



## *A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women's Rights*

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### Book Description

*Elementary | Biography*

This picture book biography tells the story of Belva Lockwood, a lawyer, activist, and presidential candidate who devoted her life to overcoming obstacles and demanding equality for women. As the first woman to argue a case to the Supreme Court, Belva felt not only qualified to run for President, but that the laws allowed her to do so even as a woman in 1884 (36 years before the passage of the 19th Amendment that granted women voting rights). Though she did not win the election, her presidential campaign changed the political landscape. The book features a thoughtful author's note, a timeline of Belva's life and other female political milestones, and a bibliography. Belva's quotes are also integrated into the illustrations with a look reminiscent of 19th-century folk art.

### Discussion Questions

- How did Belva's experience teaching girls public speaking prepare her for her future? How can you prepare today for the goals and dreams you want to accomplish?
- Which quote of Belva's do you like the most? Why?
- Belva fought for the rights of all people and not just for women. How can you fight for the rights of others?
- Even though Belva lost, do you think her campaign was still successful? Why? How can we turn what might seem like a "failure" into success?

### Utah Connection

Like Belva Lockwood, Utah women understood that suffrage was just the first step in political engagement. Even before statehood and suffrage were secured, three Utah women attempted to run for elected office in 1895

but were ultimately barred from running because of their gender. After Utah's constitutional convention adopted women's right to vote and hold office, controversy arose regarding whether women would be eligible to vote in the ratifying election. Although the federal Enabling Act specifically limited voting on the constitution to male citizens, some Utah delegates argued that women should at least be able to vote for state officials under the rights guaranteed in the new constitution. Accordingly, the Republican party nominated Emmeline B. Wells to run for the Utah House of Representatives, Lillie Pardee for the State Senate, and Emma McVicker for state superintendent of schools. Shortly thereafter, the territorial supreme court ruled that women did not have the right to vote in the ratifying election. Although the ruling did not explicitly address women's right to run for office, many extended the court's reasoning to bar the three Republican women candidates. Emma McVicker and Lillie Pardee soon dropped out of the race, but Emmeline fought to maintain her candidacy as long as possible and finally capitulated only weeks before the election. Although women could not vote in the election that ratified the new state constitution and restored their voting rights, several women successfully ran for office in the election the following year.



*Emma J. McVicker was nominated for state superintendent of schools in 1895, but the territorial supreme court ruled that women could not yet run for election. She would later be appointed to this position in 1900. Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.*