

PRESS RELEASE  
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Contact: CAWP (732) 932-9384  
Susan J. Carroll, Senior Scholar, x235

### **Women's Votes Pivotal in Shifting Control of US Senate to Democrats**

Women voters provided the critical margin of victory in three must-win races that enabled Democrats to regain control of the US Senate, according to exit polls conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. In the pivotal states of Missouri, Montana, and Virginia, exit polls show that a majority of women cast their ballots for the victorious Democratic candidate, while a majority of men voted for the Republican opponent.

In Virginia, 55 percent of women, compared with 45 percent of men, voted for Democrat Jim Webb. In Missouri, 51 percent of women, but only 46 percent of men cast ballots for Democrat Claire McCaskill. In Montana, 52 percent of women, compared with 48 percent of men, voted for Democrat Jon Tester.

“Women voted for change in this election,” according to Susan Carroll, a senior scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. “The exit polls provide compelling evidence that Democrats would not be in control of the new Congress without strong support from women voters.”

A gender gap – defined as the difference in the proportion of women and men supporting a given candidate – was also evident in other Senate races where Democrats captured seats previously held by Republicans. In Rhode Island, the victorious Democratic candidate Sheldon Whitehouse received 57 percent of women's votes, compared with 50 percent of men's. In Pennsylvania, 61 percent of women and 57 percent of men voted for the winner, Democrat Robert Casey, Jr. In Ohio, 57 percent of women and 55 percent of men cast their ballots for Democrat Sherrod Brown; this difference is within the margin of sampling error.

A gender gap was also apparent in the two targeted races where Democrats were able to hold on to seats previously held by Democrats. In New Jersey, Democrat Robert Menendez garnered 57 percent of women's votes, but only 49 percent of men's. In Maryland, Democrat Benjamin Cardin won 60 percent of women's votes, compared with 50 percent of men's.

In the one key Senate race lost by the Democrats, Democrat Harold Ford, Jr. of Tennessee was defeated by Republican Bob Corker. Ford nevertheless was the preferred candidate for a majority of women, according to the exit polls. Ford received 51 percent of women's votes, but only 45 percent of men's.

In addition to Claire McCaskill's race in Missouri, the only other Senate seat won by a woman was in Minnesota, where a large gender gap was evident in voting for Democrat Amy Klobuchar. Klobuchar won 63 percent of women's votes compared with 52 percent of men's votes.

Finally, a gender gap was apparent in voting for US House candidates; 55 percent of women, compared with 50 percent of men, in the national exit poll reported that they voted for the Democratic candidate for the US House in their district.

“The gender gap has become a defining feature of US elections over the past two and one-half decades. The fact that gender differences were apparent in so many races in 2006 is a continuation of a long-term trend,” Carroll observed. More information on women's voting and gender gap trends is available on the website of the Center for American Women and Politics at [www.cawp.rutgers.edu](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu).