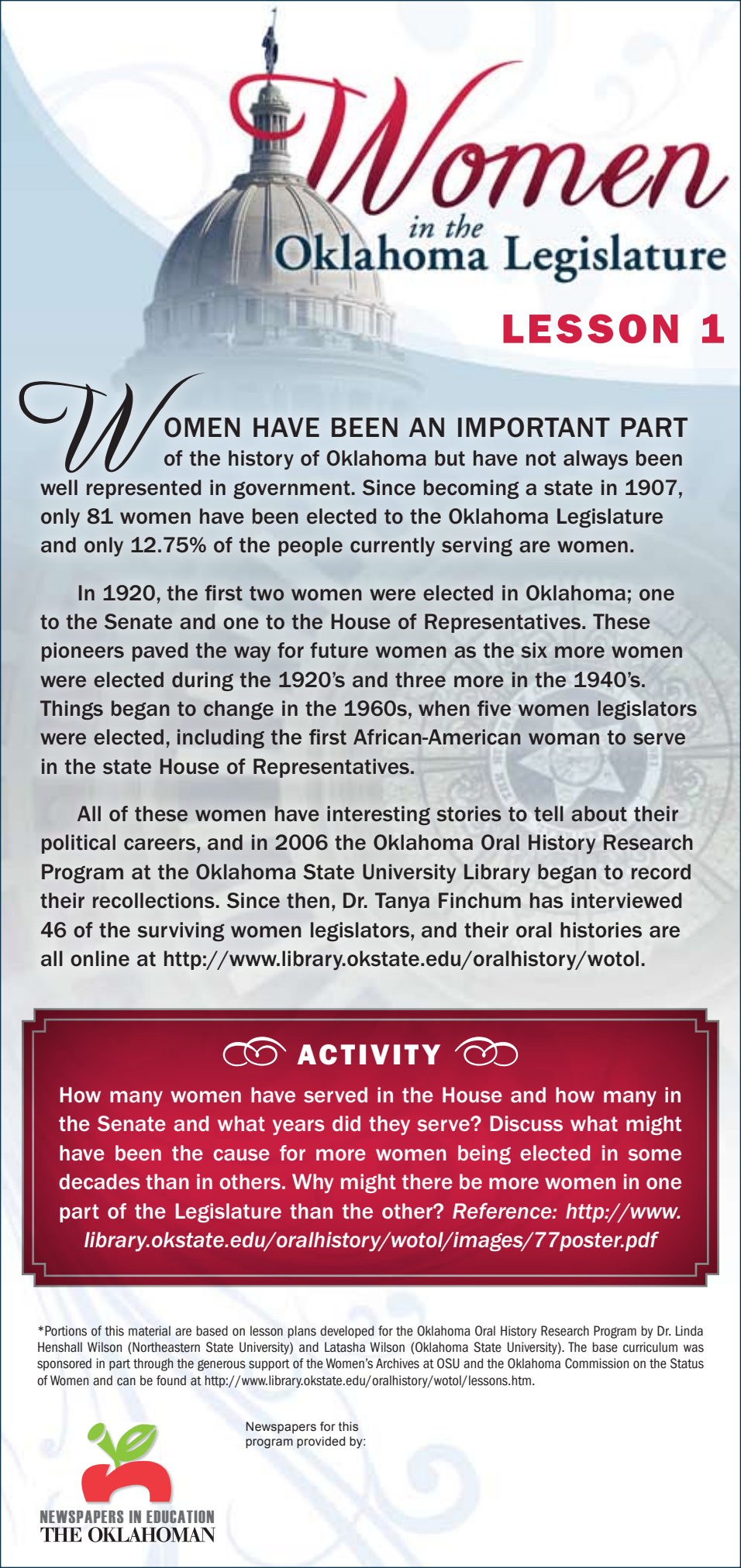




Women in the Oklahoma Legislature

LESSON 1

WOMEN HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART of the history of Oklahoma but have not always been well represented in government. Since becoming a state in 1907, only 81 women have been elected to the Oklahoma Legislature and only 12.75% of the people currently serving are women.

In 1920, the first two women were elected in Oklahoma; one to the Senate and one to the House of Representatives. These pioneers paved the way for future women as the six more women were elected during the 1920's and three more in the 1940's. Things began to change in the 1960s, when five women legislators were elected, including the first African-American woman to serve in the state House of Representatives.

All of these women have interesting stories to tell about their political careers, and in 2006 the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at the Oklahoma State University Library began to record their recollections. Since then, Dr. Tanya Finchum has interviewed 46 of the surviving women legislators, and their oral histories are all online at <http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol>.

ACTIVITY

How many women have served in the House and how many in the Senate and what years did they serve? Discuss what might have been the cause for more women being elected in some decades than in others. Why might there be more women in one part of the Legislature than the other? *Reference:* <http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/images/77poster.pdf>

*Portions of this material are based on lesson plans developed for the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program by Dr. Linda Henshall Wilson (Northeastern State University) and Latasha Wilson (Oklahoma State University). The base curriculum was sponsored in part through the generous support of the Women's Archives at OSU and the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women and can be found at <http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/lessons.htm>.



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