



PRESS RELEASE  
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### RECORD NUMBER OF WOMEN SEEK SEATS IN U.S. HOUSE; CANDIDATE NUMBERS AT OTHER LEVELS DON'T MATCH RECORD HIGHS

A record 141 women won major-party nominations for seats in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2004, according to figures compiled by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). Ten women were candidates for the U.S. Senate and three for governor; neither figure set a new record. The number of women running for state legislatures was 2,220, a slight decrease from the most recent comparable year.

#### U.S. House of Representatives

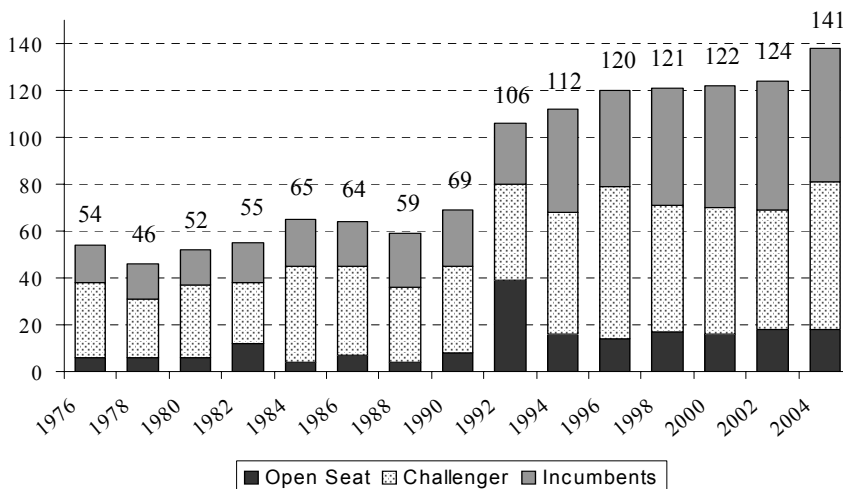
One hundred forty-one women were general election candidates for the House, easily surpassing the record of 124 candidates in 2002. The House candidates included 88 Democrats and 53 Republicans. Among them were 57 incumbents seeking re-election (37D, 20R), as well as 19 candidates for open seats (10D, 9R) and 65 challengers facing incumbents (41D, 24R).

In eleven districts, women opposed one another for House seats. Eight of these races featured incumbents facing female challengers, while three were for open seats. "We're pleased to see

so many women running for the House, and we'd like to see a record number of winners," noted Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP, before the election. "But the greatest potential for expanding women's representation lies in open seats. While women are running for more than half of the 29 available open seats, with so few such seats available, the opportunities are very limited."

Walsh added, "To make significant progress, we'll need another landmark year like 1992, when there were 91 open seats. That year, more than one-third of the women candidates ran for open seats, and record numbers of women won."

Women Candidates for U.S. House Seats: 1976-2004



## **U.S. Senate**

Ten women (9D, 1R) won their parties' nominations for the U.S. Senate this year. The candidates included five incumbents seeking re-election (4D, 1R), three women seeking open seats (3D), and two challengers (2D). There were Senate races in 34 states this year.

The record number of women with major-party Senate nominations in one year, set in 1992 and tied in 2002, was 11.

## **Governor**

Three women were candidates for governors of states in 2004; they included one incumbent (Gov. Ruth Ann Minner, D-DE) and two women running for open seats (Christine Gregoire, D-WA and Claire McCaskill, D-MO). There were gubernatorial races in 11 states this year. Most gubernatorial races occur in non-presidential even-numbered election years; in two such years, 1994 and 2002, a record 10 women won major party nominations for governor.

## **State Legislatures**

The number of women candidates for state legislatures in 2004 is slightly lower than, but similar to, figures from recent years. The 2,220 women seeking state legislative seats in 2004 reflect a slight decrease from the most recent comparable election year, 2000, when 2,228 women ran for state legislatures.<sup>1</sup>

The largest number of women candidates for legislatures was in 1992, when 2,375 women ran. A summary of the numbers of women candidates for state legislatures since 1992 is available at [www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts/CanHistory/canwinleg\\_histst.pdf](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts/CanHistory/canwinleg_histst.pdf).

“We’re disappointed that the number of women candidates seems stuck,” says CAWP director Walsh. “We need women’s voices in state policymaking and in higher offices. It all begins at the state legislative level, so we’re sorry not to see more women stepping forward to run.”

Regular state legislative elections took place in 46 states this year. Four states (LA, MS, NJ and VA) hold state legislative elections in odd-numbered years. A total of 5,809 seats were up for grabs this year out of the 7,382 state legislative slots across the country.

## **About CAWP**

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a university-based research, education and public service center. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women’s changing relationship to politics and government and to enhance women’s influence and leadership in public life. CAWP is a leading authority in its field and a respected bridge between the academic and political worlds.

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<sup>1</sup> Because some states hold legislative elections only every four years, comparisons between elections held at four-year intervals generally reflect the same overall number of races, except when redistricting has changed the total number of seats. Elections held two years apart do not reflect a comparable number of races.