

October 28, 2021
For Immediate Release

Contact: Daniel De Simone
ddesimone@eagleton.rutgers.edu
760.703.0948

Advisory: Women in the 2021 Elections

Data from the Center for American Women and Politics

Next week, voters will go to the polls for state government elections in New Jersey and Virginia, as well as special congressional elections in Florida and Ohio. The [Center for American Women and Politics](#) (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University, presents data on women in these electoral contests, as well as potential historic breakthroughs that may result from election 2021.

New Jersey

- Sheila Oliver (D), the current lieutenant governor, and former state Senator Diane Allen (R) are competing in the NJ lieutenant governor's race. This position has been held by a woman since its inception in 2010.
- A record 84 (54D, 30R) women are running in the general election for seats in the New Jersey Legislature. The previous record was 77, set in 2017.
 - 19 (13D, 6R) women are running for New Jersey Senate seats. This is not a record; that record was set in 2017 at 25.
 - A record 65 (41D, 24R) women are running for New Jersey General Assembly seats. The previous record was 60, set in 2019.
- No Asian or Pacific Islander (API) woman has ever been elected to the New Jersey Legislature. At least six API women are running this year to become the first. More than 10% of the state identifies as Asian or Pacific Islander. These candidates include:
 - Sadaf Jaffer (D-16)
 - Anjali Mehrotra (D-21)
 - Shama A. Haider (D-37)
 - Ellen J. Park (D-37)
 - Bina Shah (R-14)
 - Raya Arbiol (D-12)
- Records to beat:
 - Record number of women serving in the New Jersey Legislature is 38, first set in 2019.
 - Record number of women serving in the New Jersey Senate is 12, first set in 2017.
 - The record number of women winners in New Jersey Senate general elections is 11, first set in 2011.
 - Record number of women serving in the New Jersey General Assembly is 28, first set in 2009.
 - The record number of women winners in New Jersey General Assembly general elections is 26, first set in 2009.
- Current numbers:

- 37 women serve in the New Jersey State Legislature, comprising 30.8% of members.
- In the Senate, women hold 11 seats, or 27.5% of the total number of senators.
- In the Assembly, women hold 26 seats, or 32.5% of the total.
- New Jersey ranks 25th among the 50 states in [CAWP's state rankings](#) of women's representation in state legislatures.

Virginia

- Hala Ayala (D) and Winsome Sears (R) are competing in the general election to be Virginia's lieutenant governor. Either one would become the first woman of color elected statewide in Virginia as well as the first woman and first woman of color elected to the lieutenant governorship. Ayala identifies as Black, Latina, Lebanese, and white, while Winsome Sears identifies as Black.
- The Virginia Senate does not have elections this year.
- A record 72 (49D, 23R) women are running in the general election for seats in the Virginia House of Delegates this year. The previous record was 62, set in 2019.
- The overall record for women candidates in general election contests for the Virginia General Assembly (the combined upper and lower chambers of its legislature) is 85, set in 2019 when both chambers were up for election.
- Records to beat:
 - The record, and current, number of women serving in the Virginia General Assembly is 42, set in 2021. Currently, 11 women serve in the Virginia Senate, meaning that at least 32 women must win House of Delegates races in order for this overall record to be broken.
 - Record number of women serving in the Virginia House of Delegates is 31, set in 2021.
- Current numbers:
 - 42 women serve in the Virginia General Assembly, comprising 30.0% of members.
 - In the Senate, women hold 11 seats, or 27.5% of the total number of senators.
 - In the House of Delegates, women hold 31 seats, or 31.0% of the total.
 - Virginia ranks 28th among the 50 states in [CAWP's state rankings](#) of women's representation in state legislatures.

Florida Special Primary Election

- Three women – Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, Barbara Sharief, and Priscilla Taylor – are running in next week's special Democratic primary for Florida's 20th congressional district. All three women identify as Black. The general election for this heavily-Democratic district will be held on January 11, 2022.

Ohio Special Elections

- Two women, Shontel Brown (D) and Laverne Gore (R), are running in the special election for Ohio's 11th congressional district. This seat was vacated by Marcia Fudge when she left Congress to join the Biden Cabinet as secretary of Housing and Urban Development; the district is solidly Democratic. Both of these candidates identify as Black.
 - This race is all but assured to increase the number of women, the number of Black women, and the number of women of color serving in the U.S. Congress and House.

Currently, 143 (104D, 39R) women serve in the Congress, 119 (88D, 31R) of whom serve in the House; 23 Black women serve in Congress, all of whom serve in the House and none of whom are Republicans; and 49 (44D, 5R) women of color serve in Congress, 46 (41D, 5R) of whom serve in the House.

- One woman, Allison Russo (D), is running in the special election for Ohio's 15th congressional district. The district leans Republican.

For full information on the women running in 2021, visit [CAWP's Election Watch](#).

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 women's political participation in the United States. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about the role of women in American politics, enhance women's influence in public life, and expand the diversity of women in politics and government. CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's underrepresentation in political leadership with effective, intersectional, and imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's five decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.