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Data Point: With New Addition, Record Number of Women in Senate

The arrival of Minnesota's new U.S. Senator, Tina Smith (D), brings the total number of women in the Senate to 22, a new record. There are now 17 Democrats and 5 Republicans among the Senate women. The previous high for women in the U.S. Senate was 21, reached in January 2017.

This will also mark a new high for the number of women in the U.S. Congress overall; from 105 (reached in January 2017) to 106.* Still, women will remain just under 20% of all members of Congress (19.8%).

The data on women in the Senate were compiled by the Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

Minnesota becomes the fourth state to be represented currently by two female Senators, joining California, New Hampshire and Washington. Two other states were represented by all-women delegations in the past: Kansas and Maine. For more information about states represented by two women in the Senate, see our [earlier release](#) on all-women Senate delegations.

Smith is the 51st woman ever to serve in the Senate; there have been 34 Democrats and 17 Republicans. She is the third Minnesotan to serve in the Senate; in addition to the state's current senior senator, Amy Klobuchar (D), Minnesota was represented briefly in 1978 by Muriel Buck Humphrey (D), the widow of Senator and former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey.

The first woman to serve in the Senate was Rebecca Latimer Felton (D-GA), who, in a symbolic move, was appointed to fill a vacancy caused by death and served just one day in 1922, resigning when her successor was sworn in. The first woman ever to win election to the Senate was Hattie Wyatt Caraway (D-AR), who was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of her husband in 1931 and then won an election to complete his term, along with two subsequent terms, before losing her bid for re-election in 1944.

The first woman elected to the Senate without first filling a Senate vacancy was Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME), who filled the House vacancy caused by her husband's death and served four full terms there before running for the Senate, where she was elected to four terms (1949-1973) before losing a re-election race. The first woman elected to the Senate in her own right, without having first filled any congressional vacancy, was Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-KS), who served from 1978-1997.

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From the time the first woman entered the Senate, no more than one woman served at a time until the 74th Congress (1935-37), and no more than two served together until the 102nd Congress (1991-93). The first time there were more than 10 female senators was in the 107th Congress (2001-03), and the total reached 20 in the 113th Congress (2013-15).

Details about the history of women in the Senate can be found [here](#).

*This number does not include delegates.

About CAWP

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's underrepresentation in political leadership with effective, imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's over four decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.

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