

Women in State Government: Historical Overview and Current Trends

By Susan J. Carroll

In recent years the movement of women into state-level offices has slowed following several decades of gains, and the 2004 elections continued this pattern of stagnation, producing little change in the numbers of women officials. Efforts to actively recruit women for elective and appointive positions will be critical in determining what the future holds for women in state government.

In the history of our nation, women are relative newcomers among state elected and appointed officials. Women first entered state-level offices in the 1920s following passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which granted women suffrage. However, significant growth in the numbers of women in office occurred only after the emergence of the contemporary women's movement during the late-1960s and early-1970s. Since the mid-1970s, as data collected by the Center for American Women and Politics show,¹ women have greatly increased their numbers among elected and appointed officials in state government. In recent years, however, progress has slowed, and nationwide statistics show a leveling off in the numbers of women serving in state-level offices. The 2004 elections continued the pattern of stagnation with the numbers of women nationwide showing little change following the elections.

Governors

Since the founding of our country, only 28 women (18 Democrats, 10 Republicans) have served as state governors (Table A), and only one woman has served as governor of a U.S. territory (Puerto Rico).² A majority of the states, 29, have never had a woman chief executive. Arizona is the only state to have had three women governors as well as the only state where a woman succeeded another as governor. Connecticut, Texas, Kansas, Washington and New Hampshire have each had two women governors although one of the governors of New Hampshire, Vesta Roy, served for only seven days following the death of an incumbent.

The first woman governor, Nellie Taylor Ross of Wyoming, was selected in a special election to succeed her deceased husband in 1925. Fifteen days later a second woman, Miriam "Ma" Ferguson, was inaugurated as governor of Texas, having been elected

as a surrogate for her husband, a former governor who had been impeached and consequently was barred constitutionally from running again. Ferguson's campaign slogan was "Two governors for the price of one."³ The third woman to serve as a governor, Lurleen Wallace of Alabama, who campaigned on the slogan, "Let George do it," was similarly elected to replace a husband who was constitutionally prohibited from seeking another term.⁴

The first woman elected in her own right (i.e., without following her husband) into the governorship was Ella Grasso, who presided over the state of Connecticut from 1975 to 1980. Eighteen of the women governors (including Grasso) who have served since the mid-1970s were elected in their own right. The other seven became governor through constitutional succession; only one of these seven was subsequently elected to a full term.

Eight women serve as governors in 2005, down from a record nine women who held governorships simultaneously at the end of 2004. Three states governed by women (Montana, Utah and Delaware) held elections in 2004. Of the three women governors of these states, only Ruth Ann Minner (D) of Delaware sought re-election,⁵ and she won. Two other women in addition to Minner were gubernatorial candidates in 2004. Christine Gregoire (D) of Washington won her gubernatorial bid for an open seat by the slimmest of margins following a statewide manual recount. The other woman candidate, Claire McCaskill (D) of Missouri, lost her gubernatorial race. The eight women (6 Democrats, 2 Republicans) who serve as chief executives of their states in 2005 are: Ruth Ann Minner (D-Del.), Jennifer M. Granholm (D-Mich.), Linda Lingle (R-Hawaii), Janet Napolitano (D-Ariz.), Kathleen Sebelius (D-Kan.), Kathleen Blanco (D-La.), M. Jodi Rell (R-Conn.) and Christine Gregoire (D-Wash.).

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Table A: Women Governors Throughout History

| <i>Name (party-state)</i> | <i>Dates served</i> | <i>Special circumstances</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Nellie Tayloe Ross (D-WY) | 1925–1927 | Won special election to replace deceased husband. |
| Miriam "Ma" Ferguson (D-TX) | 1925–1927, 1933–1935 | Inaugurated 15 days after Ross; elected as surrogate for husband who could not succeed himself. |
| Lurleen Wallace (D-AL) | 1967–1968 | Elected as surrogate for husband who could not succeed himself. |
| Ella Grasso (D-CT) | 1975–1980 | First woman elected governor in her own right; resigned for health reasons. |
| Dixy Lee Ray (D-WA) | 1977–1981 | |
| Vesta Roy (R-NH) | 1982–1983 | Elected to state senate and chosen as senate president; served as governor for seven days when incumbent died. |
| Martha Layne Collins (D-KY) | 1984–1987 | |
| Madeleine Kunin (D-VT) | 1985–1991 | First woman to serve three terms as governor. |
| Kay Orr (R-NE) | 1987–1991 | First Republican woman governor and first woman to defeat another woman in a gubernatorial race. |
| Rose Mofford (D-AZ) | 1988–1991 | Elected as secretary of state, succeeded governor who was impeached and convicted. |
| Joan Finney (D-KS) | 1991–1995 | First woman to defeat an incumbent governor. |
| Ann Richards (D-TX) | 1991–1995 | |
| Barbara Roberts (D-OR) | 1991–1995 | |
| Christine Todd Whitman (R-NJ) | 1994–2001 | Resigned to take presidential appointment as commissioner of the Environmental Protection Agency. |
| Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) | 1997–2003 | |
| Jane Dee Hull (R-AZ) | 1997–2003 | Elected as secretary of state, succeeded governor who resigned; later elected to a full term. |
| Nancy Hollister (R-OH) | 1998–1999 | Elected lieutenant governor; served as governor for 11 days when predecessor took U.S. Senate seat and successor had not yet been sworn in. |
| Jane Swift (R-MA) | 2001–2003 | Elected as lieutenant governor, succeeded governor who resigned for an ambassadorial appointment. |
| Judy Martz (R-MT) | 2001–2005 | |
| Olene Walker (R-UT) | 2003–2005 | Elected as lieutenant governor, succeeded governor who resigned to take a federal appointment. |
| Ruth Ann Minner (D-DE) | 2001–present | |
| Jennifer M. Granholm (D-MI) | 2003–present | |
| Linda Lingle (R-HI) | 2003–present | |
| Janet Napolitano (D-AZ) | 2003–present | First woman to succeed another woman as governor. |
| Kathleen Sebelius (D-KS) | 2003–present | Father was governor of Ohio. |
| Kathleen Blanco (D-LA) | 2004–present | |
| M. Jodi Rell (R-CT) | 2004–present | Elected as lieutenant governor, succeeded governor who resigned. |
| Christine Gregoire (D-WA) | 2005–present | |

Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.

Other Statewide Elected and Appointed Officials in the Executive Branch

The states vary greatly in their numbers of statewide elected and appointed officials. For example, Maine, New Hampshire and New Jersey have only one statewide elected official, the governor, while North Dakota, at the other extreme, has 12.

The first woman to ever hold a major statewide office was Soledad C. Chacon (D-N.M.) who was secretary of state in New Mexico from 1923–26;⁶ Delaware, Kentucky, New York, South Dakota and Texas also had women secretaries of state in the 1920s. The first woman treasurer, Grace B. Urbahns (R-Indiana) also served during this time period, from 1926–1932.

Several more years passed before a woman be-

came lieutenant governor. Matilda R. Wilson (R-Mich.) served briefly as lieutenant governor of Michigan in 1940 when she was appointed to fill an expiring term. However, the first woman elected as a lieutenant governor was Consuelo N. Bailey (R-Vt.) who served from 1955–1956. An additional three decades passed before a woman became attorney general of a state; the first was Arlene Violet (R-R.I.) who served from 1985–1987.

As evident from Figure A, the proportion of women among statewide elective officials has grown substantially over the past three decades. From 1971 to 1985 the increases were small and incremental. Then, between 1983 and 1995, a period of significant growth, the numbers and proportions of women serving in statewide office more than doubled. Since 1995, the numbers and proportions have leveled off.

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The number of women serving in statewide elective offices actually decreased by two as a result of the 2004 elections, and slightly fewer women, 79,⁷ currently hold statewide offices than a decade ago when there were 84 women.

In early 2005, women hold 25.1 percent of the 315 statewide elective positions. In addition to the eight women governors, women serve as lieutenant governors in 16, or 37.2 percent, of the 43 states that elect lieutenant governors in statewide elections; this is the same number of women who served as lieutenant governor in 2004.⁸ Other women statewide elected officials include: 12 secretaries of state, eight state treasurers, four attorney generals, 10 chief education officials, seven state auditors, four public service commissioners, three state comptroller/controllers, two chief agricultural officials, one commissioner of insurance, two commissioners of labor and two corporation commissioners. The women serving in statewide elective office include two African Americans (the lieutenant governor of Ohio and the state treasurer of Connecticut) as well as three Latinas (the secretary of state of New Mexico, the attorney general of New Mexico, and the superintendent of public instruction for Oregon).

Women are slightly better represented among top appointed officials in state government. According to nationwide data collected by the Center on Women in Government and Civil Society at SUNY-Albany, in the second half of 2004 women constituted 29.7 percent of department heads with major policy-making responsibilities (including heads of departments, agencies, offices, boards, commissions and authorities) who were appointed by governors. Similarly, women were 41.1 percent of the top appointed advisors in governors' offices. These 2004 figures represent a slight increase since 2003 and a more notable increase since 1998 when women were 23.7 percent of department heads and 39.6 percent of governors' top advisors. Women of color are also slightly better represented among these appointed officials than among statewide elective officials,⁹ with women of color constitut-

**Table B:
Women Statewide Elected Officials, 2005**

| State | Governor | Lieutenant governor | Attorney general | Secretary of state | Treasurer |
|----------------|----------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Alabama | ★ | W | ★ | W | W |
| Alaska | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... | ... |
| Arizona | W | ... | ★ | W | ★ |
| Arkansas | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| California | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Colorado | ★ | W | ★ | W | ★ |
| Connecticut | W | ★ | ★ | W | W |
| Delaware | W | ★ | W | ... | ★ |
| Florida | ★ | W | ★ | ... | ... |
| Georgia | ★ | ★ | ★ | W | ... |
| Hawaii | W | ★ | ... | ... | ... |
| Idaho | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... | ★ |
| Illinois | ★ | ★ | W | ★ | W |
| Indiana | ★ | W | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Iowa | ★ | W | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Kansas | W | ★ | ★ | ★ | W |
| Kentucky | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Louisiana | W | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Maine | ★ | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Maryland | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... | ... |
| Massachusetts | ★ | W | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Michigan | W | ★ | ★ | W | ... |
| Minnesota | ★ | W | ★ | W | ... |
| Mississippi | ★ | W | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Missouri | ★ | ★ | ★ | W | W |
| Montana | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... |
| Nebraska | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... |
| Nevada | ★ | W | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| New Hampshire | ★ | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| New Jersey | ★ | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| New Mexico | ★ | W | W | W | ★ |
| New York | ★ | W | ★ | ... | ... |
| North Carolina | ★ | W | ★ | W | ★ |
| North Dakota | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | W |
| Ohio | ★ | W | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Oklahoma | ★ | W | ★ | ... | ★ |
| Oregon | ★ | ... | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Pennsylvania | ★ | W | ★ | ... | W |
| Rhode Island | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| South Carolina | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| South Dakota | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Tennessee | ★ | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Texas | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... | ... |
| Utah | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... | ★ |
| Vermont | ★ | ★ | ★ | W | ★ |
| Virginia | ★ | ★ | ★ | ... | ... |
| Washington | W | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| West Virginia | ★ | ... | ★ | W | ★ |
| Wisconsin | ★ | W | W | ★ | ★ |
| Wyoming | ★ | ... | ... | ★ | W |

Source: Data for elected officials are current as of January 2005 and have been provided by the Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.

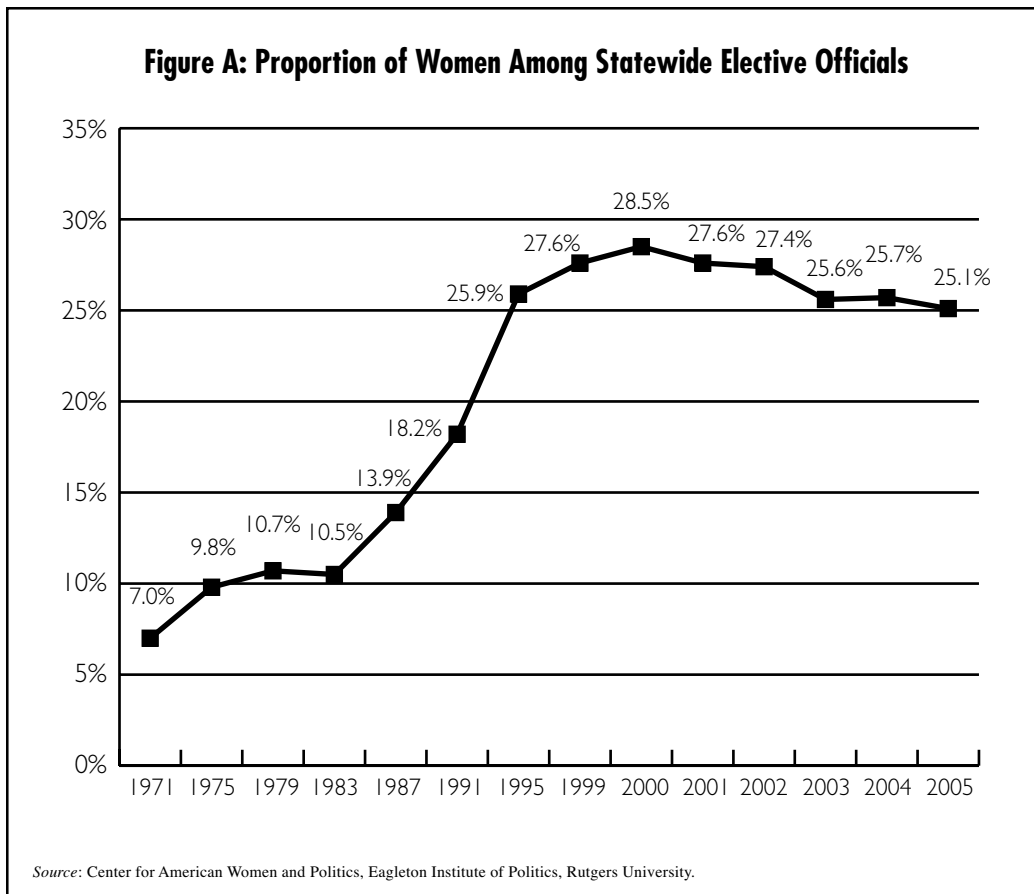
Key:

★—Denotes that this position is filled through a statewide election.

W—Denotes that this position is filled through a statewide election and is held by a woman.

...—Denotes that this position is filled through methods other than a statewide election.

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ing 5.8 percent of all department heads and 7.7 percent of top advisors in governors' offices.¹⁰

Justices on Courts of Last Resort

The first woman to win election to a state court of last resort was Florence E. Allen, who was elected to the Ohio Supreme Court in 1922 and re-elected in 1928. Nevertheless, it was not until 1960 that a second woman, Lorna Lockwood of Arizona, was elected to a state supreme court. In 1965 Lockwood's colleagues on the Arizona Supreme Court elected her chief justice, thereby also making her the first woman in history to preside over a state court of last resort.¹¹

According to the National Center for State Courts, 95, or 28.2 percent, of the 337 justices on state courts of last resort in early 2005 are women. Of the 52 chief justices of these courts, 17, or 32.7 percent, are women. The current chief justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court, Petra Jimenez Maes, is the first Latina in the country to hold this position.

Women comprise a majority of justices on the courts of last resort in two states—New York and Ohio. Women constitute at least 40 percent of the justices (but less than a majority) on an additional 16 courts of last resort.

Legislators

Even before 1920 when women won the right to vote across the country, a few women had been elected to legislatures in states that had granted the franchise to women. By 1971 the proportion of women serving in state legislatures across the country had grown to 4.5 percent, and by 2005 this proportion had increased almost fivefold to 22.5 percent. As Figure B illustrates, the proportion of women among legislators grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The rate of growth slowed in the 1990s, and similar to the pattern for statewide elected officials, the numbers and proportions of women legislators nationally have leveled off since the late 1990s. In

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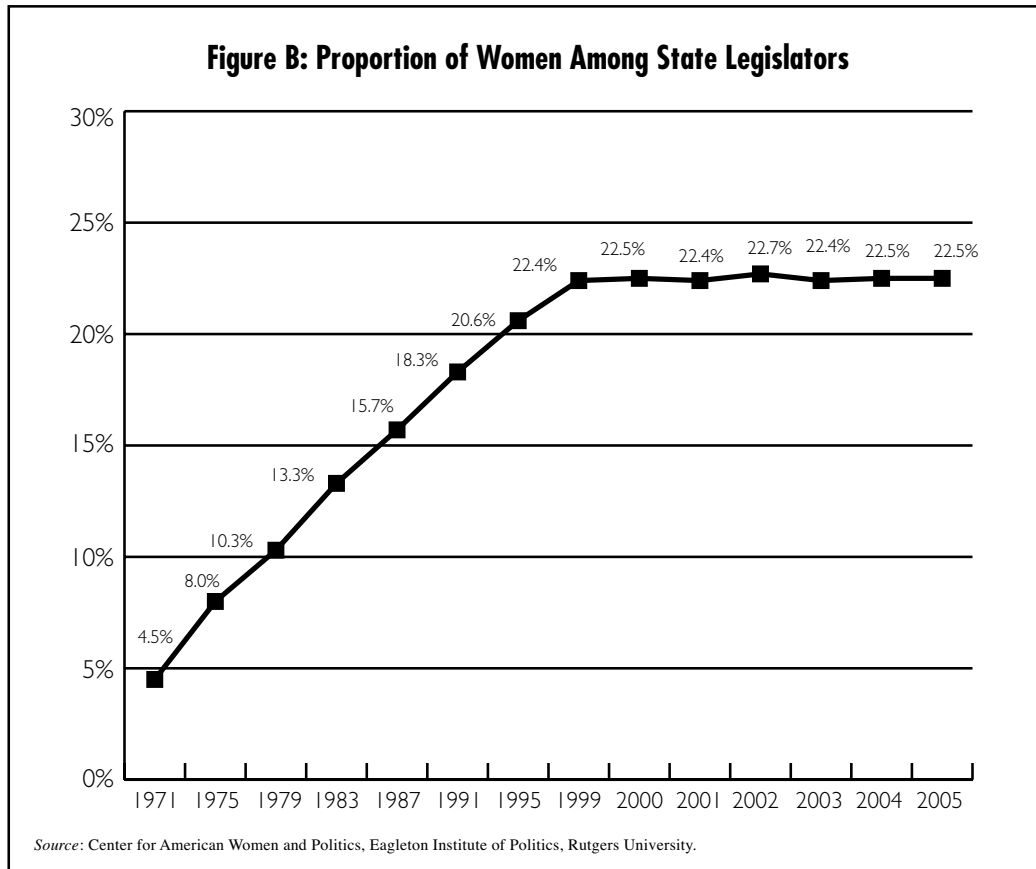
fact, the same number of women, 1664, serves in state legislatures at the beginning of 2005 as in 1999 when there were also 1664 women legislators.

Great variation exists across the states in the proportion of legislators who are women (see Table C). With 34.0 percent women in their legislatures, Maryland and Colorado are tied for first place among the states. They are closely followed by Delaware (33.9 percent), Arizona (33.3 percent), Nevada (33.3 percent), Vermont (33.3 percent) and Washington (33.3 percent). There seems to be no easy explanation for why these states have risen to the top, and indeed scholars who have statistically examined the variation among the states in the representation of women in their legislatures have found no simple patterns.¹²

At the other extreme, South Carolina with only 8.8 percent ranks last among the 50 states in the representation of women among its legislators. Accompanying South Carolina in the bottom five states are Alabama with 10.0 percent women, Ken-

tucky with 12.3 percent, Mississippi with 12.6 percent, and Pennsylvania with 12.6 percent. Six of the eight states with the lowest proportions of women are Southern or border states. No Southern state ranks among the top 20, and only Florida, with 23.8 percent women, is above the national average. These rankings suggest that the South lags behind the rest of the country in the representation of women within its legislatures.

In early 2005, women hold 402, or 20.4 percent, of all state senate seats and 1262, or 23.3 percent, of all state house seats across the country. Although state legislators nationally have become considerably more Republican over the last decade and a half with legislators now evenly divided between the two parties,¹³ the same is not true for women legislators. In 2005 as in the past, Democrats substantially outnumber Republicans among women state legislators. Among women state senators nationwide, 63.8 percent are Democrats; among women state representatives, 62.2



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Table C: Women in State Legislatures

| State | Senate | | | House/Assembly | | | Legislature (both houses) | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|---------|----------------|-------------|----------|---------------------------|------------|
| | Democrats | Republicans | % Women | Democrats | Republicans | % Women | % Women | State rank |
| Alabama | 2 | 1 | 8.6% | 9 | 2 | 10.5% | 10.0% | 49 |
| Alaska | 2 | 1 | 15.0 | 4 | 4 | 20.0 | 18.3 | 32 |
| Arizona | 4 | 6 | 33.3 | 10 | 10 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 4 |
| Arkansas | 4 | 2 | 17.1 | 12 | 4 | 16.0 | 16.3 | 39 |
| California | 12 | 0 | 30.0 | 19 | 6 | 31.3 | 30.8 | 10 |
| Colorado | 9 | 2 | 31.4 | 19 | 4 | 35.4 | 34.0 | 1 |
| Connecticut | 7 | 2 | 25.0 | 27 | 18 | 29.8 | 28.9 | 13 |
| Delaware | 4 | 3 | 33.3 | 7 | 7 | 34.1 | 33.9 | 3 |
| Florida | 5 | 4 | 22.5 | 13 | 16 | 23.3 | 23.8 | 22 |
| Georgia | 5 | 2 | 12.5 | 26 | 10 | 20.0 | 18.2 | 33 |
| Hawaii | 6 | 0 | 24.0 | 9 | 6 | 29.4 | 27.6 | 16 |
| Idaho | 1 | 3 | 11.4 | 9 | 16 | 35.7 | 27.6 | 16 |
| Illinois | 9 | 5 | 23.7 | 24 | 11 | 29.7 | 27.7 | 15 |
| Indiana | 6 | 5 | 22.0 | 7 | 7 | 14.0 | 16.7 | 36 |
| Iowa | 1 | 4 | 10.0 | 17 | 8 | 25.0 | 20.0 | 29 |
| Kansas | 4 | 9 | 32.5 | 19 | 21 | 32.0 | 32.1 | 8 |
| Kentucky | 1 | 5 | 15.8 | 8 | 3 | 11.0 | 12.3 | 48 |
| Louisiana | 5 | 1 | 15.4 | 13 | 5 | 17.1 | 16.7 | 36 |
| Maine | 6 | 5 | 31.4 | 24 | 9 | 21.9 | 23.7 | 23 |
| Maryland | 12 | 3 | 31.9 | 38 | 11 | 34.8 | 34.0 | 1 |
| Massachusetts | 10 | 0 | 25.0 | 33 | 6 | 24.4 | 24.5 | 20 |
| Michigan | 5 | 6 | 28.9 | 13 | 9 | 17.3 | 20.3 | 27 |
| Minnesota | 11 | 11 | 34.3 | 26 | 11 | 27.6 (a) | 29.9 | 12 |
| Mississippi | 4 | 0 | 7.7 | 13 | 5 | 14.8 | 12.6 | 46 |
| Missouri | 4 | 2 | 17.6 | 25 | 11 | 22.1 | 21.3 | 26 |
| Montana | 6 | 1 | 14.0 | 22 | 8 | 30.0 | 24.7 | 19 |
| Nebraska (b) | —Nonpartisan— | | 24.5 | —Unicameral— | | | 24.5 | 20 |
| Nevada | 4 | 2 | 28.6 | 11 | 4 | 35.7 | 33.3 | 4 |
| New Hampshire | 4 | 1 | 20.8 | 72 | 53 | 31.3 | 30.7 | 11 |
| New Jersey | 4 | 2 | 15.0 | 10 | 3 | 16.3 | 15.8 | 42 |
| New Mexico | 7 | 4 | 26.2 | 12 | 12 | 34.4 | 31.3 | 9 |
| New York | 7 | 3 | 16.1 | 31 | 9 | 26.7 | 23.6 | 24 |
| North Carolina | 7 | 0 | 14.0 | 22 | 10 | 26.7 | 22.9 | 25 |
| North Dakota | 3 | 2 | 10.6 | 7 | 11 | 19.1 | 16.3 | 39 |
| Ohio | 3 | 2 | 15.2 | 13 | 8 | 21.2 | 19.7 | 31 |
| Oklahoma | 6 | 2 | 16.7 | 5 | 9 | 13.9 | 14.8 | 43 |
| Oregon | 8 | 1 | 30.0 | 9 | 8 | 28.3 | 28.9 | 13 |
| Pennsylvania | 4 | 4 | 16.0 | 9 | 15 | 11.8 | 12.6 | 46 |
| Rhode Island | 7 | 1 | 21.1 | 9 | 2 | 14.7 | 16.8 | 35 |
| South Carolina | 1 | 0 | 2.2 | 7 | 7 | 11.3 | 8.8 | 50 |
| South Dakota | 2 | 1 | 8.6 | 4 | 10 | 20.0 | 16.2 | 41 |
| Tennessee | 3 | 3 | 18.2 | 12 | 5 | 17.2 | 17.4 | 34 |
| Texas | 2 | 2 | 12.9 | 13 | 19 | 21.3 | 19.9 | 30 |
| Utah | 3 | 2 | 17.2 | 6 | 10 | 21.3 | 20.2 | 28 |
| Vermont | 8 | 2 | 33.3 | 36 | 14 | 33.3 (c) | 33.3 | 4 |
| Virginia | 7 | 1 | 20.0 | 6 | 6 | 12.0 | 14.3 | 45 |
| Washington | 15 | 5 | 40.8 | 19 | 10 | 29.6 | 33.3 | 4 |
| West Virginia | 0 | 4 | 11.8 | 12 | 6 | 18.0 | 16.4 | 38 |
| Wisconsin | 3 | 5 | 24.2 | 12 | 14 | 26.3 | 25.8 | 18 |
| Wyoming | 3 | 1 | 13.3 | 4 | 5 | 15.0 | 14.4 | 44 |

Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. Figures are as of January 2005.

Key:
 (a)—Includes one member of the Independence Party.
 (b)—Nebraska has a unicameral legislature with nonpartisan elections.
 (c)—Includes two members of the Progressive Party.

percent are Democrats.

Almost one-fifth of women state legislators, 18.7 percent, are women of color. Of the 83 senators and 229 representatives serving in legislatures in early 2004, all but 18 are Democrats. African American women hold 56 seats in state senates and 158 seats in state houses across 39 states. Latinas are concentrated in 16 states; they hold 19 senate and 47 house seats. Asian American women count among their numbers six senators and 17 representatives in eight states while Native American women hold two senate and seven house seats in five states.

Looking Toward the Future

Although women have made substantial progress over time in increasing their presence in state government, the recent leveling off of women's numbers among statewide elective officials and state legislators is a puzzling, and for many a troubling, development. At a minimum, the leveling off is evidence that increases over time are not inevitable; there is no invisible hand at work to insure that more women will seek and be elected to office with each subsequent election.

The leveling off has implications for women's representation not only among state legislators and nongubernatorial statewide officeholders, but also among governors and members of Congress. Probably the most striking positive development for women in state government in recent years has been the increase in women governors. Of the 28 women in the entire history of our country who have served as governors, half (14) have served all or part of their terms during the first five years of the 21st century. Of the eight sitting governors, seven held statewide elective office before running for governor; three were lieutenant governors, three served as attorney generals and one was her state's insurance commissioner. Four of the current women governors also served in their state legislatures. Similarly, many of the women who run for Congress have gained experience and visibility in state government before seeking federal office. Of the 65 women members of the U.S. House, 29 served in their state houses, 17 in their state senates and two in statewide elective offices; of the 14 women U.S. senators, seven served in their state legislatures, two in statewide elective offices and one in an appointed state cabinet post.

Activists who are interested in increasing the numbers of women serving in office often refer to a political "pipeline" through which potential women candidates for higher level office come forward from amongst the pool of women who have gained experience

at lower levels of office. Clearly, the pipeline has worked well in the case of the current women governors and members of Congress. But what will happen if the pool of candidates in statewide and state legislative office continues to stagnate or even decline? Then, the number of politically experienced women with the visibility and contacts necessary to step forward to run for governor or a seat in the U.S. House or Senate is also likely to stagnate or decline.

While several different factors may be responsible for the recent leveling off in the numbers of women in statewide elective and state legislative office, a lack of effective recruitment certainly is one of the most important. Statistics on the number of women candidates over time seem clearly to point to a problem with recruitment. For example, in 2004 a total of 2,220 women were general election candidates for 5,809 seats up for election in state legislatures. Although the number of state legislative seats up for election varies from year to year, fewer women ran for the state legislature in 2004 than in any year since 1990!¹⁴ Clearly, then, the number of women stepping forward to run for state legislative seats has not been increasing.

Research has found that women who run for office are less likely than their male counterparts to be "self-starters." Women more often than men seek office only after receiving encouragement from others. For example, one recent study of major party candidates in state legislative races found that only 11 percent of women, compared with 37 percent of men, said that it was entirely their own idea to run for the legislature; in contrast, 37 percent of women, compared with 18 percent of men, reported that they had not seriously thought about running until someone else suggested it.¹⁵ Another recent study of people in the professions from which political candidates are most likely to emerge (i.e., law, business, education and politics) found that notably fewer women (43 percent) than men (59 percent) had ever considered running for office.¹⁶

Findings such as these suggest that the future for women in state government will depend, at least in part, upon the strength of efforts to actively recruit women for both elected and appointed positions. Legislative leaders, public officials, party leaders and advocacy organizations can help by renewing their commitment and augmenting their efforts to identify and offer support to potential women candidates, especially in winnable races with open seats or vulnerable incumbents. Recruitment efforts may well be the key to determining whether the numbers of women officials continue to stagnate (or even de-

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cline) or whether the numbers again begin to move steadily upward as they did in earlier decades.

Notes

¹All statistical information in this essay, unless otherwise noted, has been provided by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. Additional information is available at www.cawp.rutgers.edu. I would especially like to thank several of my colleagues at CAWP—Gilda Morales, Linda Phillips, Kathleen Casey and Amy Bain—for their assistance with the data for this essay.

²Sila Calderon (Popular Democratic Party) served as governor of Puerto Rico from 2001 to 2004.

³Martin Gruberg, *Women in American Politics* (Oshkosh, WI: Academia Press, 1968), 189.

⁴*Ibid.*, 190.

⁵Judy Martz (R) of Montana did not seek re-election. Olene Walker (R) of Utah failed to win her party's nomination and thus was not a candidate in the general election. Sila Calderon (Popular Democratic Party), who served as governor of Puerto Rico in 2004, also did not seek re-election.

⁶Women did serve as superintendents of public instruction in a few states earlier than this.

⁷These 79 women serving in statewide elective office include 35 Democrats, 41 Republicans and 3 nonpartisans.

⁸Nine states held elections for lieutenant governor in 2004. One incumbent lieutenant governor was re-elected, one was defeated but replaced by a woman, and four other women candidates all lost. The net result was a slight partisan shift with one more Republican and one fewer Democrat (6 Democrats, 10 Republicans) serving in 2005 than in 2004.

⁹Women of color comprise less than 2 percent of all statewide elective officials.

¹⁰"Women's Leadership Profile 2004," A Report of the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society, (Uni-

versity at Albany, State University of New York, Fall 2004). <http://www.cwig.albany.edu/2004leadershipprofile2004.pdf>.

¹¹See note 3 above, 190, 192.

¹²See, for example, Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, "The Geography of Gender Power: Women in State Legislatures," in Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox, ed., *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹³Democrats did register gains in legislative races in the 2004 elections, and as a result, a slight Republican advantage among legislators in 2004 has disappeared, resulting in an even split between Democrats and Republicans nationally. See "Perfect Parity in Nation's State Legislatures," *NCSL News*, <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2004/pr041103a.htm>.

¹⁴There were 2,375 women candidates for state legislative seats in 1992; 2,285 in 1994; 2,277 in 1996; 2,280 in 1998; 2,228 in 2000; and 2,348 in 2002.

¹⁵Gary Moncrief, Peeverill Squire, and Malcolm Jewell, *Who Runs for the Legislature?* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 2001), Table 5.5, 102; see also Susan J. Carroll and Wendy S. Strimling, *Women's Routes to Elective Office: A Comparison With Men's* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Woman and Politics, 1983).

¹⁶Richard L. Fox and Jennifer Lawless, "Entering the Arena: Gender and the Initial Decision to Run for Office," *American Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming 2005.

About the Author

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