

## Gender and the Decision to Run for the State Legislature

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**Abstract:** We revisit the debate about the recruitment of women to public office with a new study of state legislators conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics. We find important gender differences in the initial decision to seek state legislative office. Women are more likely than men to seek office because they were encouraged to run. In addition, we find that family and organizational support play a larger role in women's candidacy decisions than in men's. Meanwhile, we find similarity between women and their male colleagues in the types of actors who encourage and discourage candidacy.

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The recruitment of women to run for public office was one of the first topics explored by scholars of women and politics beginning in the 1970s. Initial explanations for the underrepresentation of women in public office tended to focus on gender role socialization, situational and structural factors, and overt gender discrimination (e.g., Lee 1977; King 1977; Stoper 1977; Welch 1978; Flammang 1997). Traditionally, women were socialized to believe that politics was a man's game. Women's roles as the primary caregivers within families meant that they did not have the time or flexibility to seek and hold office. Women also were not as likely as men to hold advanced degrees or be employed in law or business where they could develop the skills, qualifications, and networks to help them run for office. Many political gatekeepers believed that women did not belong in politics and that voters would be less likely to vote for female than for male candidates.

In addition to examining these possible explanations for women's underrepresentation, scholars also turned their attention to the political opportunity structure, identifying biases in the "rules of the game" that placed women at a disadvantage (Carroll 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Rule 1981). For example, women were found to fare better in multimember districts, where they ran as one of several candidates for multiple seats, than in single-member districts. Campaigns are often costly, and women were thought to have greater difficulty asking for and raising money. But perhaps the feature of the political opportunity structure that seemed most seriously to disadvantage women was incumbency. Incumbents seek re-election at high rates and are difficult to defeat. Research showed women candidates fare best in open seats, but open-seat races are not common.

Much has changed since the pioneering studies of recruitment were conducted in the

1970s and 1980s. Society and women's place within it have evolved. Today, few members of the public believe that women are unsuited for politics. Only about one of every ten Americans now say they would not vote for a qualified woman for president (Gallup 2007), and in the 2008 elections one woman, Hillary Clinton, almost won the Democratic nomination for president while a second woman, Sarah Palin, was the Republican nominee for vice president. Women now earn a majority of post-secondary degrees, and while women earned only about 5% of law degrees in 1970, today they earn nearly half (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). And while women still bear more responsibility than men for care-giving within the family, there is much more flexibility in gender roles than there was three decades ago.

Research in the intervening years has also revealed that some of our initial expectations about obstacles to women's increased representation are not necessarily true. Several studies have demonstrated that women candidates fare as well as men with voters when they are running in similar circumstances (e.g., Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). At least at the congressional level, women candidates are able to raise as much, or more, money than their male counterparts (Burrell 1994 and 2003). And incumbency, while as powerful as ever, clearly is not the sole or even dominant explanation for women's continued underrepresentation. The implementation of term limits in several states provided scores of open legislative seats in the late 1990s and 2000s, many of which went uncontested by any women candidate (Carroll and Jenkins 2001). The opportunities were there, but women did not step forward to take advantage of them.

Despite all the societal changes and positive research findings that suggest the political playing field for women, while certainly not level, is much closer to level than in the 1970s and

1980s, a troubling and puzzling pattern has emerged in women's representation among state legislators. From the early 1970s through the late 1990s, the numbers and proportions of women serving in state legislatures increased fivefold, from 4.5% of legislators in 1971 to 22.4% in 1999. However, since the late 1990s, the rate of progress has slowed, with the numbers and proportions of women in legislatures increasing only slightly over the past decade. In 2009, women constitute 24.3% of state legislators, an increase of only 1.9 percentage points over the 1999 figure (Center for American Women and Politics 2009). Clearly, something is amiss.

Propelled in large part by the slow progress toward equal numerical representation of women in state legislative and other offices, some researchers have begun to examine anew questions regarding the recruitment of women for public office (Sanbonmatsu 2006). Perhaps most notably, Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, in a panel study of the men and women in the professions from which political candidates most commonly emerge, have identified the decision to run as a critical juncture where gender differences that hinder women's increased representation may be apparent (Fox and Lawless 2004; Lawless and Fox 2005; Lawless and Fox 2008). Meanwhile, Gary Moncrief, Peverill Squire, and Malcolm Jewell (Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001; Squire and Moncrief 2004) in one project and David Niven (2006) in another, have also examined gender differences in the decision to run. Unlike Lawless and Fox, who focus on decisions made by men and women in the eligibility pool, these studies examine the decision-making of those who took the next step and actually ran for office, more specifically for the state legislature.

In this paper we add an additional dimension to this emerging picture by analyzing the decision to run from the perspective of those who were successful in the process: officeholders.

These officeholders not only made a decision to run for the legislature, but also were elected. We analyze survey data from the 2008 CAWP Recruitment Study, which included nationwide samples of women and men serving in state legislatures, to assess possible gender differences in the decision to run.

### **Previous Research and Hypotheses**

The research of Lawless and Fox on eligibility pools and Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell on state legislative candidates has provided considerable insight about how gender may affect the decision to run for office in ways that would restrict the number of women candidates and therefore women's numerical representation among legislators. Fox and Lawless found that women in their eligibility pool sample were notably less likely than men to have considered running for office. Moreover, of those who had thought about a candidacy, women were less likely than men to have run for office. Women significantly less often than men received encouragement to run from all types of political actors—party leaders, elected officials, and political activists. They also were less likely to have been encouraged by multiple sources. Finally, the findings of Lawless and Fox suggest that women's organizations may play an important role for women. Women were more likely than men to have had contact with a women's organization, and those who had such contact were more likely to have been recruited to run for office by a political actor (Fox and Lawless 1994; Lawless and Fox 2008).

In their study of the recruitment and campaigns of nonincumbent candidates for state legislative office in eight states, Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell unearthed some interesting gender differences. Most important, they found that women candidates were far less likely than their

male counterparts to be “self-starters.” Men were three times more likely than women to agree that “It was entirely my idea to run” for the legislature. Conversely, women were notably more likely than men to have been recruited to run. And the recruitment came from a variety of sources. Larger proportions of women than men were encouraged to run by party officials, elected officials, and legislative leaders. Women also were significantly more likely to have received encouragement from service organizations. While Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell did not ask about women’s organizations *per se*, it is likely that some of the support came from such organizations (Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001, 99 and 102).

Although neither Lawless and Fox nor Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell directly explored the effects of family support on decisions to run,<sup>1</sup> previous research conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) and others suggests that spouses and other family members may have more influence on the political choices of women than men. Two well documented findings are that women in office are older than their male counterparts and less likely to have young children, suggesting that they wait until their children are older to run for office. Moreover, married women officeholders have been found to be more likely than their male counterparts to report that their spouses are very supportive of their officeholding (Carroll and Strimling 1983; Carroll 1989; Flammang 1997, 164-67).

While Lawless and Fox (2008) found that discouragement of candidacies was a rare experience for those in the eligibility pool, David Niven (2006) has called upon researchers to pay greater attention to the idea of negative recruitment. In a study of candidates for the state legislature in Florida, Niven found that women were slightly more likely than men to be both

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<sup>1</sup> Lawless and Fox did look less directly at the effects of family roles on political ambition. They found that women in all their eligibility pool professions were less likely than men to receive encouragement to run from a

encouraged and discouraged from running for office by political and community leaders, and they were more likely to be affected by the recruitment messages they received. Moreover, women more often than men received encouragement to run in districts where their prospects of winning were not favorable and were discouraged from running in favorable districts.

Consistent with the research described above suggesting that women seem to need more encouragement before running for office, we expect to find that women officeholders less often than their male colleagues will be self-starters. Rather, women candidates who have run for and successfully been elected to state legislative office will have made it through the process in part because of the large amount of encouragement they received. Thus, our first hypothesis is:

*Women state legislators less often than their male counterparts will be self-starters.*

Based on previous research, we expect support and encouragement of candidacies to have come from multiple sources—from political actors (such as party leaders and elected officials), from organizations, and from spouses and families. Thus, our second hypothesis is:

*Women state legislators more often than their male counterparts will have received encouragement and/or support to run for office from: (a) political actors, (b) organizations, and (c) spouses and families.*

Our final hypothesis is consistent with Niven's findings that women, while they may more often be discouraged from running for office in favorable circumstances, are more likely than men to heed the messages they receive and drop out of such potentially winnable races. We expect to find that the women who do not drop out, who make it through the process, and who are elected will be no more likely than the men to report that they were discouraged. Consequently, our third

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“spouse/partner, family member, or friend” (2005, 69).

hypothesis is:

*Women state legislators will have been discouraged from running for office no more often than their male counterparts.*

### **The 2008 CAWP Recruitment Study**

We test these hypotheses with data from the 2008 CAWP Recruitment Study, funded in large part by the Barbara Lee Family Foundation with matching funds from the Susie Tompkins Buell Foundation, Wendy McKenzie, and other donors. The 2008 CAWP Recruitment Study, designed in large part to replicate a similar study CAWP conducted in 1981, focuses on factors that affect state legislators' entry into office. Data were gathered through a survey instrument consisting primarily of questions concerning the decision to seek office, previous political experience, and personal background.<sup>2</sup>

Our 2008 sampling strategy was modeled on the 1981 study.<sup>3</sup> We included the population of women state senators (N=423); the population of women state representatives (N=1,314); a random sample of men state senators, stratified by state and sampled in proportion to the number of women from each state in the population of women state senators (N=423); and a random

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<sup>2</sup> The survey was administered by the research firm Abt/SRBI Inc. Data collection began in late January 2008 and continued through early September 2008. Respondents received an initial letter informing them of the study and inviting them to complete the survey online. This letter was also sent electronically to those respondents with publicly available email addresses. Respondents who did not complete the web survey after this initial invitation were sent a paper copy of the survey instrument with a postage-paid, self-addressed return envelope. Non-respondents were subsequently re-contacted with reminder messages and additional copies of the survey instrument. Towards the end of the data collection period, remaining non-respondents received phone call reminder messages as well as invitations to complete the survey by phone. Most respondents (63.2%) completed the paper version of the survey although some respondents completed the web version (27.6%) or phone version (9.1%). At the same time that we conducted the state legislator survey, we conducted a parallel survey of mayors of large cities, although we do not discuss the results here.

<sup>3</sup> Samples were based on lists of legislators and women legislators serving in January 2008 provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Center for American Women and Politics.

sample of men state representatives (N=1,314), stratified by state and sampled in proportion to the number of women from each state in the population of women state representatives.<sup>4</sup> A total of 1,268 legislators completed the survey for an overall response rate of 36.5%.<sup>5</sup> All 50 states are represented in our sample.

Because our focus is on the initial decision to run for the legislature, we limit our analysis in this paper to those state legislators for whom the legislature was the very first elective office that they sought. These respondents represent 57% of our sample (N=726). We combine state senators and state representatives in our analysis.

### **Analysis: Self-Starters**

Our first hypothesis concerns the source of the initial decision to run for the legislature. Modeled on a question asked by Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell (2001), we asked legislators whether the initial decision to run for the legislature was entirely their idea, whether they had already thought seriously about running when someone else suggested it, or whether they had not seriously thought about running until someone else suggested it.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

We find confirmation for our first hypothesis--that women are less likely than men to be self-starters--in Table 1. In fact, women were notably less likely than men to claim that the decision to run for office was their own idea—21.8% of women compared with 39.3% of men. Similarly, fewer women than men reported that their own initiative played even a partial role in

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<sup>4</sup> The men were sampled in this manner to ensure that we compared women and men who served in similar political and legislative environments.

<sup>5</sup> The response rate was higher among women than men. The response rates were as follows: women state senators, 40.7%; men state senators, 27.9%; women state representatives, 40.7%; and men state representatives, 33.6%.

the decision to run; 21.7% of women and 31.3% of men reported that the decision to seek state legislative office was a mixture of their own thinking combined with the suggestion of someone else.

The most striking gender differences are apparent among “pure recruits”--those who had never thought seriously about running until someone else suggested it. More than half the women (56.5%) compared with fewer than one-third of the men (29.3%) had never considered running for office until they were encouraged to do so by someone else.

In contrast to the most recent study of nonincumbent candidates by Squire and Moncrief (2004, 18), we find a higher proportion of what we call pure recruits among both women and men (56.5% of women and 29.3% of men in our study, compared with 32% of women and 17% of men in theirs). Perhaps these differences in findings between the two studies are due to differences in the populations studied, or state-based differences since they focused on seven states while we included all fifty. Regardless, a consistent pattern of gender differences emerges across the two studies; similar to Squire and Moncrief, we find a lower incidence of self-starters and a higher incidence of pure recruits among women officeholders than among men.

Thus, women and men state legislators arrive at the initial decision to seek office differently. Our findings are consistent with past research that has found that women are less likely to reach elective office because of a longstanding interest in politics or plan for a political career. Rather, receiving encouragement to run seems to be critical to the presence of women in the legislatures. Because women legislators are so much less likely than their male counterparts to have thought seriously about candidacy, far fewer of these women would probably be serving in the legislature today were it not for the encouragement that prompted their initial races. We

also suspect that the leveling off in the numbers of women legislators since the late-1990s may reflect the fact that many potential women candidates have not received the encouragement they would need to seek state legislative office.

### **Analysis: Encouragement and Support**

We asked respondents--other than the self-starters--a follow-up question about the most influential actor in encouraging them to run for the legislature. This survey question provides an initial test of our second hypothesis about the level of political, organizational, and personal support that respondents encountered.

In Table 2 we find that those men and women legislators who sought state legislative office entirely or partially because they were encouraged to do so were encouraged by similar sources. For both women and men a political actor--a party official and/or legislative leader from the respondent's party or an elected or appointed officeholder-- was the single most influential source of encouragement for state legislative candidacy.<sup>6</sup> The second most frequently mentioned recruitment source is personal: the respondent's spouse or partner; another family member; or a friend, co-worker, or acquaintance. Least common is an organizational source of encouragement. Gender differences in the most influential source of encouragement for candidacy are small to nonexistent. Thus, those men and women who ran after being encouraged to do so pointed to various recruitment agents with similar frequency.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

We can also examine the first subpart of our second hypothesis with a survey question that

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<sup>6</sup> We do not find a difference on party encouragement between Democratic and Republican women.

explicitly addressed party encouragement of candidacy.<sup>7</sup> We asked respondents: “Did leaders from your party actively seek you out and encourage you to run for this office?” Just slightly larger proportions of women (55.0%) than men (47.6%) were asked to run for their current office by party leaders.<sup>8</sup> Although Moncrief, Squire and Jewell found that women candidates for the legislature had notably more recruitment contacts with parties than did men, we find more similarity between female and male officeholders. Because we do not find that women experienced a significantly higher degree of party recruitment, we cannot confirm the expectations of some scholars that political parties are a solution to the problem of women’s underrepresentation. We simply do not find that women benefit from a disproportionate amount of party encouragement.<sup>9</sup>

We do find, however, that organizations played a larger role in women’s candidacy decisions than men’s, confirming the second subpart of our second hypothesis.<sup>10</sup> We asked legislators: “Excluding your political party, was there an organization that played a particularly important role in getting you to run the first time for the office you now hold?” Women (30.9%) were significantly more likely than men (22.3%) to report that organizations were important.<sup>11</sup> Another of our survey items, asked only of the women legislators, focused on women’s organizations specifically. On this item, 20.8% of women responded affirmatively that a women’s organization actively encouraged them to run the first time for their current office. Clearly, encouragement from organizations generally, and women’s organizations more specifically, plays

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<sup>7</sup> We restrict this analysis to respondents for whom their current office is the first elective office they sought, or 49% of our sample.

<sup>8</sup> The association between gender and party recruitment is not statistically significant ( $\tau_{ub}=.07, p=.07$ ).

<sup>9</sup> Democratic and Republican women report similar levels of party recruitment.

<sup>10</sup> We restrict this analysis to respondents for whom their current office is the first elective office they sought.

<sup>11</sup> The association between gender and organizational support is statistically significant ( $\tau_{ub}=.10, p<.05$ ).

an important role in the candidacies of a notable proportion of women who seek and win election to state legislatures.

We investigate the third subpart of our second hypothesis, which focuses on personal support from spouses and families, with several questions that are explicitly about how family affected the decision to seek state legislative office. We asked legislators to rate the importance of various factors in influencing the decision to run the first time for their current office.<sup>12</sup>

Women were significantly less likely than men to respond that “approval of my spouse or partner” was “very important” (see Table 3). However, overwhelming majorities of legislators of both genders said spousal support was “very important” to their decision and very few reported that the approval of their spouse was not important.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

When we examine the importance of spousal support to officeholding, a different pattern emerges (see Table 4). Although women were less likely than men to report that the approval of their spouse was a very important factor in their initial decision to run, women legislators who are currently married (or living as married) are significantly more likely than men (83.0% to 69.4%) to say that their spouse or partner is “very supportive” of their officeholding. Few legislators of either gender report that their spouses are indifferent or resistant to their holding office, but men are more likely than women to acknowledge that their spouses are only “somewhat” supportive.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

We also find a significant gender difference in the importance of parental status. Specifically, we asked legislators about the importance to the decision to run of: “My children being old enough for me to feel comfortable not being home as much” (see Table 5). Many more

women (76.6%) than men (50.0%) rated this factor as “very important” to their decision to run the first time for their current office.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

We view these family factors as evidence that family responsibilities can be an impediment to women’s election to office. Analyzing the results of the 1981 CAWP Recruitment Study, Carroll and Strimling observed, “These differences between women and men who hold public office suggest that considerations about children’s needs and spouse’s attitude affect a woman’s decision about seeking elective office more often than they affect a man’s” (1983, 7). Although much has changed since 1981, the gendered division of labor within the home continues to have implications for the initial decision to seek elective office as well as the timing of women’s political careers. Family considerations affect both men and women, but they seem to play a larger role in women’s candidacies. And in addition to juggling their personal and professional lives, political women must weigh voter beliefs about women’s roles and the appropriateness of women seeking office if they have young children.

### **Analysis: Discouragement of Candidacy**

Finally, we turn to the question of explicit attempts to discourage candidacy. Our third hypothesis is that women legislators would be no more likely than men to have been discouraged from running for office. This hypothesis is confirmed. Similar proportions of women (36.0%) and men (33.2%) reported that someone tried to discourage them from running the very first time they sought state legislative office.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> We restrict this analysis to respondents for whom their current office is the first elective office they sought.

<sup>13</sup> The exact question wording is: “When you were making your initial decision to seek elective office the very first

Women and men also report that these efforts to discourage their candidacies came from similar types of sources (see Table 6). For both women and men, a political actor--a party official and/or legislative leader or an elected or appointed officeholder--was a common source of efforts to discourage the respondent's candidacy. Nevertheless, women were no more likely than men to have been discouraged by party leaders and only slightly less likely to have been discouraged by an elected or appointed official. Personal sources also were frequent sources of discouragement. However, women were no more likely than men to have been discouraged to run for the legislature by a spouse or other family member, and they were less likely to have been discouraged by a friend, co-worker, or acquaintance.<sup>14</sup> Finally, organizations were less often a source of discouragement for both women and men with no gender differences apparent.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

We expected to find that the women state legislators --precisely because they did seek office and were successful--would be no more likely than the men to report that they were discouraged. The women state legislators in our sample overcame efforts to discourage their candidacies, just as their male counterparts did. Because our sample consists of officeholders, we do not know whether women were deterred from candidacy for the legislature at a higher rate than men. However, the relatively high incidence of efforts to discourage candidacy that we find in our sample suggests that scholars should devote more attention to this phenomenon. Because women legislators appear to need more encouragement to seek state legislative office than men do, it is likely that women would be more likely than men to be deterred from running if they received negative reactions to their candidacies.

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time, did anyone try to discourage you from running?" The association between gender and discouragement is not statistically significant ( $\tau_u=.03, p=.45$ ).

## Conclusion

Women and men officeholders arrived at the initial decision to seek state legislative office in somewhat different ways. Whereas women were more likely than men to become state legislators through recruitment, men were more likely to become state legislators because they were self-starters. Support from family and organizations figured more prominently in women's decisions to seek public office than in men's.

In other respects, however, we find similarity between women and their male colleagues. Women no more often than men were discouraged from running for the legislature. And the sources of encouragement and discouragement for legislative candidacies were similar for women and men.

Because we find that women who reach the legislature are more likely than men to have received critical encouragement to run, we conclude that recruitment is more consequential for the presence of women in state legislative office than for the presence of men. Therefore, the level of women's officeholding, more so than men's, depends on the strength of recruitment mechanisms. Insufficient recruitment from all sources, including political actors and organizations, is a likely explanation for the stagnation in women's state legislative officeholding over the last decade.

Unlike the 2008 CAWP Recruitment Study, the 1981 CAWP Recruitment Study did not include a question about whether legislators were self-starters or ran for office largely because of the encouragement of others. Nevertheless, our 2008 findings are highly consistent with the overall picture that emerged from the 1981 study. The 1981 study pointed to the need for greater

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<sup>14</sup> Only on the "friend, co-worker, or acquaintance" category is there a statistically significant gender difference.

recruitment efforts by political parties, organizations, and women public officials themselves. As a report of findings from that study concluded, “the fact that so many women ran for office primarily because they were asked to do so by party leaders, friends, or organizations suggests that many more women might run for office if only they were sought out and encouraged to do so” (Carroll and Strimling 1983, 125-26). The 1981 CAWP Recruitment Study also found that family factors—the support of spouses/partners and the responsibilities of child rearing—were important factors affecting decisions to run (Carroll and Strimling 1983).

Our findings thus indicate considerable continuity across two and one-half decades in the factors that affect women’s decisions to become candidates. Despite efforts over the years by women’s organizations and parties to identify and encourage women to run for office, women still are not being recruited in sufficient numbers to achieve anything close to parity in representation. Our analysis makes clear that the women who have been successful in winning election to legislative office are there in large part because their candidacies were encouraged. Few made the decision to run on their own. In the absence of intensified recruitment efforts, gender parity in officeholding is likely to remain an unattainable goal for the foreseeable future.

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**Table 1. The Initial Decision to Run for the Legislature**

	Women	Men
It was entirely my idea to run.	21.7%	39.3%
I had already thought seriously about running when someone else suggested it.	21.7%	31.3%
I had not seriously thought about running until someone else suggested it.	56.5%	29.3%
<i>N</i> = tau <sub>c</sub> = .28, <i>p</i> < .0001	414	300

**Table 2. The Most Influential Source of Encouragement for Legislative Candidacies**

	Women	Men
<i>Political Sources</i>		
A party official and/or legislative leader from my party	29.7%	31.5%
An elected or appointed officeholder	22.0%	23.8%
<i>Personal Sources</i>		
My spouse or partner	17.0%	13.8%
A family member (other than spouse)	6.2%	5.0%
A friend, co-worker, or acquaintance	13.6%	16.0%
<i>Organizational Sources</i>		
A member of a women's organization	3.4%	1.0%
A member of another organization or association	6.5%	7.7%
<i>Other</i>	1.6%	1.7%
<i>N</i> =	323	181
$\chi^2 = .735$ , <i>df</i> = 2, <i>p</i> = .693 (chi-square test conducted pooling political, personal, and organizational sources)		

Note: Question wording: "Who was the most influential person in encouraging you to run?"

**Table 3. Approval of Spouse/ Partner as a Factor in the Decision to Run**

	Women	Men
Very important	75.2%	83.6%
Somewhat important	19.2%	13.7%
Not important	5.7%	2.7%
<i>N</i> =	282	219

$\tau_c = .09, p < .05$

*Note: This analysis is limited to state legislators for whom their current office is the first elective office they sought. Respondents who reported that approval of spouse/partner was not applicable are excluded.*

**Table 4. Spousal Support among State Legislators**

Spouse/partner is:	Women	Men
is very supportive of your holding public office	83.0%	69.4%
is somewhat supportive of your holding public office	12.5%	26.8%
is indifferent toward your holding public office	1.7%	1.5%
is somewhat resistant toward your holding public office	2.8%	2.3%

*N* =

288

261

$\tau_c = .13, p < .001$

*Note: This question was only asked of respondents who were currently married or living as married.*

**Table 5. Age of Children as a Factor in the Decision to Run**

	Women	Men
Very important	76.6%	50.0%
Somewhat important	17.6%	34.8%
Not important	5.8%	15.2%
<i>N</i> =	261	184

$\tau_c = .27, p < .0001$

*Note: This analysis is limited to state legislators for whom their current office is the first elective office they sought. Respondents who reported that age of children was not applicable are excluded.*

**Table 6. Sources of Discouragement of Legislative Candidacies**

	Women	Men
<i>Political Sources</i>		
A party official and/or legislative leader from my party	31.5%	33.0%
An elected or appointed officeholder	23.3%	30.0%
<i>Personal Sources</i>		
My spouse or partner	8.2%	8.0%
A family member (other than spouse)	26.7%	23.0%
A friend, co-worker, or acquaintance	22.6%*	34.0%
<i>Organizational Sources</i>		
A member of a women's organization	5.5%	2.0%
A member of another organization or association	15.1%	19.0%
<i>Other</i>	8.2%	3.0%
<i>N =</i>	146	100

\* Difference of means is statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

Note: Columns may sum to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one actor. This question was only asked of those respondents who said that someone tried to discourage them from running.