

Barry Morris Goldwater (1909–1998)

Barry Morris Goldwater was a Republican Arizona Senator and US presidential candidate in the twentieth-century whose policies supported the women's reproductive rights movement. Goldwater, a businessman and Air Force reservist, transitioned into politics in the 1950s. He helped align popular support for a conservative Republican Party in the 1960s. Throughout his life, he worked to maintain personal liberty and to limit governmental intrusion into citizens' private lives. Goldwater, influenced by his wife Margaret (Peggy) Goldwater, supported women's rights to abortions. Goldwater's advocacy and support for reproductive rights assisted in the foundation of the Planned Parenthood chapter in Phoenix, Arizona, and for national policies promoting birth control and abortion rights.

Goldwater was born on 1 January 1909 in Phoenix, Arizona, to parents Josephine and Baron Goldwater. Goldwater's grandparents were immigrants from Poland who moved to Arizona from California after the Gold Rush of the mid-nineteenth century. Once in Arizona, his grandparents founded the J. Goldwater and Brothers General store. Goldwater's father inherited the business after his grandfather's death. Goldwater's mother, a nurse, moved to Arizona because she suffered from tuberculosis, a contagious lung infection, and the hot, dry climate of Arizona was claimed to alleviate the condition. Goldwater's parents met and married in Arizona before having Goldwater and his siblings. In 1920, at the age of eleven, Goldwater received his first radio set from his father, beginning a lifelong hobby in radio. He established an early commercial radio transmitter in Arizona at the age of thirteen.

Goldwater attended Phoenix Union High School in Phoenix for his first year of high school. During his first year, he was president of his freshman class despite struggling academically. According to his biographer Peter Iverson, the school's principal told Goldwater's parents he might not continue to sophomore year due to his poor grades. As a result, Goldwater's parents sent him to the Staunton Military Academy in Staunton, Virginia, for his final years of high school. At Staunton, Goldwater's athletic ability earned him a place on the football, track, and swim teams. During his final year at Staunton, he won a medal for best all-around cadet. Goldwater aspired to attend college at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York. However, when his father fell ill in 1928, Goldwater moved back to Arizona where he attended the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona.

When his father died a year later in 1929, Goldwater dropped out of college to work in the family store. Goldwater started working as a salesman to learn more about running a business. While working at the store, he met Margaret (Peggy) Johnson. They courted long distance, because she lived in Muncie, Indiana. Goldwater described her as being uninterested, and after several years of courting he proposed, saying he was tired of chasing her. She agreed, he mailed the engagement ring to her home in Muncie, and when she returned to Arizona in September of 1934, they married. They had four children together: Joanne, Barry Jr., Michael, and Peggy Goldwater.

After several years of working as a salesman, Goldwater became president of the family company in 1937. He expanded the business to include direct mail orders throughout the country and began advertising in national magazines. Goldwater managed the business in ways that were not commonplace at the time. He became one of the first Phoenix business owners to hire African-Americans and to provide his employees with health insurance, retirement, and profit sharing. He remained with the company until 1953. However, during his time as a businessman, Goldwater suffered two nervous breakdowns and began struggling with alcohol abuse. Political opponents would later use both conditions against him during his political career.

While Goldwater was working his way up the family company, his wife, after volunteering at a

women's hospital, became involved in the birth control movement. In the 1930s birth control was illegal in the US due to Comstock Laws. Goldwater's wife, after meeting birth control activist Margaret Sanger, helped establish the first birth control clinic in Phoenix. The Phoenix Mother's Health Clinic opened in 1937 and later became the Phoenix Planned Parenthood clinic. Goldwater supported his wife's efforts by writing letters seeking financial backing for the birth control clinics from prominent people and companies in Arizona. Historian Mary Melcher argues that his wife's influence contributed to Goldwater's support for the reproductive rights movement during his political career.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, Goldwater volunteered for active duty. However, due to his age and prior athletic injuries, the military rejected him for active duty. Instead, he was assigned to the Air Force reserves in Yuma, Arizona, as an instructor in artillery. Prior to the war, Goldwater had piloted aircrafts as a hobby and had over four hundred hours of experience. After the military learned about his flying experience, he was reassigned as a pilot and flew across the North Atlantic and Europe delivering supplies. When the war ended in 1945, Goldwater returned to Arizona and organized the Arizona Air National Guard. Goldwater remained in the military until his retirement in 1969.

Following World War II, Goldwater became involved in several community organizations including the Boys Club of Phoenix, the Community Chest board, and the Arizona Interstate Stream Commission. His involvement with those organizations brought him local publicity and prominence within the Phoenix community. In 1949 he won Phoenix's Man of the Year award and was elected to the Phoenix City Council. Prior to the 1950s, Arizona was considered a Democratic state, with Democrats far outnumbering Republicans in voter registration. However, with the influx of people to Arizona during and after World War II, the political climate changed. Goldwater was among those who worked to spread Republican influence in Arizona. After several years working in local Arizona government, several friends and political allies encouraged Goldwater to run for US Senate in Washington, D.C. Goldwater announced his candidacy for Senate in 1952.

In 1952, Goldwater was elected to the United States Senate as an Arizona Representative for the Republican Party. He was reelected in 1958. Throughout his senate career, Goldwater supported a decentralized government and for individual liberties. He viewed welfare and collectivism, the concept of prioritizing the needs of a group of people over an individual, as infringements upon individual rights. Goldwater spent much of his time in the Senate discussing foreign policy arguing against communism. Goldwater supported a large military and an authoritative foreign presence to protect the individual freedoms of US citizens. In addition, he argued that decreasing the size of the government should be the most urgent and important issue in the US. Throughout Goldwater's terms in Senate, he sponsored and co-sponsored many bills relating to Arizona land, Native American affairs, military, and defense, among others.

In 1956 Goldwater's eldest daughter Joanne became pregnant at the age of twenty. In a later interview, Joanne described how she was in college at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, and not ready to become a mother. Goldwater and his wife supported her decision to have an abortion, though abortions were illegal. Due to his financial security and political connections gained in Washington, D.C., Goldwater arranged an illegal abortion for his daughter in Virginia. Though he never publicly discussed the event, Melcher argues that it influenced his lifelong support for women's rights to abortions.

In 1960 Goldwater authored the book *The Conscience of a Conservative*, which garnered him national attention in and for the Republican Party. The book sold greater than three million copies and attained a spot on New York Time's best-seller list. Following his second term in the US Senate, Goldwater ran for US President. In 1964 he won the Republican Primaries, winning eight out of the sixteen states hosting primaries. However, in the 1964 Presidential Election, he lost to Democrat Lyndon Johnson in a landslide defeat. Besides Arizona, he won only five states, all in in the deep south. The election marked the first time in nearly a hundred years when a Republican presidential candidate won any of those five states. Historians attributed that change partly to Goldwater's opposition in the US Senate against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which Goldwater claimed was federal overreach of states' rights. His position was popular among southern whites, many of whom opposed the act. Historians highlighted Goldwater's campaign as a moment when fiscal conserva-

tives began to unite with social conservatives in the US. Despite his loss, Goldwater emerged as a political icon for the Republican Party.

To run for president, Goldwater had left his position in the Senate. After his presidential loss in 1964, he left Washington, D.C., and returned to Arizona. Goldwater returned to the US Senate in 1968 and remained in the senate until his retirement in 1987. Throughout his later terms in the Senate, the Republican Party changed.

The New Right, a movement that increasingly linked economic conservatives with social conservatives to broaden the support of the Republican Party, gained popularity. The New Right became popular partly by linking religion with politics, focusing on topics such as prayer in school, abortion, and pornography and using religious morality for either condemning or supporting those issues in politics. The New Right gained national prominence with the election of Ronald Regan as US President in 1981. By the 1980s, the Republican Party had become both economically and socially conservative and embraced religion in public policy.

On several occasions throughout the 1980s Goldwater criticized the religious Republicans for their approach toward issues such as abortion. Goldwater argued that the true principle of conservatism was the support of individual liberty. He viewed religion in politics as an infringement on personal privacy and liberty. Instead, Goldwater emphasized constitutional guarantees of privacy from governmental intrusion into one's private life.

After the US Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., issued its decision in the case *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which rule unconstitutional any states' attempts to prohibit abortion, representatives in the US Congress tried to pass several amendments to overturn the decision and give states the authority to prohibit abortion. Though Goldwater had argued that abortion was a personal choice between a woman and her doctor, he wavered in his political stance on abortion in the 1980s.

In 1981 Goldwater co-sponsored a new Right to Life Amendment to the US Constitution that aimed to give fetuses a constitutional right to life. It aimed to ban abortions except in cases for which they were necessary to save the life of the mother. However, Goldwater voted against a bill proposed at the same time that would ban all abortions even when the mother's life was at risk. In letters to his constituents, Goldwater claimed that medical research had demonstrated that fetuses were distinct human beings from the mothers, and therefore should have rights. Additionally, he referred to a need to be conscientious of other people's religions, and that some of those religions held that abortion was murder. The Amendment was introduced into the Senate but did not pass.

Two years later, in 1983, the Senate debated the Hatch-Eagleton Amendment. The Amendment sought to allow states the ability to prohibit abortion. Despite his previous efforts to limit abortion, Goldwater voted against the amendment, stating that the measure would undermine personal freedom and choice. The amendment did not pass. Goldwater again argued that abortion was an individual choice between a woman and her doctor, which the government should not regulate.

By the 1970s Goldwater's personal life had begun to conflict with his professional career. His wife's health began to suffer and she was no longer able to accompany him to Washington, D.C. Despite his family's pleas for his retirement, Goldwater stated that he had obligations to Arizona and to the Republican Party. In 1985, Goldwater's wife died from complications following surgery. Following his wife's death, Goldwater retired from politics when his Senate term ended in 1987.

Despite his retirement, Goldwater remained active in Arizona politics. In 1992 Goldwater announced his opposition to Proposition 110, which aimed to ban abortions except when a pregnant woman's life was threatened or in cases of incest or rape. Goldwater appeared in television ads urging citizens to vote against the proposition, claiming it would be a governmental intrusion into citizens' private lives. Continuing his support of women's rights, in 1992 he publically objected to the national Republican Party's platform opposing the legality of abortion. In February 1992, Goldwater married the health care activist Susan Wechsler.

In 1994 Planned Parenthood honored Goldwater for his commitment to individual privacy and women's rights to choose abortion. The following year, Planned Parenthood established the Barry Goldwater Award, given each year to a public service official within the Republican Party who supported reproductive rights.

In the late 1990s Goldwater was diagnosed with early Alzheimer's disease and spent much of his time with his wife, children, and grandchildren. He died of a stroke on 29 May 1998 in Paradise Valley, Arizona, at the age of eighty-nine. His ashes, along with the ashes of his first wife, were scattered across the Colorado River. Since his death, several buildings, scholarships, and awards have been named after him to honor the commitment he made to his state, his political party, and the woman's reproductive rights movement.

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