The Impact of State Elections on Women Legislators

Kira Sanbonmatsu
The Ohio State University
2004 ELECTIONS

2,217 women ran in 2004

2,228 women ran in 2000

Women will be 22.5% of state legislators

Women were 22.5% of state legislators

Source: CAWP
Women in Statewide Elective Executive Office, 1971 to 2005

Source: CAWP
Percentage of Women in Congress, 1971 to 2005

Source: CAWP
Percentage of Women State Legislators, 1971 to 2005

Source: CAWP
Number of Women Legislators by Party

Source: CAWP
Women as Percentage of Each Party’s Legislators

- Democratic women
- Republican women

Source: CAWP
Women’s underrepresentation is not due to lack of voter support

But to the scarcity of women candidates
# When Women Run, Women Win

Success Rates in House Races, 1986-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republican</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents*</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open seat</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challengers</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Democratic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>94.4%</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
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Source: Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997
Women’s Representation

- Incumbency
- Eligibility pool
- Pipeline
- Family responsibilities
- Gender stereotypes
- Socialization
- Role models
Percentage of Women in State Legislatures (2005)

Source: The National Conference of State Legislatures
Why are women more likely to serve in some states than others?

- Turnover
- Eligibility pool
- Public opinion
- Full-time legislatures
- Stronger parties
Percentage of Women State Legislators, 1971 to 2005

Source: CAWP
Percentage of Law Degrees Going to Women

Source: National Center for Education Statistics
Are term limits the solution?

In about 40% of all house seats vacated due to term limits in 1998 and 2000:

Women did not enter the primary

Source: Carroll and Jenkins 2001
Candidate Recruitment
Recruitment for the Legislature

- Party
- Interest groups
- Friends, family
- Co-workers
- Women’s groups
### The Decision to Run for the Legislature

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<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>9%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>association or organization</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>party officials and/or legislative leaders</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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N = 143; N (men) = 114; N (women) = 29.

Source: Sanbonmatsu
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Source: Sanbonmatsu
Party Recruitment of Candidates

• Over 60% of legislative caucuses and state parties recruit candidates for many, if not all, house seats

• More than half of party leaders are assisted by part-time or full-time staff

Source: Sanbonmatsu
Women’s Groups

- Massachusetts Women’s Political Caucus
- Lillian’s List (in NC)
- Jo Ann Davidson Leadership Institute (in OH)
- Committee to Elect Republican Women (in NC)
- Iowa’s Women in Public Policy (WIPP)
Gender Stereotypes

- Positive, negative
- Issue positions
- Issue competency
- Personality traits
“Now I’m going to read a list of issues. Please tell me who you think would probably do a better job of handling these issues in Congress: a man or a woman…”

“Who do you think would do a better job of handling foreign affairs?”
## Gender Stereotypes

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<th>Woman</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign affairs</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More honest</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support more govt services</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely to support legal abortion</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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Source: Sanbonmatsu
## OHIO SURVEY 2000

### Gender Stereotypes

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<td>Protecting Social Security</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with crime problem</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change politics as usual</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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Source: Sanbonmatsu 2002
Conclusion

• The level of women’s representation in the legislatures will remain the same

• Democratic women legislators continue to outnumber Republican women

• More recruitment is needed
NOTE: CAWP stands for the Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. Note that statistics on 2004 women candidates and 2005 women legislators are preliminary as of December 2004.

Works Cited


