

WOMEN IN STATE LEGISLATURES 2007

In 2007, 1,732, or 23.5% of the 7,382 state legislators in the United States are women. Women currently hold 422, or 21.4%, of the 1,971 state senate seats and 1,310, or 24.2%, of the 5,411 state house or assembly seats. Since 1971, the number of women serving in state legislatures has more than quintupled.

Year	Women Legislators	% of Total Legislators	Year	Women Legislators	% of Total Legislators	Year	Women Legislators	% of Total Legislators
1971	344	4.5	1987	1,170	15.7	2000	1,670	22.5
1973	424	5.6	1989	1,270	17.0	2001	1,666	22.4
1975	604	8.0	1991	1,368	18.3	2002	1,682	22.7
1977	688	9.1	1993	1,524	20.5	2003	1,654	22.4
1979	770	10.3	1995	1,532	20.6	2004	1,659	22.5
1981	908	12.1	1997	1,605	21.6	2005	1,674	22.7
1983	991	13.3	1998	1,617	21.8	2006	1,681	22.8
1985	1,103	14.8	1999	1,664	22.4	2007	1,732	23.5

The party breakdown for women serving in state legislatures in 2007 is:

	Total Legislators		State Senators		State Reps.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Democrats	1,186	68.5	292	69.2	894	68.2
Republicans	532	30.7	121	28.7	411	31.4
Nonpartisans*	9	0.5	9	2.1	---	---
Progressives	3	0.2	---	---	3	0.2
Independents	2	0.1	---	---	2	0.1
Total	1,732	100.0	422	100.0	1,310	99.9

The states with the highest percentages of women state legislators are:

State	% Women	State	% Women
Vermont	37.8	Arizona	33.3
New Hampshire	35.6	Hawaii	32.9
Minnesota	34.8	Maryland	31.9
Colorado	34.0	Maine	31.2
Washington	34.0	Oregon	31.1

The states with the lowest percentages of women state legislators are:

State	% Women	State	% Women
South Carolina	8.8	Pennsylvania	14.6
Kentucky	11.6	Ohio	15.9
Oklahoma	12.8	Tennessee	16.7
Alabama	12.9	South Dakota	17.1
Mississippi	13.8	Virginia	17.1
West Virginia	14.2		

Women in State Legislative Leadership

Five women serve as presidents of senates: Lyda Green (R-AK), Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI), Beth Edmonds (D-ME), Therese Murray (D-MA), and Sylvia Larsen (D-NH). Four women serve as speakers of state houses: Margaret Anderson Kelliher (D-MN), Barbara Buckley (D-NV), Terie Norelli (D-NH), and Gaye Symington (D-VT).

Women of Color in State Legislatures

Of the 1,732 women legislators serving nationwide, 348 or 20.1% are women of color. They include 94 senators and 254 representatives; 323 are Democrats and 25 are Republicans. Women of color constitute 4.7% of the total 7,382 state legislators.

The First Women Legislators

In 1894, the first women state legislators were elected to serve in the United States. Three Republican women were elected to the Colorado House of Representatives: Clara Cressingham; Carrie C. Holly; Frances Klock. The first woman state senator, Democrat Martha Hughes Cannon, was elected to the Utah State Senate in 1896.[†]

* In Nebraska, where the legislature is unicameral, legislators are elected on a nonpartisan basis.

† Source: Utah Governor's Commission for Women.

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