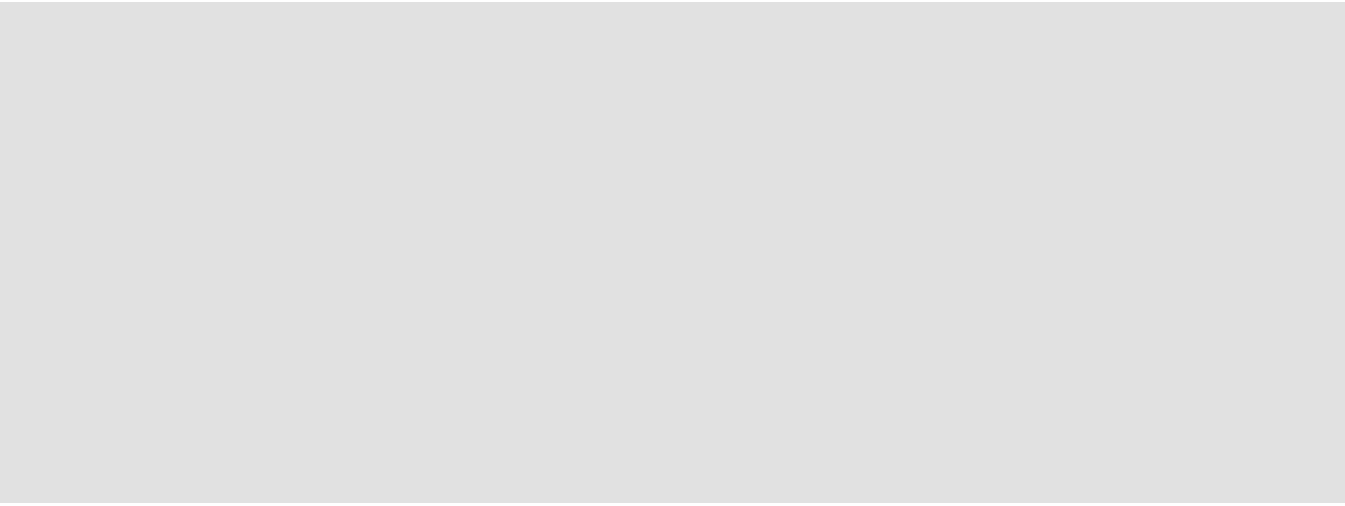
Art Zelin/Archive Photos/Getty Images

Steinem already had a big name as a journalist, with a column in *New York* magazine and as a co-founder of *Ms.* magazine. Her work focused on advocating for women's rights, and, combined with her prominent platform, made her one of the leading voices in second-wave feminism.

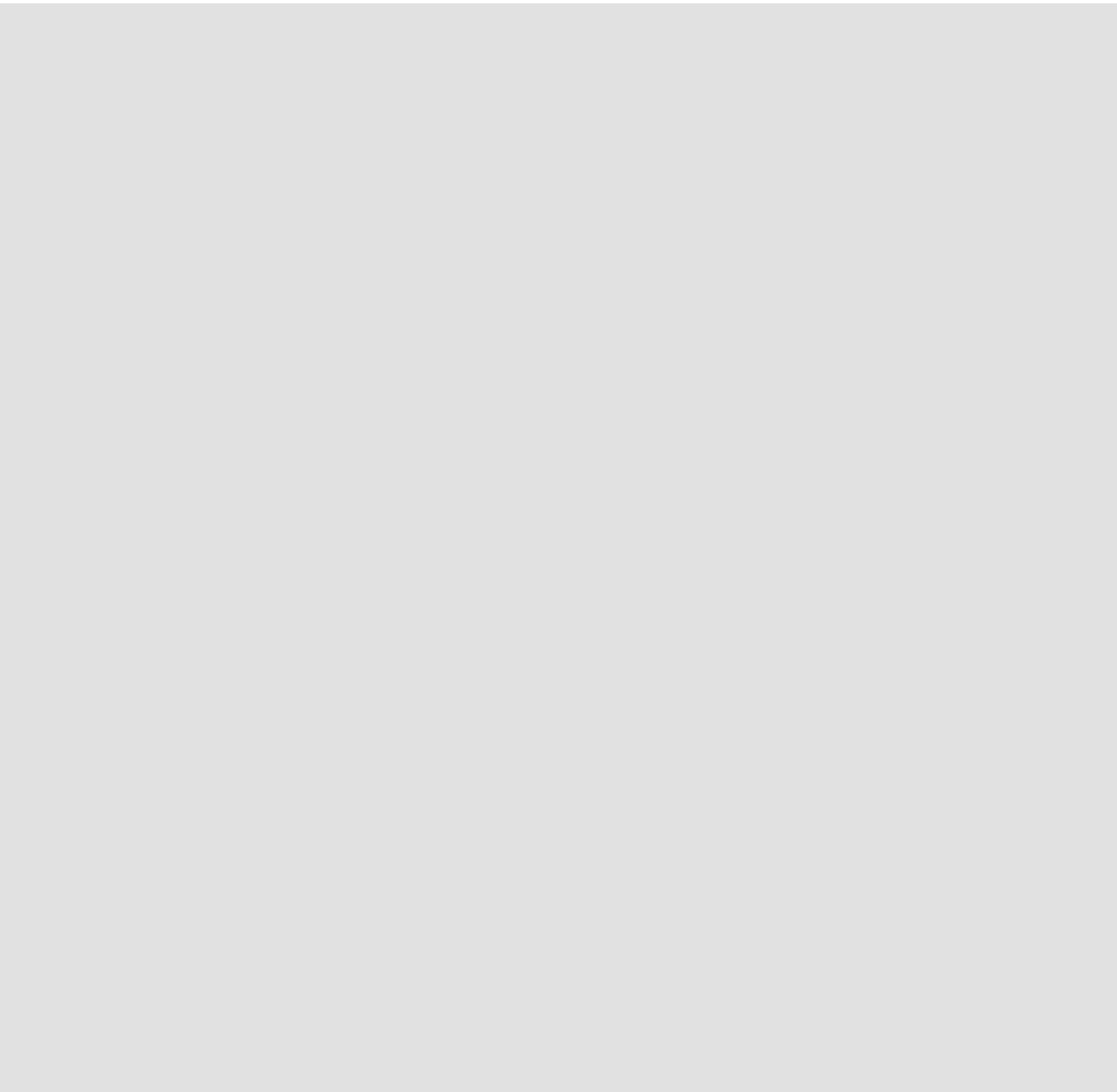
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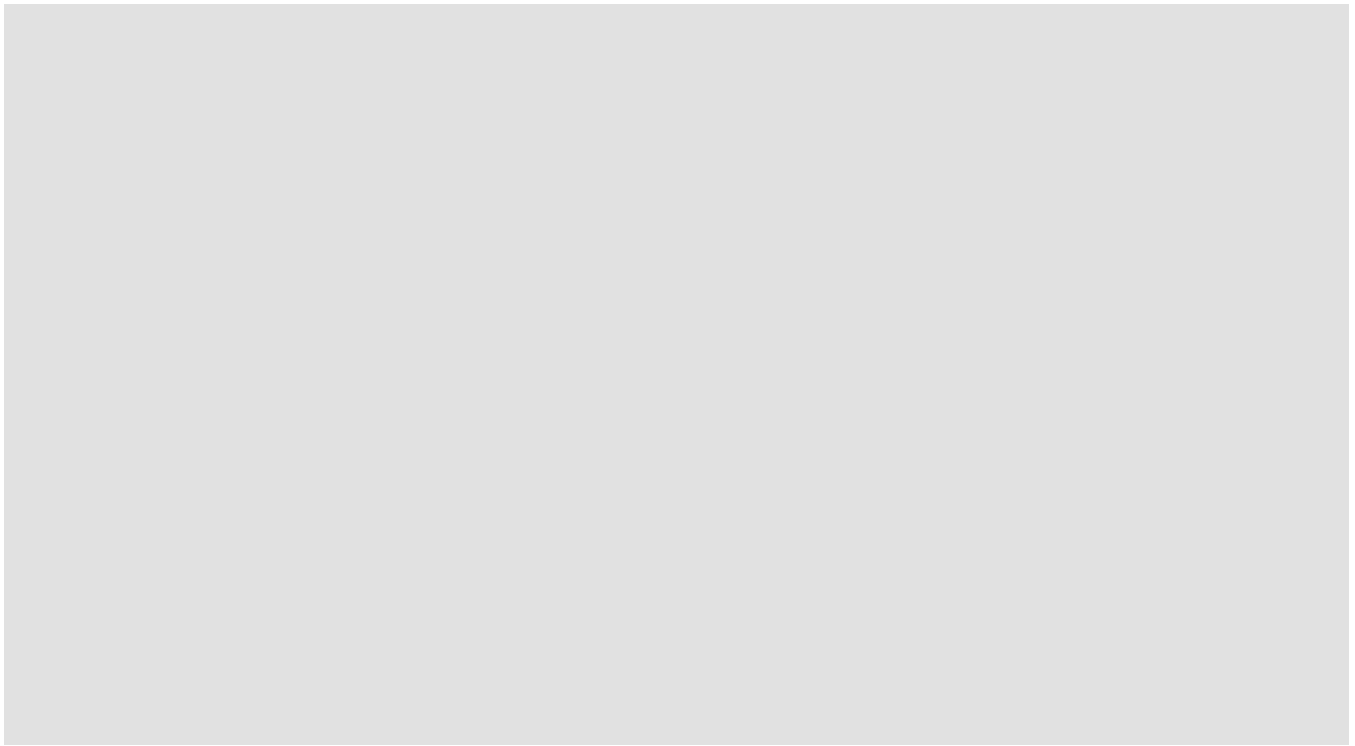
Margo Martindale as Bella Abzug





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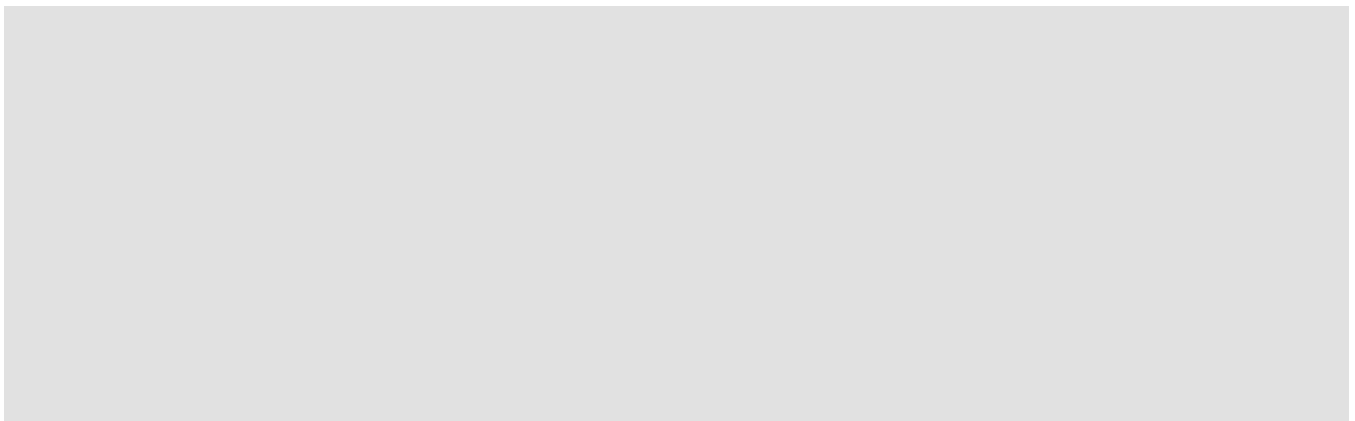


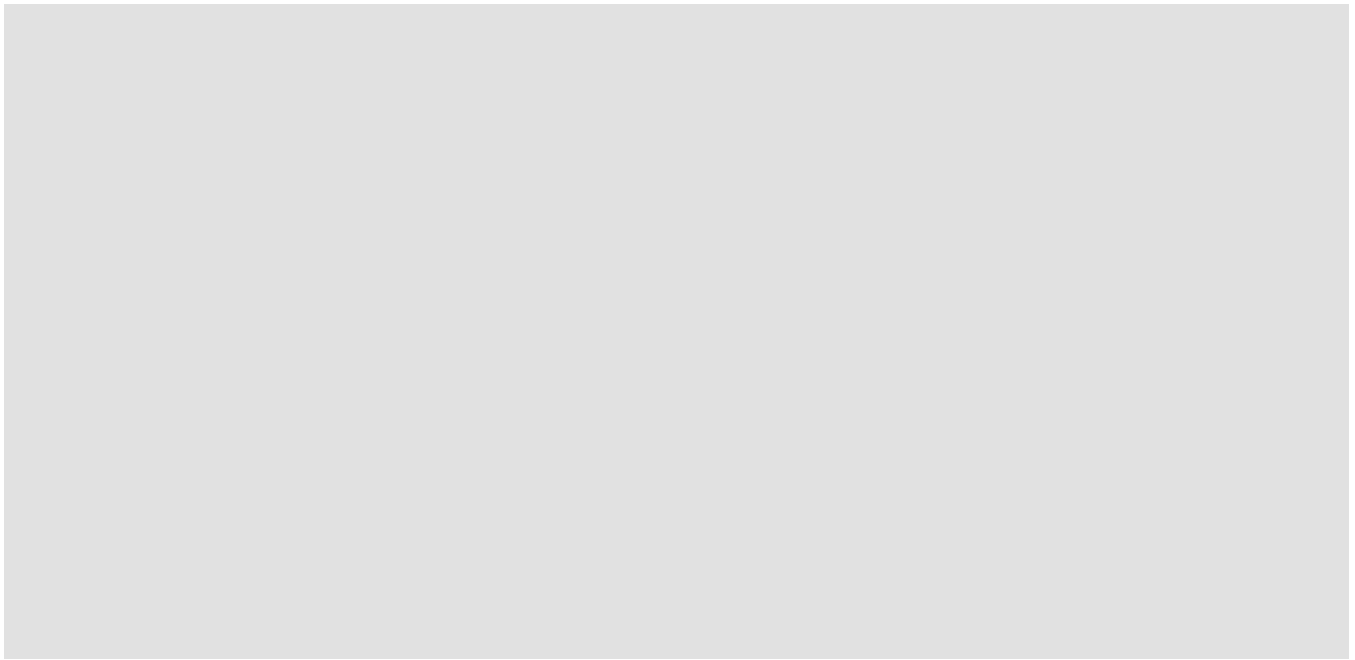
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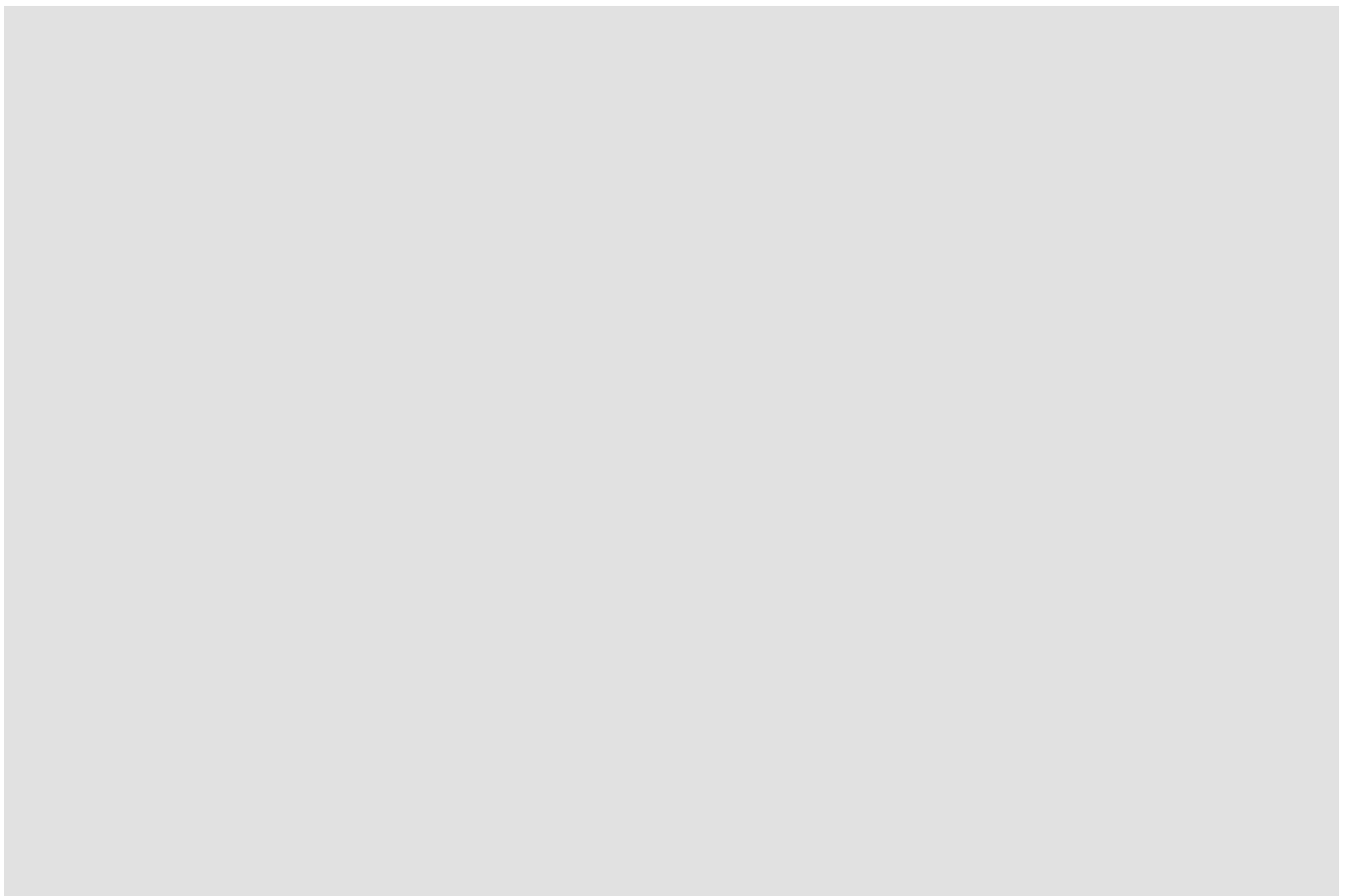
Abzug was a lawyer and prominent activist, lobbying for equality and women's rights. Her advocacy for marginalized people took her all the way to Congress, where she served as a representative for a district in Manhattan. There she stayed, making a name for herself as one of the first members of Congress to advocate for gay rights. She served until 1976, when she left to campaign for a seat on the Senate, though she ultimately did not succeed.

Uzo Aduba as Shirley Chisholm





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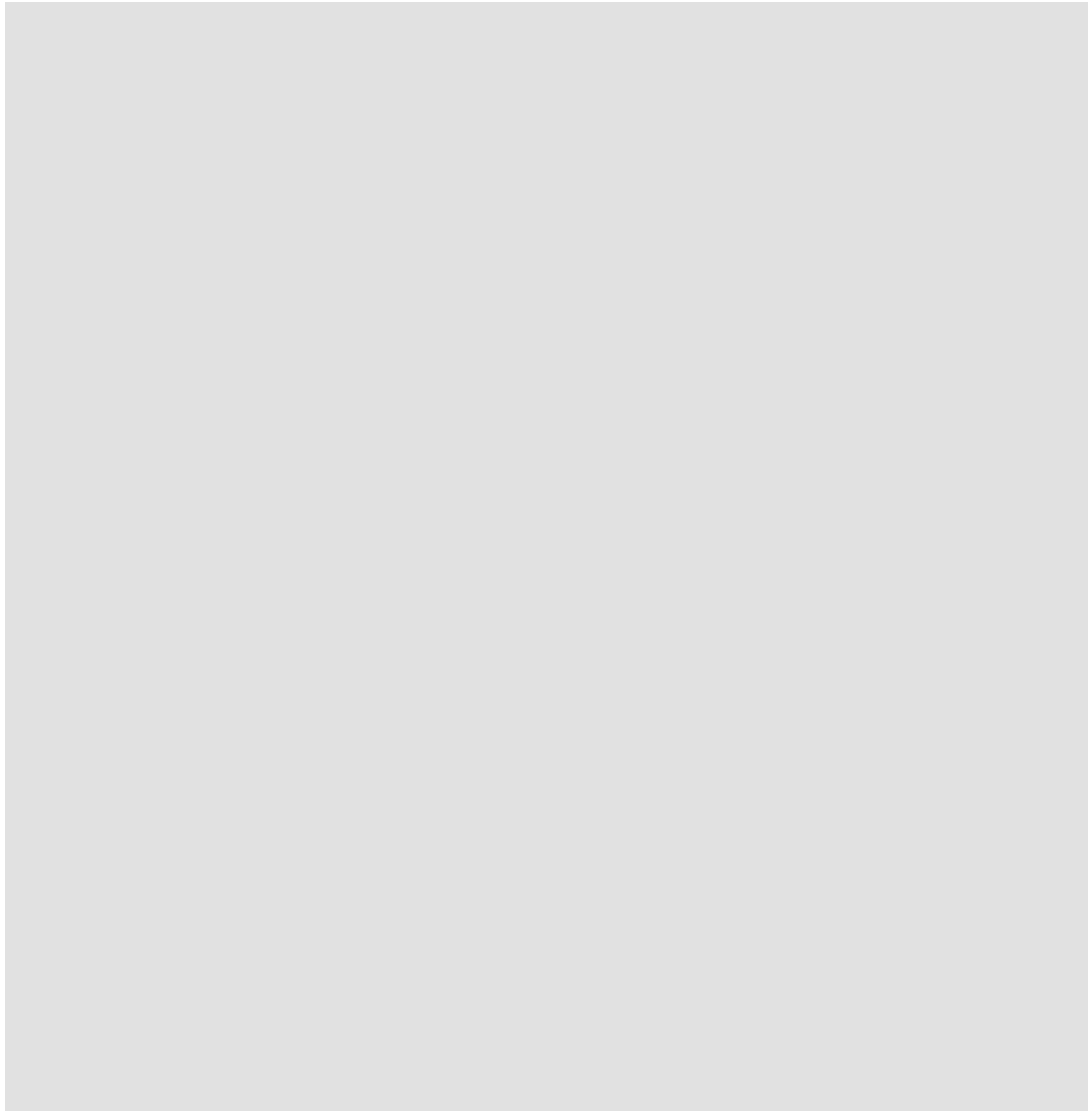


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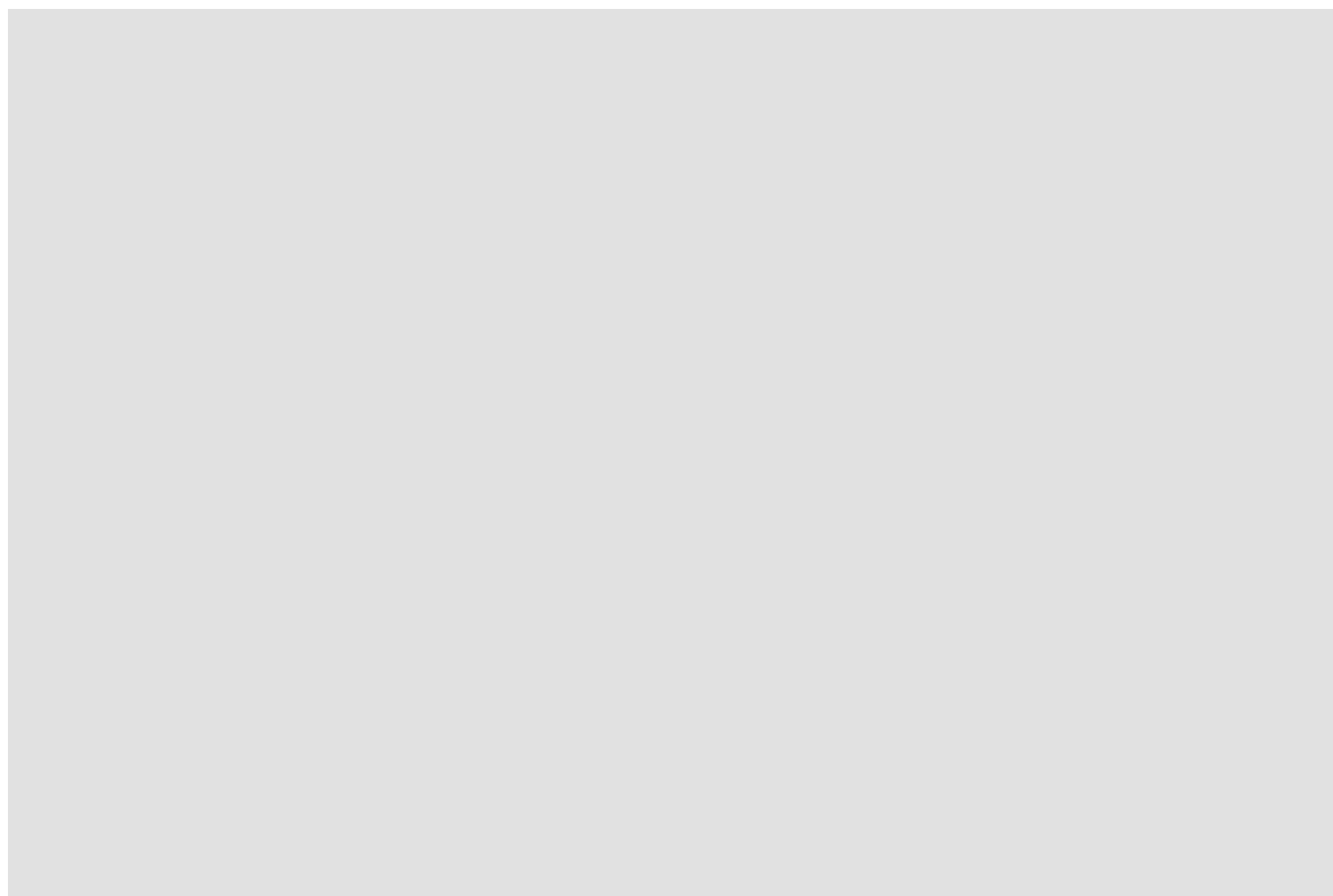
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Chisholm made history as the first black woman to be elected to Congress, which is the first of many firsts she had accomplished in her political career. She was also the first woman to run for the Democratic party's presidential nomination, the first black candidate to run for any party's nomination, and the first woman to appear in a United States debate. She accomplished many of these firsts in her 1972 presidential campaign.

Elizabeth Banks as Jill Ruckelshaus



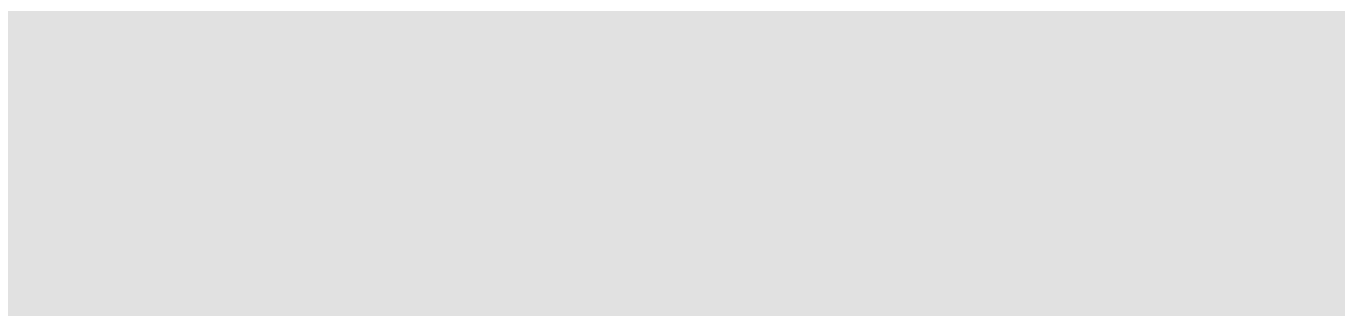
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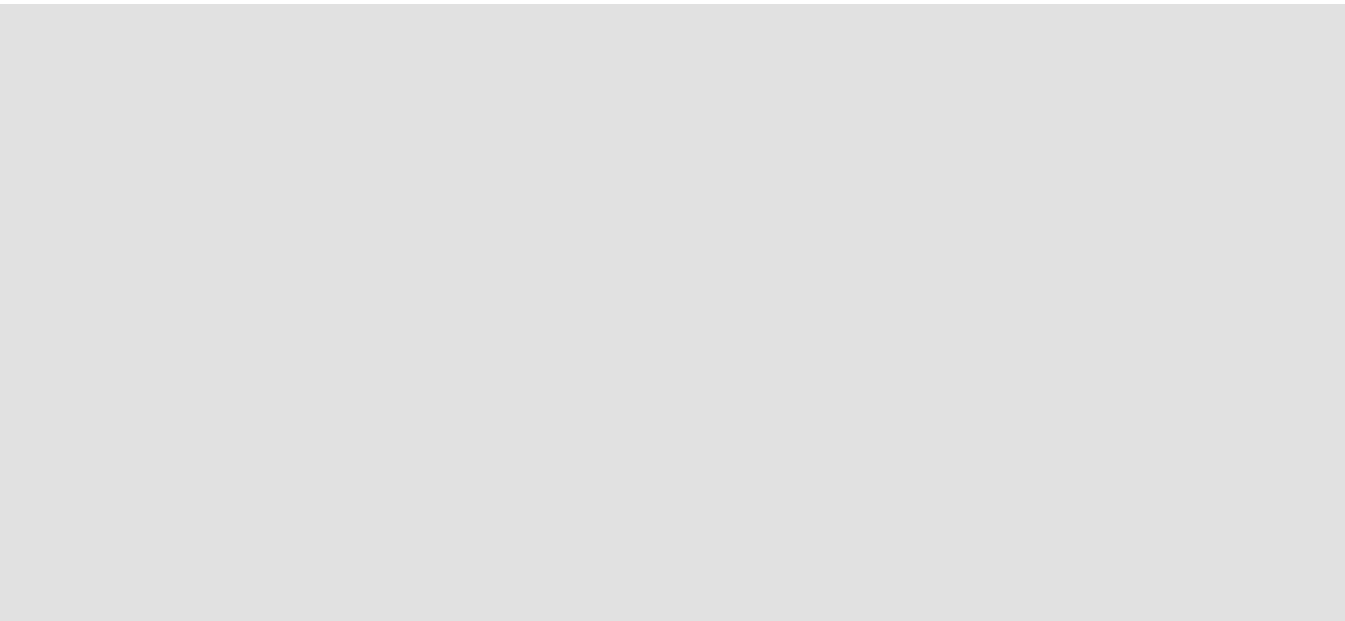


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Ruckelshaus served as an assistant at the White House, and led the White House Office of Women's Programs. In 1971, she also helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, a group dedicated to helping women who wish to be elected to office in any level of government.

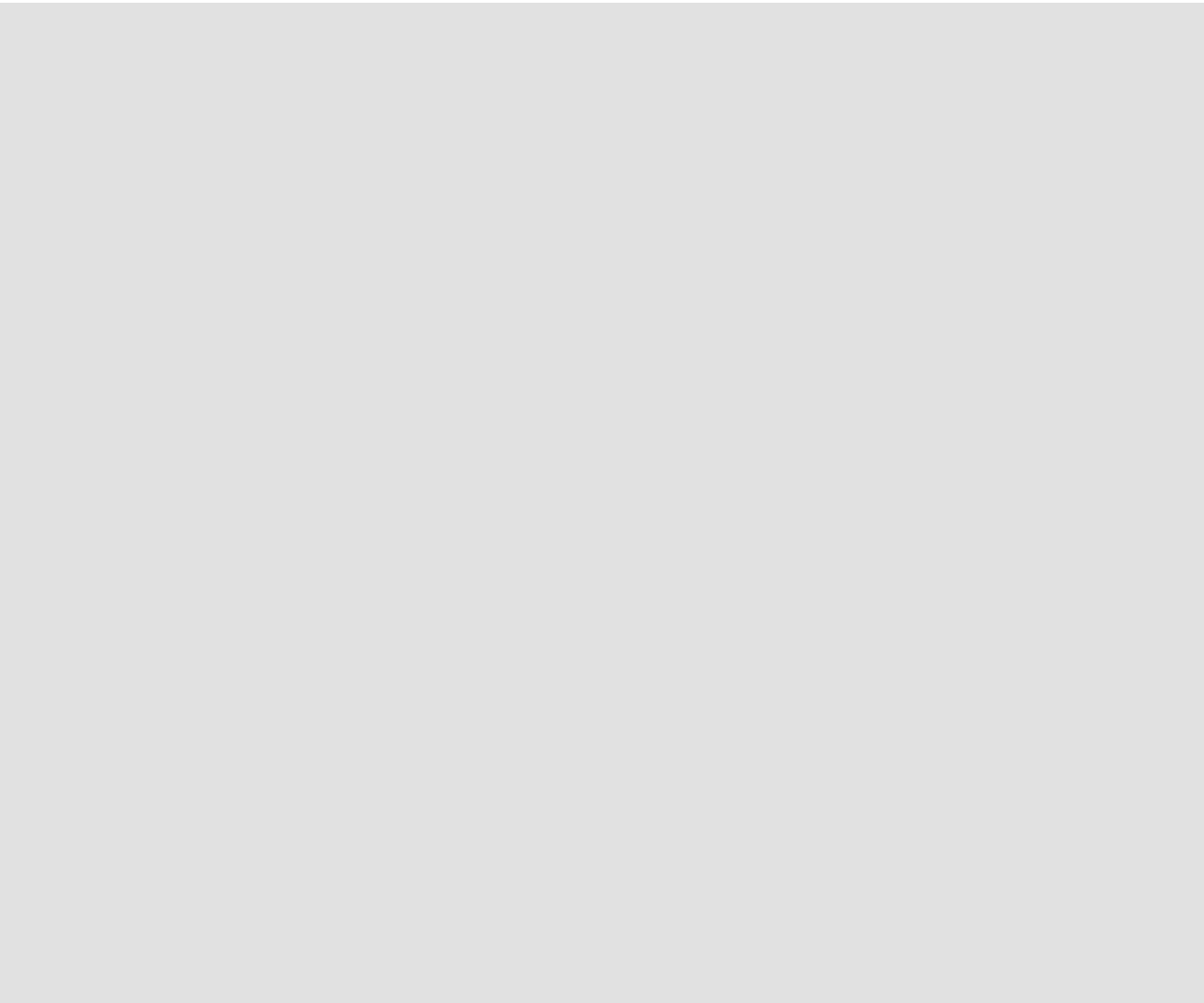
Tracey Ullman as Betty Friedan

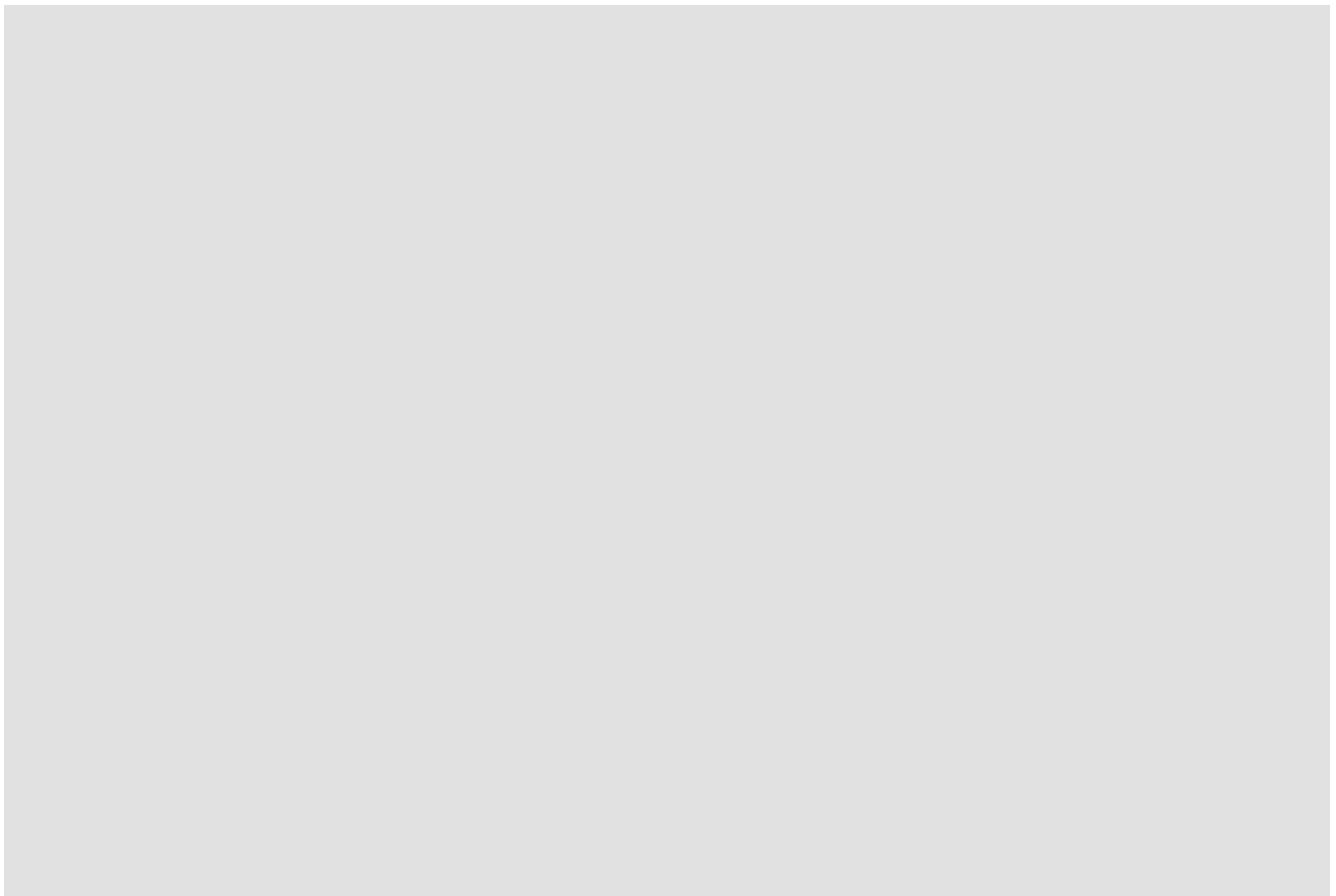




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By the time the fight for the ERA came around, Friedan was already one of the most prominent activists for women's rights. She effectively kickstarted second-wave feminism when she published *The Feminine Mystique*, a book that confronted women with the traditional gender roles they were expected to fulfill, showing them to be an illusion propped up by men.

Each of these women had a significant role in moving the ERA forward, though the fight to have it fully ratified continues on. Originally, the proposal only had seven years to secure approval from 38 states, and they fell short, thanks to the efforts of Schlafly. Later, the deadline was moved three years to 1982, and by then, it still only had the approval of 35 states. Since then, however, approvals for the amendment have trickled in, until Virginia handed in its 38th approval in January 2020. It has yet to be recognized as the 28th amendment.

