Inventory of the Elizabeth Snyder Papers

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Elizabeth Snyder Papers
Dates: 1937-1987
Collection number: C138
Creator: Elizabeth Snyder
Collection Size: 3 cubic feet
Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California
Abstract: The Elizabeth Snyder Papers consist of 2 cubic feet of records covering the years 1937 to 1987, with the bulk of materials covering 1953 to 1956, when she was Chair of the Democratic State Central Committee (DSCC), and 1977 to 1987, when she was active in the feminist movement in the Southern California region.
Physical location: California State Archives
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Elizabeth Snyder Papers, C138.[series number], [box and folder number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.
Acquisition and Custodial History
The California State Archives acquired the private papers of Elizabeth Snyder through a donation.
Administrative History
Elizabeth Snyder was born Elizabeth Carlson on April 8, 1914 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She moved to Los Angeles in 1927 with her family and attended Garfield High School. As a college student she was active in the Young Democrats. She attended both undergraduate and graduate school at the University of California, Los Angeles and received her degree in Political Science in 1937. The following year she attended the Young Democrats' national convention as a national committeewoman for the organization. In 1938, she was a member of the speakers' bureau during the successful campaign of Culbert Olson for California governor. From 1938 to 1942, while still active in the Young Democrats, she worked as a substitute teacher and as a lobbyist for laws pertaining to substitute teaching. In 1940, she married a fellow Young Democrat, attorney Nathan Snyder.
She attended her first Democratic National Convention in 1940 as an alternate delegate for Congressman Jerry Voorhis, whom she would one day describe as her political hero. After World War II, she worked on congressional campaigns for Voorhis and Chet Holifield, and for the Harry Truman presidential campaign in 1948. In 1950, both of her major campaigns were unsuccessful - the signature-gathering drive to place an initiative abolishing California's "cross-filing" system on the ballot and the Helen Gahagan Douglas campaign for United States Senate.

Eliminating cross-filing was one of Snyder's passions; in 1952, the initiative finally made it onto the ballot as Proposition 13 (it failed by 3,000 votes). That same year she attended the Democratic National Convention again, as an alternate delegate supporting U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee. The next year, after Adlai Stevenson's loss in the presidential election, Snyder and other California activists founded the California Democratic Council (CDC), which quickly became the primary grassroots organization supporting Democratic candidates and issues in California.

In 1954, Snyder became the first female chairperson of the State Democratic Central Committee, in effect making her the head of the Democratic Party in California. She served in that position for two years. In 1956, she attended the Democratic National Convention as a delegate. That was where Snyder's official capacity as a party official ended. In 1958, she co-founded the firm of Snyder-Smith Advertising and Public Relations, where she managed state and local campaigns for the rest of her career. In 1970, Snyder-Smith became Elizabeth Snyder and Associates.

In the 1970s, Snyder returned to presidential politics. She was California state chairperson of the 51.3 Percent Committee, an organization of feminists working for the Jimmy Carter for President campaign. Upon taking office in 1977, President Carter appointed Snyder to the U.S. Circuit Judge Nominating Commission.

An outspoken feminist, Snyder remained active in women's political organizations through the 1980s, and was part of the unsuccessful campaign to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the United States Constitution. She actively supported the Democratic presidential ticket of Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro in 1984. She died of emphysema on August 28, 1998.

Scope and Content

The Elizabeth Snyder Papers consist of 2 cubic feet of records covering the years 1937 to 1987, with the bulk of materials covering 1953 to 1956, when she was Chair of the Democratic State Central Committee (DSCC), and 1977 to 1987, when she was active in the feminist movement in the Southern California region. The records are organized into nine distinct series: DSCC Files, Subject Files, Candidate Files, Party Platforms, Women's Issues, Events and Fundraising Files, Correspondence, Campaign Material, and Publications.

Most of the records concern Snyder's political activities, with very little of them oriented around her personal life. The three periods most covered in the records are the early- to mid-1950s, when she was active in the DSCC and helped found the California Democratic Council (CDC); the late 1960s, when she worked on the Robert F. Kennedy presidential campaign of 1968 and the Jess Unruh gubernatorial campaign of 1970; and the late 1970s through mid-1980s, when she was active in the movement to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

Almost all of the records are textual, consisting of memoranda, correspondence, invitations to events, campaign literature, newspaper clippings, and publications, such as magazines. Also included are campaign ephemera such as buttons and bumper stickers.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Snyder, Elizabeth, 1914-
Democratic Party (Calif.). State Central Committee

Related Collections at the California State Archives
California Democratic Council Papers
Stephen Zetterberg Papers
**Series 1 Democratic State Central Committee Files 1953-1956**

**ID C138.01, Box 1, Folders 1-15**

**Physical Description:** 15 file folders

**Arrangement**

Democratic State Central Committee (DSCC) Files are arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Scope and Content Note**

DSCC Files were created by Snyder during her service as Chair of the Democratic State Central Committee from 1954 to 1956 (although some records from 1953 are included in the series). They consist of correspondence, memoranda, campaign literature, newspaper clippings, and some campaign ephemera. Of particular interest are the files of the California Democratic Council (CDC), which Snyder helped found in 1954, and the Democratic National Convention of 1956, at which Snyder represented the California state party.

1953-1956: General DSCC Files (1ff) Box 1/1
1956: 1956 Election (1ff) Box 1/2
1954-1955: California Democratic Council (1ff) Box 1/3
1952-1956: Democratic National Convention (1ff) Box 1/4
1954-1955: Executive Committee (1ff) Box 1/5
1954-1956: General Correspondence (1ff) Box 1/6
1954-1956: Labor (3ff) Box 1/7-1/9
1953-1955: Newspapers (1ff) Box 1/10
1955-1956: Outdoor Advertising (1ff) Box 1/11
1956: Registration (1ff) Box 1/12
1954-1956: Steering Committee (1ff) Box 1/13
1955-1956: United Democratic Headquarters (1ff) Box 1/14
1956: Young Democrats (1ff) Box 1/15

**Series 2 Subject Files 1949-1987**

**ID C138.02, Boxes 1-2, Folders 16-2**

**Physical Description:** 15 file folders

**Arrangement**

Subject Files are arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Scope and Content Note**

Files include correspondence, memoranda, campaign literature, newspaper clippings, and some campaign ephemera. One of Snyder’s passions, reflected in these files, was electoral reform - limiting and making public campaign contributions, and eliminating the state’s "cross-filing" election system, which was in place until the late 1950s. The Campaign Reform files contain information about three decades of efforts to reform the way state political campaigns were financed, including legislation introduced to limit contributions, and grassroots organizations founded to lobby on behalf of such reforms. Although it was not a signature issue of hers, the Immigration file contains materials relating to 1950s immigration reform in the United States.

1981-1983: Campaign Reform (3ff) Box 1/16-18
1984: Child Care (1ff) Box 1/19
1956-1984: Congress (1ff) Box 1/20
1952: Cross-filing (1ff) Box 1/21
1985: Democratic Policy Commission (1ff) Box 1/22
1952-1956: Immigration (1ff) Box 1/23
1960-1968: Kennedys (1ff) Box 1/24
1983-1985: Party Reform (1ff) Box 1/25
1981: Split Roll Tax Reform (1ff) Box 1/26
1949-1987: State Politics (2ff) Box 1/27-1/28
1977: U.S. Circuit Judge Nominating Commission (1ff) Box 2/1
1952-1982: Water (1ff) Box 2/2
ID C138.03, Box 2, Folders 3-15

**Series 3 Candidate Files 1952-1987**

**Physical Description:** 13 file folders

**Arrangement**
Candidate Files are arranged alphabetically by candidate's last name.

**Scope and Content Note**
The Candidate Files entirely consist of campaign ephemera and literature, with some correspondence, newspaper clippings, and memoranda. Note that Snyder did not work for all of the candidates represented here. Of particular interest are Jimmy Carter and Jerry Brown, two prominent politicians who ran against one another (for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1976 and in 1980). Despite being from Brown's home state of California, Snyder was a strong Carter supporter; she served on the Committee of 51.3 Percent (a group of pro-Carter feminist women) in 1976 and was subsequently appointed by Carter to the U.S. Circuit Judge Nominating Commission in 1977. Also of interest are the two candidates for the 1956 Democratic presidential nomination, Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver. Snyder was a strong Stevenson supporter and helped her candidate win the June 1956 California primary by a wide margin.

- Brown, Jerry (1ff) Box 2/3
- Carter, Jimmy (1ff) Box 2/4
- Cranston, Alan (1ff) Box 2/5
- Kefauver, Estes (1ff) Box 2/6
- Nixon, Richard (1ff) Box 2/7
- Richards, Richard (1ff) Box 2/8
- Roberti, David (1ff) Box 2/9
- Roos, Mike (1ff) Box 2/10
- Roosevelt, James (1ff) Box 2/11
- Stevenson, Adlai (1ff) Box 2/12
- Unruh, Jesse (1ff) Box 2/13
- Watson, Diane (1ff) Box 2/14
- Waxman, Henry (1ff) Box 2/15

ID C138.04, Box 2, Folders 16-18

**Series 4 Party Platforms 1948-1956**

**Physical Description:** 3 file folders

**Arrangement**
Party Platform files are arranged chronologically.

**Scope and Content Note**
Party Platforms consist of printed party platforms (brochures), correspondence to and from the Democratic National Committee regarding the party's national platform, and suggestions for the platform submitted by various interest groups and individuals. The bulk of the files relate to the 1956 national Democratic platform. These files will be of interest to those wishing to see how interest groups interact with national parties; among the multiple groups submitting suggested planks to the Democratic National Committee were pro-Israel groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, and several different business and labor organizations. There is also much to be found relating to the struggle within the Democratic Party over the issue of race, as there are suggestions and testimony from organizations and individuals ranging from the NAACP to segregationist Senator John Sparkman of Alabama.
Series 5 Women's Issues 1952-1987

ID C138.05, Box 2, Folders 19-23

Series 5 Women's Issues 1952-1987

Physical Description: 5 file folders

Arrangement

Women's Issues files are arranged by subject.

Scope and Content Note

The series consists of correspondence, newspaper clippings, and campaign literature related to women in politics, much of it related to the feminist movement of which Snyder was a part. Her activities were most significant in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, she helped organize a conference on the theme of Women in Public Life in Texas, and for the next decade she was involved in the unsuccessful campaign to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). There is significant material on the ERA in this series, including newspaper clippings and campaign brochures.

1952-1986: General Women's Issues (2ff) Box 2/19-2/20
1981-1986: Equal Rights Amendment (1ff) Box 2/21
1985-1987: UCLA Center for Women's Studies (1ff) Box 2/22
1975: Women in Public Life Conference (1ff) Box 2/23

ID C138.06, Boxes 2-3, Folders 24-2

Series 6 Events and Fundraising Files 1950-1986

Physical Description: 3 file folders

Arrangement

Events and Fundraising Files are arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

Events and Fundraising Files consist primarily of invitations to, and brochures regarding, political events and fundraisers. Also included are some newspaper clippings and correspondence. Since Snyder was not a party official after 1956, the material from before that date is more comprehensive about the events in question; after that, the material is limited almost exclusively to invitations and brochures.

ID C138.07, Box 3, Folder 3

Series 7 Correspondence 1949-1982

Physical Description: 1 file folder

Arrangement

Correspondence is arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

The series includes general letters to and from Snyder, some of it personal, but most of it relating to issues not covered in any of the other series. Included are letters to and from prominent California elected officials and party officials, including Governor Edmund G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor Glenn Anderson, Secretary of State Frank Jordan, and 1954 Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Graves.

ID C138.08, Box 3, Folder 4

Series 8 Campaign Material 1954-1986

Physical Description: 1 file folder

Arrangement

Campaign Material files include ephemera from more than thirty years of political campaigns with which Snyder was involved (or in which she took an interest), such as buttons, bumper stickers, campaign brochures, and candidate biographical information. Prominent candidates represented include 1956 Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, California Governor Pat Brown, U.S. Senator Alan Cranston, and U.S. Representative Henry Waxman. Note that not all material comes from individuals' campaigns for office; included also is material from the several-year campaign to pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. Oversized campaign posters have been stored separately for preservation purposes.
Series 9 Publications 1937-1983

Physical Description: 6 file folder

Arrangement
Publications are arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note
Included are magazines, newspapers, reports, and publications by various interest groups. Of particular interest are a December 1937 issue of Liberty magazine with a detailed biography of then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt; an article from a 1941 issue of Collier's weekly magazine by President Roosevelt about his controversial 1937 Supreme Court reorganization plan; issues of the Los Angeles Daily News and the Los Angeles Examiner covering the Japanese surrender which ended World War II; issues of the Los Angeles Times covering the three days after President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963; and a memorial issue of Life magazine dedicated to Kennedy. Several of these publications are oversized and have been stored separately for preservation purposes.