



Laura W. Bush

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Mrs. Laura Bush is actively involved in issues of national and global concern, with a particular emphasis on education, health care and human rights.

As First Lady, Mrs. Bush made an historic trip to Afghanistan in 2005 and witnessed firsthand the progress achieved by the Afghan people after the fall of the Taliban regime. She visited the Women's Teacher Training Institute in Kabul, which is training women to lead classrooms that girls were once forbidden to enter. She met with President Hamid Karzai and expressed America's continued support for Afghanistan's new democracy, which ensures equal rights for women and men. Mrs. Bush's involvement in Afghanistan began in 2001, when she delivered the weekly presidential radio address to call attention to the plight of women and children suffering under the Taliban.

A former teacher and librarian, Mrs. Bush convened in 2001 a Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development, providing a forum for prominent scholars and educators to share research on the best ways for parents and caregivers to prepare children for lifelong learning. She is an enthusiastic proponent of teacher recruitment programs such as Teach for America, The New Teacher Project and Troops to Teachers.

As the leader of former President George W. Bush's *Helping America's Youth* initiative, Mrs. Bush has listened closely to the concerns of young people, parents and community leaders throughout the country. She draws attention to proven programs that help children avoid such risky behaviors as drug and alcohol use, early sexual activity and violence, and highlights the need for a caring adult role model in every child's life.

In September 2001, Mrs. Bush joined the Library of Congress to launch the first National Book Festival. The Festival has grown each year, drawing more than 120,000 book-lovers from across the nation to Washington, D.C. in 2008. In 1995 Mrs. Bush established the Texas Book Festival, and it continues to thrive today. In 2006 Mrs. Bush hosted leaders from around the world for the White House Conference on Advancing Global Literacy, showcasing successful, culturally aware literacy programs from a diversity of countries. Her leadership of this effort led to her current role as Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade.

Mrs. Bush is an advocate for women's health and has been an active participant in campaigns to raise awareness of breast cancer and heart disease, both in the U.S. and around the world. She partnered with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in *The Heart Truth* campaign and the Red Dress project. And she traveled to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Panama to help launch international partnerships for breast cancer awareness and research in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

A hiking and camping enthusiast and strong supporter of our national parks, Mrs. Bush has spotlighted the glories and needs of the parks through her many visits as First Lady. As Honorary Chair of the National Park Foundation, she has worked to promote the Junior Ranger program to encourage children to become active stewards of our national parks. And she has helped start Preserve America, a national initiative to protect our cultural and natural heritage.

Laura Bush was born in Midland, Texas, to Harold and Jenna Welch. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Southern Methodist University and a master's degree in library science from the University of Texas. She taught in public schools in Dallas, Houston and Austin and worked as a public school librarian. In 1977, she met and married George Walker Bush. They are the parents of twin daughters, Barbara and Jenna and son-in-law, Henry Hager.