



CAWP

Election Watch

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RECORD NUMBERS OF WOMEN TO SERVE IN SENATE AND HOUSE

Record numbers of women have won races for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. At the statewide level, in contrast, the number of women serving is expected to drop, although election results are not yet complete.

“More women than ever will serve in both houses of Congress, even though the numbers of candidates were not all-time highs,” observed CAWP director Debbie Walsh. “Many women were nominated for winnable seats, so more women won. Along with incumbents seeking re-election, we saw women contending for competitive open seats and challenging vulnerable incumbents. This year women were positioned for success, not merely offered up by parties as ‘sacrificial lambs.’ ”

U.S. Senate

When the 111th Congress convenes in January, 2009, 17 women (13D, 4R) will serve in the U.S. Senate, besting the previous record of 16 set in the 110th Congress. Four women (3D, 1R) won Senate elections this year, including 2 incumbents and 2 challengers. Newcomers Kay Hagan (D-NC) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) will join incumbents Susan Collins (R-ME) and Mary Landrieu (D-LA), who were re-elected. Incumbent Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) lost her race to Hagan. Thirteen incumbent women did not face re-election.

U.S. House of Representatives

A total of 75 women (58D, 17R) will serve in the 111th Congress, setting a new all-time high. Eleven new women (9D, 2R) will join the 64 incumbents (49D, 15R) who were re-elected, topping the previous record of 71 women set in the 110th Congress (2007-08). The newcomers include 5 challengers (4D, 1R) who defeated incumbents and 6 winners of open seats (5D, 1R). Among the congresswomen will be 12 (12D) African-Americans, 7 (6D, 1R) Latinas, and 2 (2D) Asian-Americans.

The new women in the U.S. House are: Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ); Betsy Markey (D-CO); Suzanne Kosmas (D-FL); Debbie Halvorson (D-IL); Lynn Jenkins (R-KS); Chellie Pingree (D-ME); Dina Titus (D-NV); Marcia Fudge (D-OH); Mary Jo Kilroy (D-OH); Kathy Dahlkemper (D-PA); Cynthia Lummis (R-WY).

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Three incumbent women lost their seats. They are: Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO), Nancy Boyda (D-KS), and Thelma Drake (R-VA). Both Musgrave and Boyda were defeated by women.

In addition, three non-voting delegates from Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Washington, DC were re-elected.

Governors and Other Statewide Elected Executives

Beverly Perdue (D-NC) was the only new woman governor elected in 2008. She joins Christine Gregoire (D-WA), who was re-elected, as the only women to win gubernatorial races. With six incumbent women governors not facing election, the total number of women who will serve as governors in 2009 is 8 (5D, 3R), matching the number and party affiliations of the current women governors.

The only incumbent lieutenant governor up for re-election (Becky Skillman, R-IN) won her race, but no other women won races for lieutenant governor. She will join 8 holdovers (7D, 1R) who did not face election for a total of 9 lieutenant governors, one fewer than in 2008.

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.