

## **Governor Kathleen Sebelius**

### **Pioneer Woman 2005**

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Governor Kathleen Sebelius is the daughter of John and Katie Gilligan. She graduated from Trinity College in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. In 1975, she was the first professional woman ever hired by the Kansas Department of Corrections. Following in the footsteps of U.S. Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum, Kathleen Sebelius was the second woman and youngest member ever appointed to serve on the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission. She received her Master of Public Administration degree from The University of Kansas in 1977.

Sebelius served in the Kansas House of Representatives from 1987 through 1994. During this time, she organized special hearings on the status of children in Kansas, which led to increased state financing of programs for children and pregnant women and co-sponsored legislation that created the Office of Children and Families. She also served on the House Federal and State Affairs Committee during most of her legislative career and was chairwoman of the committee from 1991 – 1992.

In 1994, Sebelius was elected as Insurance Commissioner. During her tenure, her Department's operating costs decreased by nineteen percent, even as the overall Kansas state budget increased by nearly thirty percent. While making the department more efficient and accessible to the people of Kansas, she worked with the industry to create a healthy and competitive business climate for insurance in the state. One of her best programs was a nationally recognized volunteer effort that provides information and counseling to help senior citizens lower their prescription drug costs – leading 6,000 older Kansans to save nearly \$2 million on medicine in 2001 alone. Her tough, innovative, and tightfisted leadership led the prestigious *Governing Magazine* to name Sebelius as one of the Top Ten Public Officials in America for 2001. In 2002, *Modern HealthCare Magazine* named her as one of the Top 100 Health Care Professionals.

In November of 2002, Kathleen Sebelius was elected as Kansas' 44<sup>th</sup> Governor, making history as the nation's first daughter of a Governor to be elected in that particular office. She is also the first Democrat in the state to win an open contest for Governor since 1936. In her two years as governor, she has developed the Healthy Kansas initiative to help Kansans save money on health care and make insurance and prescription drugs more affordable. She has also steered the Kansas Economic Growth

Act to passage in order to bring investment and growth to the Kansas economy. In addition, she established the Governor's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board and recently signed into law a bill that expands the rape shield criminal procedure law to provide much-needed support to rape survivors. Governor Sebelius also serves as policy chair of the Democratic Governors' Association. These are just a few examples of her numerous accomplishments while in office.

Governor Sebelius serves as an exemplary role model for young women. She has been recognized for her advocacy on behalf of women and her consideration of diverse constituents' needs when determining policy, service needs and funding. Her perseverance, integrity and willingness to take risks and make difficult choices on behalf of the greater good exemplifies what it means to be a leader.

It is for her courageous leadership, her inclusion of women in the decision-making process and her ongoing dedication and work for the citizens of Kansas that we have selected Governor Kathleen Sebelius as the 2005 Pioneer Woman.