



Indiana Auditor of State
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Op-Ed

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Removing Another Barrier

The great suffragist Susan B. Anthony once said, “There will never be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers.”

Her words were influential and indeed inspired women to push for the passage of the 19th Amendment. It’s clear that words have power. But words that “limit” are even more powerful and can have a negative impact on the way our society is shaped.

One such example exists in Indiana law.

When Governor Pence appointed me Auditor of State in 2013, I began studying my responsibilities to Hoosier taxpayers. As I read through Indiana Code 4-7-1, which outlines the Auditor of State’s powers and duties, I was struck by the first words of Section 3: “**He** shall...”

To my surprise, I found this gender-specific language was not exclusive to the Auditor’s statutes. In fact, it is riddled throughout other statewide elected officials’ statutes (5 of 7 of whom are female) and the rest of the Indiana Code.

Using the words “he shall” when describing the duties of an Indiana state officeholder clearly has a limiting effect. Women should not have to question whether such statutory language means men are favored for these offices.

But this language could create a perception that men are “preferred,” and that State government is an unwelcome environment for women. Perhaps these words act as barriers and dissuade some women from seizing opportunities to run for office and make a difference.

As Lieutenant Governor Sue Ellspermann asked in a recent *IndyStar* article, “[I]f we are not seeing enough women stepping forward [to run for office], we have to ask ourselves: What are we doing to push the barriers out of their way?”

This language can —and should—be updated to reflect the times in which we live.

Therefore, in an effort to continue the legacy sought by Susan B. Anthony, for “women themselves [to] help to make laws,” I am asking for legislation to be passed in the 2016 Indiana legislative session replacing gender-specific words under the statewide statutes with gender-neutral terms.

With 70 percent of Indiana's statewide elected officials being female, there is no better time.

If the 21st Century is to be a prosperous one, we need more women to participate and lead the way. I believe this legislation will send an empowering message to Hoosier women that in Indiana you can be a part of the success story because *you* can help write it.

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Appointed in 2014 as Indiana's 56th State Auditor, Suzanne Crouch serves as the state's Chief Financial Officer. Prior to becoming State Auditor, Crouch served eight years as the State Representative for House District 78 in Southern Indiana.

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