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Big Gains for Virginia Democratic Women; New Jersey Elects Nation's First Black Democratic Woman Lieutenant Governor

Election results tracked by the Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, show a number of landmarks for women. New Jersey will have a new woman lieutenant governor. Virginia will seat a record number of women in its legislature, led by challengers who defeated incumbents, and the Old Dominion tallied a number of firsts among new members of its House of Delegates. New Jersey's legislature will see a slight drop in the number of women unless a woman is appointed to fill a currently vacant seat.

Important landmarks achieved on Election Day:

- New Virginia lawmakers will include the first woman elected as openly transgender, the first Latinas, and the first Asian American woman in the House of Delegates.
- New Jersey's new lieutenant governor will be a Black woman, the first elected to statewide office in the Garden State. Sheila Oliver will also be the nation's first Black Democratic woman lieutenant governor.
- Charlotte, NC elected its first Black woman mayor, and Seattle elected its first woman mayor in almost a century, who will be the city's first open lesbian mayor.
- Atlanta's mayoral race was decided in a run-off between two women, with Keisha Lance Bottoms winning in December

CAWP director Debbie Walsh noted, "Virginia women ran in record numbers this year, and their victories are one big story of this election. Running as challengers, they defied conventional wisdom and predictions to score some surprising wins." Walsh added that the gains were largely among Democrats; among the women who ran in Virginia, 43 were Democrats, and only 9 were Republicans.

Full election results are posted [on CAWP's website](#).

VIRGINIA RESULTS

Women won 28 seats in the Virginia House of Delegates, a new record high. Notably, there were 30 women (27D, 3R) who ran as challengers, and nine of them, all Democrats, won; this success rate far outpaces expectations, since incumbents usually win 90 percent or more of their races. When the new legislature is sworn in, including Senate holdovers who were not up for election this year, Virginia will rank 22nd among the 50 states for the proportion of women in its legislature, a sizable leap from its previous rank of 38th. New delegates will include several firsts for the House of Delegates: Danica Roem (D), the first woman openly elected as transgender; Haya Ayala (D) and Elizabeth Guzman (D), the first Latinas; and Kathy Tran (D), the first Asian American woman.

| VA DELEGATES | Candidates | | | Winners | | |
|--------------|------------|---|-------|---------|---|-------|
| | D | R | Total | D | R | Total |
| Incumbent | 12 | 4 | 16 | 12 | 4 | 16 |
| Challenger | 27 | 3 | 30 | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| Open Seat | 4 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 43 | 9 | 52 | 23 | 5 | 28 |

Virginia candidates for lieutenant governor run independently of gubernatorial candidates. The Republican lieutenant governor candidate, State Senator Jill Vogel, lost her bid. The only other statewide office on the ballot in the Old Dominion was attorney general, and no women sought that office.

NEW JERSEY RESULTS

In New Jersey, Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver was elected lieutenant governor as the running mate of Democrat Phil Murphy. Oliver, who was speaker of the Assembly for two terms, is New Jersey's second lieutenant governor and the second woman to hold the position, which was created in 2009. She is also the first person of color elected to a statewide executive position in New Jersey and only the fourth Black woman lieutenant governor in the nation; the other three have been Republicans. Prior to Oliver, only 11 Black women have ever been elected to statewide elective executive offices.

Oliver succeeds Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno, who was the losing Republican gubernatorial candidate.

Elections were held for both houses of the New Jersey legislature for the first time since 2013, with women winning 36 (28D, 8R) of the available 120 seats in the legislature. The winners include 10 women in the Senate (8D, 2R) and 26 in the Assembly (20 D, 6R). Since Oliver ran simultaneously for the Assembly and for lieutenant governor, the number of women serving in the Assembly will be 35 unless Oliver's seat is filled by a woman; a replacement will be selected by the Democratic Party, since the seat was won by a Democrat.

When the new legislature is sworn in, New Jersey will rank 16th among the 50 states for the proportion of women in its legislature, a drop from the current rank of 12th. That rank may change when Oliver's seat is filled.

| NJ SENATE | Candidates | | | Winners | | |
|------------|------------|---|-------|---------|---|-------|
| | D | R | Total | D | R | Total |
| Incumbent | 8 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Challenger | 8 | 6 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Open Seat | - | - | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 16 | 9 | 25 | 8 | 2 | 10 |

| NJ ASSEMBLY | Candidates | | | Winners | | |
|-------------|------------|----|-------|---------|---|-------|
| | D | R | Total | D | R | Total |
| Incumbent | 17 | 5 | 22 | 17 | 5 | 22 |
| Challenger | 7 | 11 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Open Seat | 7 | 5 | 12 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 31 | 21 | 52 | 20 | 6 | 26 |

BIG CITY MAYORS

Women were candidates for mayor in 11 of the nation's 100 largest cities where mayoral races were held on November 7. Vi Lyles, elected in Charlotte, NC, will be that city's first Black woman mayor, and Jenny Durkan will be Seattle's first woman mayor since the 1920s and the first open lesbian mayor of that city. Incumbent Mayor Nancy Vaughan was re-elected in Greensboro, NC, as was Mayor Nancy McFarlane in Raleigh, NC, but Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson lost her bid for re-election in Toledo, OH. In addition, New Orleans elected LaToya Cantrell, a Black woman, as its first woman mayor on November 18. Atlanta's contest went to a December run-off between two women, and Keisha Lance Bottoms defeated Mary Norwood. Mayor Betsy Hodges was defeated in her re-election bid in Minneapolis, MN; women challengers lost to incumbents in New York City and Cincinnati, OH; and women lost open seat bids in Miami, FL and St. Paul, MN.

SPECIAL CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION

Dr. Kathryn (Kathie) Allen (D) ran in a special election in Utah for a vacant congressional seat. She lost that race.

About CAWP

The [Center for American Women and Politics \(CAWP\)](#), a unit of the [Eagleton Institute of Politics](#) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 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 under-representation 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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