

KATHY KOZACHENKO

b. ca 1954, date unconfirmed

FIRST "OUT" ELECTED OFFICIAL

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Kathy Kozachenko was the first openly gay person to be elected to a public office in the United States. In 1974 she was elected as a Human Rights Party candidate to the City Council of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In the early 1970s only 10 cities in the United States had laws specific to homosexual rights. Most of these pertained either to housing or public employment. Ann Arbor was an exception. The city had enacted a human rights ordinance that protected homosexuals in both housing and employment. Kozachenko ran on a platform that the law had not been enforced. When the city refused to prosecute a restaurant manager who had allegedly separated two women who were dancing together, homosexuals in the town rallied. Said Kozachenko, "It is clear that they [City Council members] don't ever plan to enforce complaints under sexual preference."

Kozachenko won against a Democratic contender by 43 votes. She was the first to prove that an openly gay person could run for and be elected to public office. Kozachenko helped pave the way for Harvey Milk, who was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977.

Three years before Harvey Milk's well-known political victory, Kozachenko was elected to public office on a platform aimed at enforcing homosexual rights.

