

**MIRABEAU  
LAMAR COLE  
LOONEY  
1871-1935**



**POLITICS  
IN  
HER  
BLOOD**

When Lamar Looney of Hollis was elected to the Oklahoma Senate, she didn't fit the professional upper-middle-class character of many women active in politics in the 1920s.

Born in January 1871 in Talladega, Alabama, Looney moved with her family to Texas during Reconstruction. In 1891, the 20-year-old married Doc Looney and followed him to Oklahoma, where free land was available. He died in 1900, leaving her with five children under the age of ten.

To put food on the table, she taught music for a year in her home. She homesteaded 160 acres near Hollis, after trading her organ for a team of mules. When the first crop came in, she bought another organ. She lived on the land with the children as her only helpers for five years. Looney received title to the land in 1906.

She moved to Hollis so that her children could go to better schools. Her life turned to politics when she was elected Harmon County Register of Deeds in 1912 and then County Clerk in 1916. Next, she served two terms as County Treasurer from 1917 to 1921. She was also chairwoman of the Women's Suffrage Association for Harmon County.

When women got the vote in 1920, several friends convinced Looney to run for the Oklahoma Senate. She only campaigned in Greer County where she spent \$149.80. She used her middle name as her first name, because Lamar was generally considered a masculine name. Some may have believed that Lamar Looney was a man.

Looney was so popular that she was able to unseat the male incumbent to become the first woman elected to the Oklahoma Senate. She carried her county 3-to-1 and her incumbent opponent's county 2-to-1. She believed that her success was due partly to the influence of women. Others viewed her victory as payback time for those males who worked to defeat woman suffrage. Senator Looney served from 1921 to 1929.

A progressive Democrat, Looney introduced 28 bills in her first term. She was passionate about increasing funding for rural schools and helping the Oklahoma farmer. Looney was successful in enacting legislation that created equality for women and improved child welfare. After her first legislative session, the men with whom she served presented her with a nice leather handbag.

In 1926, she considered running for Lieutenant Governor, but a requirement in the Oklahoma Constitution required that a man hold the office. She soon abandoned the race knowing the courts would hold to the constitutional requirement. She ran for the United States Senate against long-serving Senator Thomas Gore. She lost that bid and returned to her fourth and final term in the Oklahoma Senate. She would remain the only woman in the Oklahoma Senate until 1975.

Looney died in September 1935 at age 64 in Oklahoma City. Her casket was placed in the Capitol Rotunda and flags were flown at half-mast in her honor. Since 2005, her portrait has hung in the Rotunda of the State Capitol.