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## FIRST LADIES OF THE USA AS ADVOCATES FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**Introduction.** Today, the figure of the First Lady is an integral part of the US political culture. The wife of the US president has special duties which are not enshrined in the national law, but were established by American society and considered to be obligatory. Domestically, the First Lady is an “example” for a female audience, the embodiment of the values and moral principles of American society, she reflects the public perceptions of the “ideal woman’s image” of her time period. At the same time, the First Lady is also a representative of American women and an advocate for women’s rights. The president’s wife may influence the domestic gender policy and decision-making process. That is why the First Lady is analyzed in terms of her contribution to the empowerment of women.

**Review of recent publications.** The issue of advocating for women’s rights by the First Lady of the USA has not constituted a separate area of theoretical research. However, the topics related to our research have been studied mostly by foreign scholars, among them are M. Borrelli [2], N. Gonnella-Platts [4], D. Grinhaus [5], K. Kuptz [10] and oth.

**Objective of the paper:** to identify the ways for the First Lady of the USA to advocate for women's rights at the national level.

**Results of the research.** The First Ladies of the United States use their status and opportunities to represent women in the national arena, as well as direct their political and public activities to protect women's rights and increase their involvement in political processes in the country. Of course, not all the wives of the presidents were concerned about gender equality, but most of them did not ignore the issue. As the First Ladies have become more involved in politics, the methods of advocating for women's rights that they used have changed.

Abigail Adams is considered to be the first advocate for women's rights among the wives of the US presidents. In a private letter to her husband, she called on him to remember women when writing the US Code of Laws: "...Remember the Ladies and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies, we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation" [8]. Thus, Ms. Adams was the first of the presidents' wives who tried to influence the domestic political decision in order to improve the women's status in the American society, namely, to involve them in the political life of the state.

Supporting the domestic political initiatives aimed to empowerment of women in politics is a promising way to promote gender equality. Being an informal advisor of the president, First Lady can influence gender policy or take part in decision-making process. The president's wife can join or initiate such processes through the Office of the First Lady, which is an instrument of her power in the White House. Therefore, the staff of the First Lady may attend meetings in the West Wing, which is considered to be the most important and influential part of the White House where political decisions are discussed and made. Also, the First Lady can join the meetings on her own. Betty Ford used to lobby for women's rights in the presidential administration, supporting the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment through political efforts and public activities [3].

Long before the advent of gender quotas and the concept of "positive discrimination", the First Ladies of the United States as heads of the Office of the First Lady, which is an unofficial division of the White House, provided employment for women in the president's residence. In 1901 Edith Roosevelt hired Isabella Hagner as social secretary, who had to assist her with scheduling and correspondence [6].

Thus, began the development of the First Lady's Office, whose staff consisted mostly of women. We can see a similar trend today: according to the White House's annual report to Congress on June 24, 2020, the office of former First Lady Melania Trump consisted of 11 employees, 8 of whom were women [1]. The First Lady forms her team and sets the criteria and standards for the work of the Office on her own. So, the president's wife is able to provide women with access to important political

positions in the White House, such as social secretary, chief of staff to the first lady, a spokesperson, etc.

In the United States social activism of the First Lady is considered extremely important. As a rule, president's wife launches her own social initiative or project aimed to solve particular social issues. Directing such initiative towards the promotion of women's rights would draw public attention to this issue, because Americans closely monitor everything that the First Lady does. Betty Ford chose the advocacy for women's rights as a field of her social activity. The events initiated by Ms. Ford included launching of an exhibition of documentary history of women's art, meeting with "Ten Outstanding Young Women of America", and promotion of the exhibition "Remember Women" [3].

Press conferences for women reporters only held by the First Lady is another way to make American women involved in politics. As the hostess of the White House, the president's wife is allowed to organize and hold meetings in the presidential residence. Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy used this type of activity to promote women's rights [7; 9]. Press conferences for women reporters encourage media to employ women workers in order to be invited to such event. Also, holding such conferences means that part of what appears in the media will be presented from a woman's point of view. During meetings with women reporters in the White House, the First Lady can express her views on political and social issues, which on the one hand provides journalists with exclusive material and, on the other hand, raises awareness of American women in political affairs.

First Lady also may use a traditional way of promoting women's rights which is to express publicly her personal opinion on the issue of gender equality. The president's wife is a role model for American society, she is considered to be the head of the White House together with the president and vice president, so her opinion is likely to be adopted by the public.

Earlier, the First Lady had to hold a press conference or attend an event to deliver her speech, but today, due to the development of information technology, the exchange of views takes place in social networks. The number of followers on the official accounts of the former US First Ladies reaches to millions. These people are the target audience of the president's wife, who is ready to listen to her and whom she can share her opinion and views with. All she has to do is to present her opinion in the short post and put the appropriate hashtag.

**Conclusions.** The diversity of the First Lady's roles provides her with a wide range of opportunities to advocate for women's rights at the national level. As a political adviser of the president, the First Lady can support the domestic policy initiatives on gender equality, as a Head of the Office of the First Lady she is able to provide American women with employment in the White House, as a social activist president's wife can launch and implement social initiatives and projects aimed at empowerment of American women, as a hostess of the White House the First Lady can hold press conferences for women reporters, and as a role model she may share her views on gender equality issues with Americans.

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## IMPLEMENTATION OF US INFORMATION SECURITY IN THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION