



Women In Politics Policy Report

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Executive Summary:

The purpose of this paper is to find and present strategies for increasing the number of women in state level office. These suggestions are aimed at state-level organizations - both partisan and non-partisan, both independent initiatives and chapters of nationwide women's groups. We also hope that those considering starting an effort to elect women, as part of an initiative within a preexisting organization or an entirely new state level group, will take our suggestions and examples into account.

While women showed steady gains in descriptive representative throughout the 1990s, the nationwide percentage of women in state legislatures has stagnated since the year 2000 (Rutgers). The state legislatures with the highest percentages of women have 30 to 35% of female office-holders, while the legislatures with the lowest have just 10-15%. Even in the states that have high numbers of female lawmakers, the numbers do not approach parity and do not reflect representation proportionate to the population of women in a given state.

Previous research on women in state politics suggests that the greatest difference in gender is seen in the decision to run for office, and that the gender gap narrows over the course of a political race. When one controls for seniority, the data suggests no significant difference in the effectiveness of male and female legislators. Therefore, our report focuses on the initial decision to run and organizations that facilitate this process. We examined the twelve states that represent those with the highest and lowest numbers of women in their legislatures after the 2004 election.

Drawing on this information, we found that several steps can be taken to bring women into politics, methods that can be useful to organizations of varying sizes, budgets, and missions:

Mentor - Create a culture in which mentoring other women becomes a matter of course for successful politicians. Strong female leaders beget more female leadership.

Meet - Make a space where women involved in politics can meet each other and share resources and strategies. The more consistent and frequent these networking opportunities are, the better.

Document – Keep a record of organizational activities and assess the results, good or bad. Political science research has a constructive role to play in identifying best practices in electoral politics. It can only play that role if researchers have readily available information to work from. Sister organizations in other states might want to learn how you’ve achieved your success, but unless they know what you’ve been doing for the past five to ten years, they can’t follow your lead.

Our Research:

How We Chose Our Topic- Focus on the Decision to Run

Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox investigated the decision to run for state legislature and the conduct of the subsequent race. Using a survey of professionals in positions that often serve as starting points for a run public office (lawyers, businesspeople), they found that women are more likely to run in states that developed early patterns of electing them to state legislature (Lawless and Fox, 2). The decision to run, the “candidate emergence process” is the locus of gender differences rather than the outcome or conduct of the actual race. Men are more likely to be recruited to run. Significantly, current literature points to no difference in success rates between similarly situated male and female candidates (Lawless and Fox, 3).

Kira Sabonmatsu suggests that since women often do not run unless recruited, the recruitment of female candidates by major parties with well organized structures may be a good way to increase women’s representation (Sabonmatsu, 5). Women candidates are more likely than male candidates to report being recruited by the major parties (Ibid, quoting Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001). However, “strong party organizations typically have a negative effect on women’s presence in the state legislature” (Ibid, quoting Nelson 1991; Werner 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Women candidates constitute a much smaller pool than male candidates. When women are asked to run, it is often because a major party is in the minority and thus needs to provide a fresh image to voters. The result is that women are often recruited for races that no candidate from their party can win. This assertion is borne out in interviews of party leaders and legislators in Massachusetts and Alabama, where the dominant party (Democratic) did not make significant efforts to recruit female candidates (Sabonmatsu, 18). Both parties did make significant recruitment efforts in Iowa, where seats are more competitive. Despite this effort, they often fell back on local party gatekeepers, who are likely to be part of older male networks. (Sabonmatsu, 20-21). Sabonmatsu’s work suggests that there are limits to efforts by the two major parties to recruit women. Serious recruitment typically occurs only when there is likely to be a very competitive campaign in a state where the party needs to pick up seats. Where these conditions do not exist, other organizations will have to step in to ensure that female candidates are entering races.

How We Chose Our Topic- Focus on State Women’s Organizations

There are a number of considerations we took into account as we focused our research. We

chose to consider the decision to run, and what contributions state level organizations focused on increasing the numbers of women in politics could make to that decision. A women's caucus and women's commission can provide a network for women who wish to be politically involved, but our primary interest lay with organizations involved in electoral politics. We hypothesized that there are three areas where women's organizations can help women make the decision to run and stay in the race. These three areas are described below.

Opportunities Provided by State Women's Organizations:

Female Mentors: Women who have already achieved political success can serve as role models and mentors for those who are considering running for office. Women in leadership positions sometimes recognize gender imbalances in their state administration or party caucus and actively work to bring women up through the ranks.

Fundraising: Women who have a wide social and financial base would be more likely to raise funds and become viable candidates. Fundraising depends on a number of factors, and may often be increased when there are events of salience for particular ideological groups. For example, the Hill-Thomas hearings greatly increased fundraising by liberal women's organizations (Nelson, 180). Issue-based organizations are more likely to benefit from such publicity.

Professional Contacts: Candidates who are already established in the business or professional world seem to be more likely to be viable candidates. Positions in these fields provide fund raising opportunities and increase name recognition. Among these organizations, the Iowa Women in Public Policy stands out for its innovative approach to networking, linking women in politics to female lobbyists and policy specialists. This approach provides women with an extended political network and provides incentives for them to help female colleagues.

The Twelve State Tactic

Last year, we began building a spreadsheet providing information on various groups related to women in public office by state. It is a useful tool for understanding the variety of state-level governmental and non-governmental organizations related to women. We hope that it will be distributed widely. The document is available from the authors upon request.

Using the 2006 pre-election data provided by the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University (CAWP), we selected twelve states for further study that had the 6 highest and 6 lowest percentages of women in their legislatures. As discussed above, Sabonmatsu already conducted an in-depth study of three states in the middle of the range in 2003. The distribution of percentages of women in state legislatures by state is scattered between 10% to 30% (Fig. 1 below). It is fairly even about the median and mode lines shown below (Fig. 1). While the twelve states we chose are not representative of the "average state" defined as one at the center of this distribution, an average state would not be significantly more or less representative of states overall given the distribution we have here. A contrast between the extremes better served our purpose of identifying any particularly

effective or particularly ineffective methods of recruiting candidates.

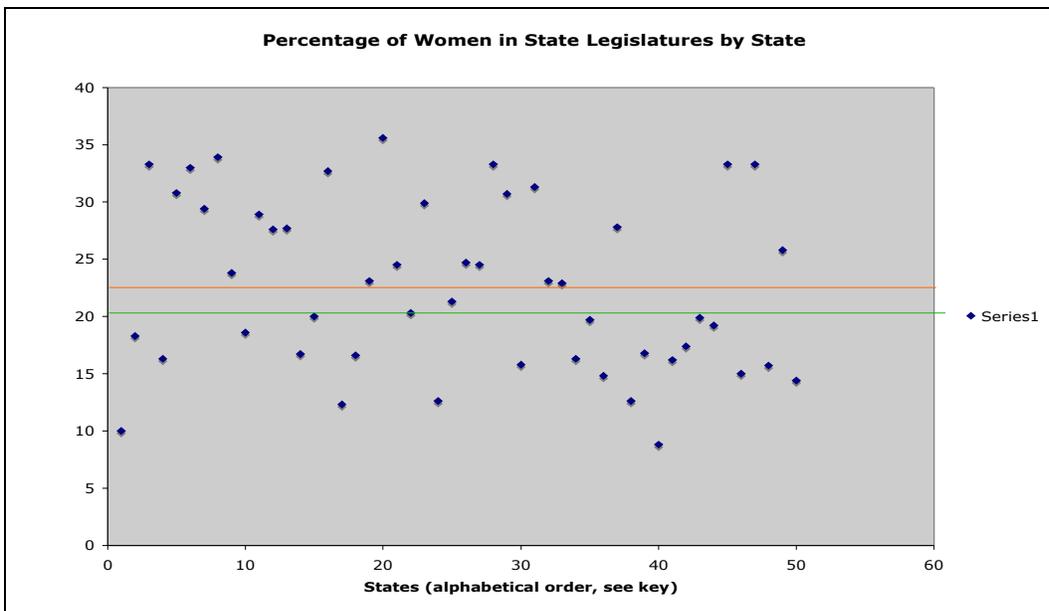
Once we had found publicly available information on state women’s organizations, we attempted to contact these organizations to gain further information. Many of the problems that organizations have in recruiting candidates may be longstanding in nature. Moreover a low percentage of women in the legislature now may actually represent an improvement from past years, while a high percentage may not be likely to be maintained. For the states we chose, that did not seem to be the result. If one looks at the numbers provided by CAWP since 2000, states near the top have stayed near the top, and states near the bottom have generally stayed near the bottom.

This method brought varying degrees of success. The information we have compiled is anecdotal, and institutional memory in these organizations is frustratingly short. It would be a mistake to generalize too broadly from what it shows. However, this information gives a sense of several common approaches to the problem of candidate recruitment that are being implemented around the country both in states with a history of success and in those where efforts have thus far not been successful.

After the 2006 elections, the rankings had shifted, although not by much (Fig. 2). Because a few states showed remarkable increases in the number of female legislators, we included a preliminary analysis of these elections.

Fig. 1 demonstrates the distribution of percentage of female legislators by state prior to the 2006 election cycle. It shows a wide fairly even distribution between 10 and 30 percent.

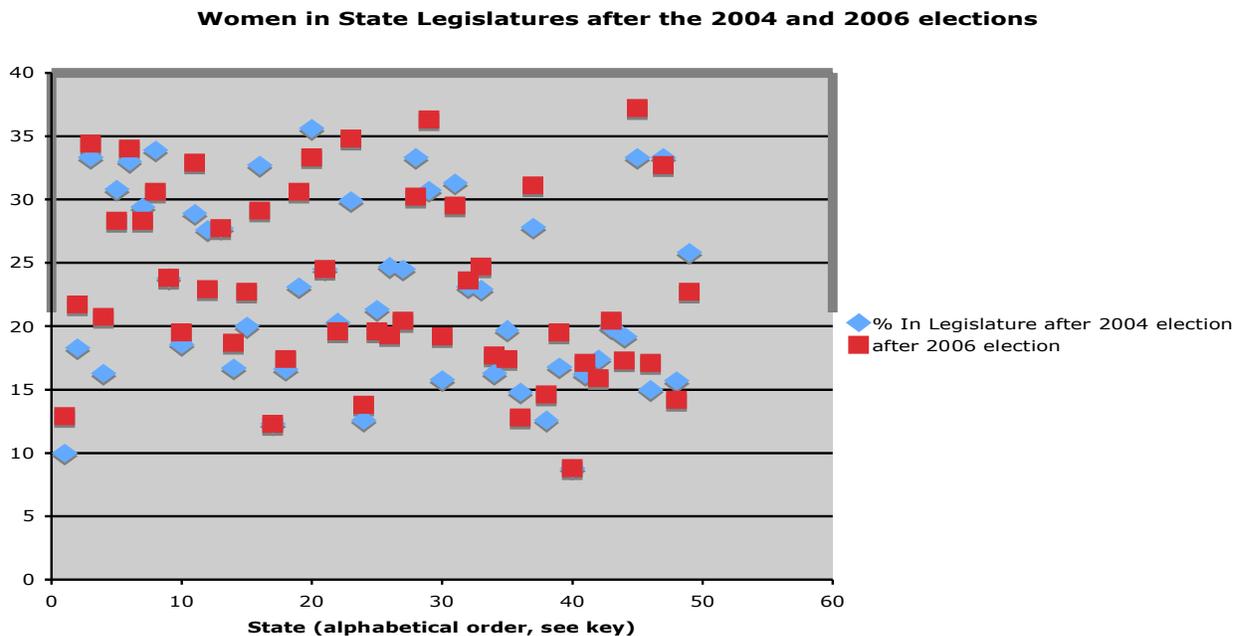
Figure 1.



For Key to both charts and data, see Appendix II.

Figure II: The 2006 elections did not see a large shift in percentage of women state legislators overall, but individual states saw some changes.

Figure 2



Findings

The Twelve States after the 2004 elections

We surveyed a diverse group of states and collected basic information regarding groups attempting to elect women to public office. These states include the states with the six highest percentages in the state legislature: Vermont, Nevada, Maryland, Washington, Arizona, Delaware, and those with the six lowest percentages of women in the state legislature: Wyoming, Kentucky, South Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi (see appendix I, does not include 2007 special elections). Bearing in mind the limitations of this report, it is possible to generalize about some areas, especially fundraising and candidate recruitment.

Money: Campaign contributions are the carrot that interest groups can offer to candidates as a way to gain their support and involvement in the future, as well as victory in the current election. Our subjects are no exception. As stories such as that of Alabama Solution illustrate, non-partisan groups seem to face particular hurdles because many donors do not wish to see the group back candidates from opposing parties (see appendix). Groups that have a party affiliation, or an issue tend to be more successful at staying afloat financially. On the other hand, this factor does not appear to be determinative. For example, South Carolina's Organization of Republican Women and the Pennsylvania chapter of the typically successful National Women's Political Caucus, a pro-choice group, have been unable to significantly boost the number of financially-backed candidates within the state.

Networking: Weekend conferences, an almost universal feature of state level organizing, do not

appear to be enough. Candidate trainings may be useful in some states where there are very few women in office and mentorship is not a viable option for most candidates. Materials can be provided by the Rutgers Center for American Women in Politics. The sessions are relatively easy to run, although they have not been run for a long enough period of time for their impact to be measured. Conferences are certainly a start, but repeated interaction is an important feature of some of the most successful groups. For example, Vermont's "taking your place at the table" meetings, which operate on a regular basis, offer a way for women in politics to meet and socialize, and to form relationships that can propel them into office and into legislative leadership.

Leaders: Successful states often have strong networks of female leadership to begin with, as in Maryland, or several stand out female leaders at the state level, such as Nevada. Unsurprisingly, states with a history of female leadership are the ones most likely to have high percentages of women candidates.

Effect of the 2006 elections:

Most states showed only a small fluctuation in the percentage of women in their legislatures, and, more importantly in the number of women in legislative office. In states where there were substantial changes in numbers, they tended to reflect national party politics. A comparison of the election results in 2004 and those in 2006 shows that many women legislatures who lost their seats were Republican, while those who gained were often overwhelmingly Democrats (CAWP 2007, 2005).

Maine- The state with the largest numerical gain in seats held by women. That may be because the results of the 2004 election were an anomaly, a 25-year low in the number of women (Susan M. Cover, "Women Make Gains in State House, Senate Seats," Portland Press Herald, B3 13 November, 2003). The Maine Women's lobby supports networking and training for female candidates. Both parties are also credited with recruiting female candidates (Cover). Female leaders in both parties have been instrumental in this effort. In response to Maine's falling numbers of women legislators, female leaders actively sought out candidates for both houses of the state legislature, and the announcement of the first female candidacies helped push other women into the race. Insiders also credit males in the legislature for backing the effort (Francis X. Quinn, "Women Press Legislative Bids," AP State and Local Wire, 1 October 2006). Thanks to Maine's strong historic numbers there are enough women leaders to choose from. Still, women make up the majority of the state's population, and thirty percent of the state legislature is still nowhere near reflecting this reality ("State House gains women, but progress is slow," Portland Press Herald, A8 11 December 2006). The important lesson from the 2004 and 2006 elections is that candidate recruitment by partisan female leaders can make a large difference to the number of women who decide to run for office. As we've seen in the political science literature, when a party fears losing power and has to demonstrate that it is capable of change, running a female or minority candidate provides a visible symbol of change.

Minnesota- Unlike Maine, it has not had a history of large numbers of women in politics. However, large numbers of women ran for office in the past election cycle ("Minnesota is ready to elect more women; Political scientists wonder what's taken so long," Minneapolis Star Tribune, A8, 4 July 2006). As a result, record numbers of women won state and national office, and Minnesota now ranks third in the nation for percentage of women legislators. Much credit goes to the Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund (WCF), which has been actively recruiting candidates and expects to continue doing so (Patricia Lopez, "Women are poised to be a Capitol force," Minneapolis Star Tribune, A1, 27 December 2006). The Women Candidate Development Coalition began building a pipeline of female office holders in local office early on (Ibid). Minnesota's most recent election cycle saw particularly effective work by a combination of state women's groups, including some such as the Women's Campaign Fund that are issue based (The WCF funds pro-choice candidates) and some that are not. Minnesota State University also has a woman in politics program that includes a "ready to run" workshop for candidates and a conference for women legislators (www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/wpp/programs_outreach.html/ready_to_run.htm, "...women_legislaors_retreat.htm). Still, money and mentoring relationships, including active recruitment by organizations that could back up their promises to deliver support for candidates, were crucial. Such relationships may be found in the traditional two party system, but where conditions are less favorable and fewer women have spent a long time in party leadership, outside organizations can provide similar help. The 2006 elections show that both models are viable, but both will have different problems in the future. Minnesota women's organizations cannot automatically count on women in legislative office to be active recruiters in 2008.

New Hampshire- The number of women legislators in New Hampshire also rose, but the local press does not credit a specific party or interest group. Part of this phenomenon may be due to the larger number of seats that were contested, and won as the Democrats took both houses of the state legislature. Prominent female leadership may have also contributed the large number of female candidates, as women were elected as Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

Kansas- This state saw a smaller increase in the number of female legislators and correspondingly less media attention to the issue. However, the lack of women in the state's House leadership is now being raised as a problem. Women already hold leadership posts in the state Senate ("All-male House GOP Leadership Team Draws Notice," AP State and Local Wire, 7 December 2006), Perhaps the increase in women in the House helped bring attention to this issue, leading to greater efforts to bring others into the political arena. 2008 will provide a test of whether efforts have continued after the publicity of the 2006 elections has ended.

Suggestions for Women's Organizations

1- Mentor

Although more women have now entered professions from which state politicians are typically drawn, women are still less likely to contemplate running for office than male counterparts. Solutions for organizations trying to increase the number of women in the state legislature must target the candidate emergence process, reminding women in a position to run that they ought to consider doing so, and assuring them of sufficient support if they decide to become candidates. Mentorship has been cited as extremely important. But where to find these mentors? We believe they can be found in the ranks of women who have recently run for and secured political office. Thus, women's organizations should seek to translate informal sense of commitment into a formal obligation. Candidates they support with funds in one election should be required to aid in the recruitment and mentoring of candidates in the next. Many organizations already provide candidates with contracts, stating that their names may be used by the organization, and that they are in agreement with its ideology. It would not be difficult to add a clause relating to this requirement. For example:

I understand that should I win election to the [State] [Senate, House, Assembly] I will be required either to recruit one woman to run for the state legislature OR mentor one candidate designated for me by [organization X]. My mentee will be from the same political party [except in states which do not allow partisan campaigns for the state legislature, in which case she will have similar political beliefs]. I understand that I have the ability to request to be placed with a specific mentee or not to be placed with a specific mentee regardless of party. I understand that my mentoring obligation includes at minimum one face to face meeting and two phone calls to check in during the campaign, but that more involvement is strongly encouraged. If I am unable to recruit a candidate and [organization X] cannot find a candidate for me to mentor, I am obligated to raise [Y] dollars on its behalf. Should I fail to meet this obligation, I will be required to repay all or part of the money my campaign has received.

2- Meet

States that have successfully promoted women's participation in their legislatures have been consistent in establishing regular, formal networking opportunities for women who are in office or considering running for office. Vermont's Commission on Women, for example, holds regular workshops to help women develop and hone the skills necessary to win election. Maryland and Nevada's organizations have also been active in pursuing structured opportunities for women to meet and support each other. This is especially critical in states where party organizations are exclusive of people who are trying to "get into the pipeline," so to speak. We recommend that states pursue the creation of more formal networking opportunities that would link potential candidates with each other and with current female politicians. These could take the form of fundraisers for the host organization, workshops, meals, or regional and statewide conferences. It is also important that these events occur regularly and fairly frequently. The result will be more women candidates, with a better grasp on the resources and strengths they have.

3- Document

Women's groups at the state level should be encouraged to work with local and national research centers on women in politics and public policy. These centers are sources of information, and potential partners in non-partisan events, but they also need raw data provided by state level women's organizations in order to study their effectiveness. We suggest that organizations seek out ways to partner with academics studying women in politics by sharing information. For example, the Women's Campaign Fund of Nevada may have a list of women it has attempted to recruit in the last five years. Statistics detailing the professions, age, and geographic location of these women would be of great interest to someone trying to write or update this report. Indeed, we sought any database that would have these statistics with no results. If it were built, it would be of great value both to researchers and to PACs planning a recruitment strategy for 2008.

Suggestions for Future Research

Groups in many different states are all attempting to use the same methods and the same model of seeking to recruit and fund candidates. National groups give much needed funding resources, and information to the states, but they are not varying their approaches based on the local political climate. These methods, such as a weekend campaign school, have not been systematically studied for their effectiveness. American politics does have a few staples, such as money and local connections, but methods of procuring these things may have to be reimagined for more women to enter politics. These new innovations are likely to come from the states. State politics, while vitally important, is somewhat forgiving. Huge amounts of money are not being spent on one race. The demands of donors for performance are less weighty. Professional campaign staff, while sometimes available, is not necessary to the same extent as it is in national politics. A candidate for state legislature, and her backers, can still take risks in their approach to electoral politics.

The results states achieve should be measured in terms of candidates recruited, numbers elected, money raised and sent to various campaigns. As we have stressed above, they ought to be reported and shared around the county, or at least within a given region. Deciding on which indicators of success are most immediately important, and gearing efforts towards changing the trend in this data is an important first step, but reporting of results is equally important if South Carolina is to learn from Vermont's success, or Pennsylvania from Minnesota's.

If any group attempts to implement any of our suggestions, we sincerely hope that they will seek to track their effectiveness over time.

Appendix I: Data

States with the Highest Percentages of Women in State Office, 2006 (with 2007 updated figures)

Vermont: 33.3% in 2006; 35.6% in 2004

Overview:

The percentage of women in the Vermont legislature is particularly high compared to other states, and in the 2006 election it jumped from 33% to 37%. One explanation of the high percentage, according to Wendy Love, Executive Director on Vermont Commission on Women, is that Vermont politics tends to be very local and personal. Most state legislators begin on town select boards and move up the political ladder. Because these select boards often deal with what some characterize as "masculine" issues like road maintenance and sanitation, Ms. Love believes that women seldom consider running for the boards. When they do, their experience in community organizations serves as a substitute for a selectman position and tends to build a large base of support and translate well to political careers (Wendy Love interview).

Organizations:

The strength and regular activity of the Vermont Commission on Women has no doubt been a significant factor in this state's success at maintaining high rates of women's political participation over the last 10 years. The Commission was founded in 1964 by then-Governor Phillip Hoff in response to President Kennedy's Presidential Committee on the Status of Women, and it aims to help women in Vermont achieve legal, economic, social, and political equality. It is composed of 16 women and men, along with advisors, who develop and vote on policies to achieve these goals. Besides publishing annual reports on women in Vermont politics, the Commission sponsors a women's legislative caucus to educate and provide a discussion space for women legislators.

The Vermont Women's Magazine reports on the progress of women politicians.

A League of Women Voters chapter, though it does not specifically support female politicians, gathers and reports information on political issues and candidates of interest to Vermont women.

Speaker of the House Gaye R. Symington is also active in promoting women in politics, and traveled the state for two years encouraging women to run.

Programming:

The Vermont Women's Commission holds regular "Taking Your Place at the Table" workshops for women that feature local and state women politicians talking about their experiences on the campaign trail and in the statehouse (Love Interview).

Nevada: 33.3% in 2006, 30.2% in 2007

Overview:

The state of Nevada has a relatively high percentage of women in its state legislature. The state boasts a strong ranching culture, as well as the powerful political center of Las Vegas. Power and prestige in Vegas centers on casino ownership, a male dominated field (Las Vegas Sun 22 July 2006) These closed networks have historically affected women's willingness and ability to run for office. Nor are the gains in women's representation bipartisan. Women in the state legislature are far more likely to be Democrats. They do not have a formal caucus. Two female candidates for governor have fared very differently. Diane Titus has received great support from the National Democratic Party, while Lorraine Hunt's campaign lost the primary by a fairly large margin. It is worth noting that a dialogue regarding the Las Vegas "old-boys" network has been opened in the press and may provide greater impetus for change in the gender makeup of state politics. Nevada also has women further advance in their political careers. It currently sends two women to Congress.

Organizations:

The National Women's Political Caucus has a state chapter, whose membership is active in the group on a national level.

The state university also has a women's leadership institute that has existed since the 1980s. Both are places potential candidates can get information and build relationships.

Maryland: 34.6% in 2006, 33.0% in 2007

Overview:

Maryland ranks highly among the 50 states in terms of number of women in elected office. Maryland's success could be due in part to the relatively high percentages of women who are in a good position to become candidates. Maryland ranks fourth in the nation for the number of women with at least four years of college, with 29.6% having reached that level of education. Additionally, 41.3% of Maryland women have managerial or professional occupations; indeed, 28.9% of all businesses are owned by women (both among the highest percentages in the country). The positions of many women in the private sector appear to have translated into relative success of women in the political arena. They have been aided by the support of male state politicians who have embraced closing the gender gap in Maryland state politics.

Organizations:

The Maryland Commission on Women is a state group, whose goals are to bring information to Maryland women and girls, advise government and serve as a statewide resource to expand social, political, and economic opportunities for all Maryland women.

Women Legislators of Maryland was established in 1972 whose goals are to foster cooperation among women holding state legislative office and to increase the participation of women in politics; this group claims to be the first women's caucus group in the nation.

Funding:

Emily's List is a private organization that raises money to support pro-choice female candidates, has helped 8 Maryland women get elected to national, state, and local office since its founding; while this is not a large number in comparison to other states in which Emily's List is active, it is certainly a healthy showing

NOW PAC currently supports Maryland candidates for federal office (a surprisingly small number).

Programming:

Women of Tomorrow Awards are sponsored by the Maryland Commission on Women; the awards honor girls and young women who have made a significant impact on their community in the hope that it will inspire young women to become and remain community leaders.

Washington: 33.3% in 2006, 32.7% in 2007

Overview:

This is a state with high rates of female political leadership overall, and the legislature is no exception. Female leadership, notes the Seattle Times, is a "fact of life that has been true for many years" ("Girl power no longer just a novelty," Seattle Times B6, 3 January 2007) However, the percentage of women in the state legislature has gone down in recent years, from a historic high of 40 percent. Part of this trend may be due to the dearth of female business leaders in the state (Craig Harris, "Where a Rise to the Top Stops," Seattle Post-Intelligencer 15 November 2006). Lack of women in business may limit on the number of women with the experience and money to credibly run for office.

Organizations:

The National Women's Political Caucus Washington Chapter (WPC) has been active in a number of elections and seeks to recruit progressive female candidates (http://wpcnet.org/?page=about_us all accessed 4 February 2007). It runs an early endorsement process for candidates that conform to its agenda and have a good chance of success (<http://wpcnet.org/?page=candidates>), and it has organized at the county level in some Washington counties.

Funding:

The May Hutton Society is a network of women committed to funding female candidates endorsed by the WPC. Its annual meeting allows donors and elected leaders to meet and provides a venue for long-term political relationships to be formed (http://wpcnet.org/?page=may_hutton_society).

Programming:

The WPC organizes yearly daylong candidate trainings, sponsored and given by consulting firms (http://wpcnet.org/?page=may_hutton_society).

Arizona: 33.3% in 2006, 34.4% in 2007

Overview:

A large number of women have been active in Arizona politics, at the state legislative level and beyond. Arizona is the only state where one female governor has replaced another woman. The diverse composition of the legislature has resulted in not one but two commissions focused on women's issues (The Governor's Division for Women and the Governor's Commission on the Health Status of Women).

Organizations:

The Arizona Women's Political Caucus (www.azstarnet.com/public/nonprofit/awpc/ accessed 13 December 2006) actively recruits and trains women for public office. Affiliated with the National Women's Political Caucus, they are focused on recruiting pro-choice candidates, but their program exists more generally as training, networking, and leadership for politically inclined women. Events are held regularly, and the group claims good results.

Delaware: 33.9%, 2006, 30.6%, 2007

Overview:

Little information is readily available on this small state. There appear to be few organized efforts to elect women. It has a large percentage of women in the state legislature, though a relatively small number because of the small numbers of legislators overall. Two women state senators each chair two committees. In the House, three women are committee chairs, and one chairs two committees. Women serve as democratic whips in both house, minority in the House and majority in the Senate. Delaware's example suggests that an organization that specifically supports female candidates is not always necessary, sometimes state parties willing to back female candidates will be just as helpful or even more so.

Programming:

The Delaware Women's Conference is a yearly event that provides general networking for women who may seek to run for office (<http://www.delawarewomen.org/mission.html> accessed 2 March 2007).

States with the Lowest Percentages of Women in Office in 2006 prior to elections (with 2007 updated figures)

Wyoming: 15.6% in 2006, 23.3% in 2007

Overview:

Little information was available on Wyoming. The women's caucus link from the National Caucus of State Legislatures on Wyoming leads to a list of all female representatives who have ever held state office (soswy.state.wy.us/informat/women.htm accessed 20 November 2006). The only political programming for women in the area is Wyoming Council for Women's Issues (WCWI), a Governor-appointed council that promotes the status of women in general and offers few resources for budding female politicians.

Kentucky: 11.6% in 2006, 12.3% in 2007

Overview:

Little information was to be had on groups connected to electoral politics. However, there is a non-partisan Kentucky Commission of Women headed by the First Lady Genna Fletcher and the Lieutenant Governor. The commission, which researches and distributes relevant information to women and girls, also studies the economic progress of women in the state in order to identify obstacles facing women for the purpose of providing workable solutions. The Commission's website is especially comprehensive in terms of providing up to date information, devoting entire sections to resources for women of all ages.

South Carolina: 8.8% in 2006, 8.8% in 2007

Overview:

Organizations that focus on women's participation in politics often focus that participation on support for male candidates, rather than asking women to run for office themselves. For example, the League of Women Voters, which does have a presence in the state, encourages women to vote and to support candidates, but not necessarily to run for office. Such a focus is in keeping with that of the national organization. The Federation of Republican Women also primarily focuses on supporting male candidates rather than running female ones. The majority of the events they sponsor are fundraisers, primarily for male candidates, since it is primarily men who run for office.

Organizations:

South Carolina has no official group dedicated to women in politics, but it has two separate state organizations related to women's political participation:

The South Carolina League of Women Voters is the state's branch of the League of Women Voters and seems to be the most well-organized and widespread female political organization in the state. Its mission statement contains a mention of "building citizen participation in government."

The South Carolina Federation of Republican Women is a state partisan group that comes closest to being a group dedicated to increasing female participation in politics. Its mission is "to help

women from all walks of life to become players at the political table nationally, statewide and locally.”

Funding:

There are no well-advertised local sources of funding, though the South Carolina Federation of Republican Women does fundraise for both male and female candidates

Programming:

We could not find well-advertised programming available related to women in politics. The majority of events held by state organizations are candidate-based.

Alabama: 11% in 2006, 12.9% in 2007

Overview:

Finding information on women in Alabama politics is made more difficult by their scarcity. There is an Alabama Men’s and Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame that cites some female politicians emerging in the late 1950s, but never in any great numbers. The Alabama State Legislature also does not have a full year calendar, which further limits the amount of attention paid to it and to the issue of who serves. At least one caucus, the House Black Caucus, is led by a woman. Alabama also has women in many statewide offices including, Lieutenant Governor, Auditor, Comptroller, and Secretary of State. It also has a history of women serving in these positions starting in the 1950s.

Part of the problem for women trying to gain legislative office may be closed partisan networks. MSNBC ran a small story (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14505740/> accessed 5 November 2006) on the Montgomery county democratic committee’s unanimous decision to disqualify both the winner and the loser of the primary race for state legislature (both female) using a rule party officials say no other candidate has had to obey since 1988.

Organizations:

Like its sister groups in other states Alabama League of Women Voters is primarily devoted to providing voter information and on professionalizing the Alabama State Legislature. Its latest report notes a number of structural reforms to leadership and the committee system, as well as the development of a non-partisan research service. In the late 1990s, it appears to have been more active on issues characterized as women’s issues, and there was at least one conference on women in public office organized in conjunction with the state university.

Now-defunct Alabama Solution: According to its former director, Alabama Solution was a group that strove to raise the number of Alabama women running for legislative office during the 1990s (interview with past president Mary Lynn Bates). It ran an annual meeting, a conference, and candidate training and was completely non-partisan, giving money to any viable female candidate. This, surmises Ms. Bates, was its eventual downfall. As state races became more polarized and competitive, it became harder for the group to find contributors, as they did not

want their money going to a candidate from another party (interview).

Programming:

NEW (National Education for Women-created by CAWP), Women's Leadership Institute at Auburn University.

Pennsylvania: 13% in 2006, 14.6% in 2007

Overview:

Pennsylvania has one of the lower percentages of women in state legislatures; it also has a low percentage of women in appointed positions (CAWP, Women's Campaign Fund "Women PA Politics Fact Sheet" <http://www.pawcf.com/fact_sheets.html#Fact_Sheet> accessed 22 February 2007.) The state is divided between liberal cities and more conservative rural areas.

Organizations:

The Women's Campaign Fund, describes itself as supporting "progressive women candidates regardless of party affiliation" with monetary contributions ("PWFC: A 22 Year Perspective," <http://www.pawcf.com/about_PWCF.html> last accessed 22 February 2007.) It also runs a campaign school for potential candidates and has done so since 1997.

The Pennsylvania Center For Women, Politics and Public Policy is located at Chatham College, a women's college within Chatham University. It cosponsors the campaign school and it is home to a number of initiatives focused on enhancing the status of women. It also hosts a "Conversations with Women in Public policy" series for its undergraduates ("public lectures" <<http://www.chatham.edu/pcwppp/lectures.htm>> accessed 24 February 2007).

Funding:

The Women's Campaign Fund funds progressive candidates who meet their selection criteria (PWCF_Application_2006.pdfPWCF_Application_2006.pdf)

Programming:

Wining Edge Campaign School, a partnership between PWCF and the Pennsylvania Center for Women, Politics, and Public Policy. The two and a half day workshop covers "messaging, communications crisis, managing criticism, raising money and voter trends" ("Campaign School," <http://www.pawcf.com/campaign_school.html> accessed 22 February 2007).

Mississippi: 12.6% in 2006, 14.4% in 2007

Overview:

Although the current lieutenant governor is a woman, only 23 other legislators are female (out of 174), and they have only been present since 1975. Mississippi is also one of three states that have not yet elected a woman to statewide office. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that Mississippi has no women's caucus or commission to help women run for and be elected to office. The me-

dia coverage and public attention to women candidates is often thin. However, Dr. Marianne Hill of the Institute for Women's Policy Research and a senior economist at the Center for Policy Research in Jackson, Mississippi, reports that the public is generally receptive to women's candidacies, provided they are Mississippi natives. The state's minority women (African Americans account for 37% of Mississippi's population) are also relatively well represented, thanks in part to a program called Coastal Women for Change sponsored by the Ms. Foundation.

Organizations:

Dr. Hill says that the state has had organizations in the past to support women running for office; however, as of this writing, most of them are inactive.

Dr. reports that the state's governor-appointed Commission on the Status of Women has been ineffective due to lack of political experience among its members, but the newly appointed chair hopes to reverse this trend.

Besides the nationally based AAUW and the League of Women Voters, the Women in Politics Network once participated in the state electoral process and held gatherings to facilitate informal networking, but internal conflict over issue-based endorsement caused it to withdraw from the arena at the beginning of the decade.

The Mississippi Coalition for Women, founded by Dr. Hill, has not been active in the last year, but is financially solvent and in the past has conducted a training session for candidates.

Beyond the Women in Politics Network's function, female candidates in Mississippi network informally. The Democratic Women's Club, whose activity has declined in recent years, provided informal networking opportunities for female legislators, but there are no programs that might pair candidates with "mentor" legislators.

All statistics from data collected by the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University.

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Interviews: we thank the following people who took the time to share their knowledge with us

Mary Lynn Bates, former President of Alabama Solution (November, 2006).

Professor Jennifer Lawless, Brown University, who spoke to us from her Congressional campaign office. (October 2006).

Dr. Marianne Hill of the Institute for Women's Policy Research and a senior economist at the Center for Policy Research in Jackson. (November, 2006).

Wendy Love, Executive Director on Vermont Commission on Women (October 2006).