



ISSUE ADVISORY: Right on the Money: Parity for Women on Our Currency

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Woman on the \$10 Bill - Mark your calendars, folks. In 2020, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in the United States, a woman (gasp!) will be featured on the ten dollar bill.

NOW is pleased that a distinguished woman will be featured on modern paper currency, though we agree with our allies at Women on 20s, who argue that the U.S. Treasury should replace Andrew Jackson (notorious for his racist views and brutal treatment of Native Americans) with a prominent woman on the \$20 bill, while also placing a women's suffrage vignette on the opposite side of the \$10 bill, thus keeping Alexander Hamilton on the currency.

Of course, as half the population, women should be visible on half of all U.S. currency, not just the \$20 and \$10 bills. In choosing which women to honor, the National Organization for Women recommends that the Treasury Department give priority consideration to those women who committed their lives to achieving equality for all women while recognizing the multiple barriers faced by women in communities of color, women with disabilities and women in the LGBTQIA community. Names that have been suggested for a spot on U.S. paper money include [Abigail Adams](#), [Susan B. Anthony](#), [Ella Baker](#), [Clara Barton](#), [Julia de Burgos](#), [Shirley Chisholm](#), [Amelia Earhart](#), [Barbara Gittings](#), [Jovita Idár](#), [Helen Keller](#), [Audre Lorde](#), [Wilma Mankiller](#), [Del Martin](#), [Patsy Mink](#), [Barbara McClintock](#), [Alicia Dickerson Montemayor](#), [Rosa Parks](#), [Sally Ride](#), [Sylvia Rivera](#), [Eleanor Roosevelt](#), [Betsy Ross](#), [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#), [Sojourner Truth](#), and [Ida B. Wells](#), among many others.

In 2014, President Obama expressed his desire to see a woman on our currency after receiving a letter from a young girl who wondered why there were no women on American currency. In June of this year, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew announced that a woman of historical significance would appear on a newly re-designed \$10 bill and solicited suggestions from the public. Lew said that the woman selected should be a “champion for our inclusive democracy.” The individual cannot be a living person. Since the announcement, the department has received more than a million suggestions.

A decision was to have been made before the end of 2015, but on Dec. 11, the Treasury Department indicated that it would delay the announcement until 2016. The problem, apparently, is that the department received more public input than expected, according to *USA Today*. (More information about a woman on the \$10 bill can be found at <https://www.thenew10.treasury.gov> and there is a link to Secretary Lew's video message.)

Treasurer Rios Advocated for a Woman - The public campaign for a woman on the \$10 bill originated with Rosie Rios, the 43rd treasurer of the United States when she decided shortly

after assuming the job in 2009 that there should be a woman on U.S. currency. She has been meeting with various groups to hear their suggestions; Rios and other senior administration officials have avoided naming personal favorites. (An article and video about Treasurer Rios and her campaign on behalf of a woman on the \$10 can be accessed at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/16/politics/woman-10-bill-rosie-rios/index.html> .)

NOW Urges Parity in Currency Images – As women’s history is inadequately taught in primary and secondary schools throughout the country, the average person has little knowledge of the critical roles that women leaders have played throughout U.S. history. Because of the paucity of women’s images on all currency denominations, the National Organization for Women urges that the Department of Treasury adopt a long-range policy of honoring women leaders on future currency as it is selected for re-design. We believe that women’s images should share a representation equal to those of men on our money, appearing on all denominations.

Andrew Jackson Should Be Retired - The decision to put a woman on the ten is not without controversy. One organization has been pushing for a woman on paper money, WomenOn20s (<http://womenon20s.org/>), and did so with the intention (as their name suggests) of placing a woman on the twenty dollar bill, not the ten. This would, in a sense, kill two birds with one stone by both memorializing one of our country's powerful, influential women in history on federal currency *and* removing Andrew Jackson, notable for, among other things, his signature of the Indian Removal Act (thereby launching the Trail of Tears, resulting in the displacement and deaths of thousands of Native Americans), his disapproval of paper money and opposition to a central banking system, instead favoring gold and silver (the irony of his being featured on the twenty should not be lost on readers). However, the \$20 bill was re-designed (for anti-counterfeiting purposes) in 2003 and may not be scheduled for a re-design for many years.

The ten dollar bill is due for a re-design for anti-counterfeiting purposes and this was a key factor in Treasury’s decision to focus on the ten dollar bill to honor a woman. In a July 4 editorial, *The New York Times* supported keeping Alexander Hamilton on the \$10 bill because he was the first Treasury secretary and creator of the foundation of the country’s financial system. Secretary Lew has indicated that Alexander Hamilton may also be on the re-designed \$10 bill, but in a smaller role. As there are 1.9 billion \$10s in circulation, Hamilton’s visage will be around for a while. The new \$10 will also have a tactile feature to allow blind persons to distinguish the denomination.

Few Women Have Been on Currency - Pocahontas was the first woman to appear on U.S. currency appearing on the back of the original issue \$20 National Bank Notes of the First Charter Period in 1863. The notes are special collectors’ items and are valued in the thousands. Very first First Lady Martha Washington appeared on a \$1 silver certificate between 1891 and 1896 and it too is a collector’s item today. Other countries are not so reticent to feature women on their currency. English monarchs have long appeared on Bank of England banknotes, with Queen Elizabeth II’s formal portrait regularly appearing. Only two other women have been featured: Elizabeth Fry, (a prison reformer) and Florence Nightingale (the founder of modern

nursing), but celebrated author Jane Austen is scheduled to appear in 2017 on the new polymer banknotes. Freda Kahlo has appeared on the Mexican peso, women's rights advocate Edith Cowan on the Australian dollar, and actress Greta Garbo plus author Astrid Lindgren on the Swedish krona.

Confusion in Coinage - Susan B. Anthony's image appeared on the silver dollar from 1979 through 1981 and was again minted in 1999. This was a replacement for the Eisenhower dollar found to be cumbersome and not welcomed by the vending industry. A re-design for a smaller coin with an image of Lady Liberty on one side was proposed, but Congress asked for an image of a real woman. Prior to the second minting, NOW submitted testimony to the Treasury Department in favor of Anthony's image. Unfortunately, the Anthony dollar created confusion because of its size similar to a quarter and was not well received initially. But increased use was later seen in vending machines and mass transit systems, depleting the 500 million coin supply. The gold-colored Sacagawea dollar was then authorized by Congress to meet this demand, but reportedly the U.S. Mint was not able to sufficiently produce the coin to meet demand. Neither is in general use today.

Champions of Inclusive Democracy - To respond to Secretary Lew's request that the nominee for the \$10 bill should be a champion of our inclusive democracy, an individual should be chosen from that period when historic advances were made for the abolition of slavery, granting of the vote to African-American men and later to all women, and the gradual recognition of women's equal rights. There is a long and diverse list of who would qualify: [Sarah and Angelina Grimke](#), [Harriet Ross Tubman](#), Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, [Lucretia Mott](#), [Matilda Joslyn Gage](#), [Elizabeth Blackwell](#), [Mary Church Terrell](#), [Carrie Chapman Catt](#), [Lucy Stone](#), [Amelia Bloomer](#), [Isabella Beecher Hooker](#), [Julia Ward Howe](#), [Olympia Brown](#), and later [Alice Paul](#), [Inez Milholland](#), Ida B. Wells, [Lucy Burns](#) and Ella Baker.

An American Export: Full Citizenship and Equality -The women of this historical period had the most fundamental and broadest impact in advancing an inclusive democracy. Collectively, they re-shaped the American conscience about the rights of women and African Americans as full and equal citizens in a democracy. This movement advocating full citizenship for all and women as equals to men expressed a powerful concept that America has exported to the world, not to be equaled by any other nation and with its effects reverberating up to the present.

(As to helping Treasury decide: there may still be time to send in your suggestion for including women on paper currency, be it the \$10, the \$20 or more; go to <https://www.thenew10.treasury.gov/> and click on 'Share Your Ideas.')

Resources:

The New Ten,
<https://thenew10.treasury.gov/faqs>

Women on 20s, A Woman's Place is on the Money,
<https://womenon20s.org>

Abolitionism in the United States,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolitionism_in_the_United_States

Suffrage,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffrage>

Women's Suffrage Movement,
<http://www.historynet.com/womens-suffrage-movement>

African-American woman suffrage movement,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_woman_suffrage_movement