



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1984

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Dianne Feinstein Mayor City of San Francisco

[[image - photograph of Mayor Dianne Feinstein]]

Dianne Feinstein is the first woman mayor of San Francisco. She was also the first woman president of the Board of Supervisors—the city's legislative body—elected to that post twice as highest vote-getter in the city wide elections, and once by her colleagues during a period of district elections. She served a total of nearly nine years as Supervisor, five of them as Board President.

As the city's chief executive officer, the mayor oversees the many departments, and 22 commissions and boards which operate the government. Each year, the mayor prepares a budget which establishes the municipality's programs and priorities. This year's budget totals \$1.3 billion.

In less than four years, Mayor Feinstein has more than reversed a budgetary deficit of \$127 million the year she became mayor. Despite the tax reductions of Proposition 13 and losses in both state and federal funds, San Francisco today stands virtually alone among major cities with a surplus of more than \$150 million.

Her first priority is a sound fiscal policy.

Crime is another high priority, as one who spent a governmental apprenticeship on a state parole board and the city's detention and crime committees, Dianne Feinstein is not one to accept the prevailing negatives about reducing urban crime. As mayor, she attacks crime at every level.

She named a new police chief. She added 350 police officers and put more of them on beats. She enlisted 800 block groups to fight neighborhood crime. She crusaded for strong law enforcement—spearheading the drive that made San Francisco the first major city to ban handguns. Result: San Francisco's crime rate is down. Mayor Feinstein's goals for the city are as diverse as the city itself, and as all-inclusive as her references to "quality of life in San Francisco." She has worked unrelentingly for better public transit, parks, schools and libraries, clean streets, more jobs, adequate housing, redevelopment, economic growth and a favorable business climate.

Dianne Feinstein's first day as mayor—in 1978—were a baptism of fire. She entered an office bloodied by the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk. Those killings came a scant few days after Jonestown—where 900 people died in the Guyana murder-suicides of the San Francisco-based Peoples Temple.

The double tragedies shook the city. Fellow supervisors elected Dianne Feinstein as their choice to lead San Francisco back to strength and stability. As the world focussed on the city's crisis, it was Dianne Feinstein's reassuring voice which helped restore confidence in her distressed community. A year later she was elected to a full, four-year term.

Teamwork offers the best approach to governing a large city, the mayor



says. You strive for cooperation from all sides on all issues, through compromise and persuasion. Polarization of the community achieves only alienation, confusion and defeat, in her opinion.

"I believe strongly that cities-particularly those as diverse as San Francisco-can best be run from the middle of the political spectrum," the Mayor has said. "People are tired of political rhetoric and political games. They want city services delivered. That's what I'm trying to give them.

Asked how she hopes history will regard her tenure, she responded: "As somebody who tried to do her best to keep the city afloat in a most difficult time, to improve the management of the city and the delivery of services-and who set a role model for women who come after me."

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