

## The Status of Women in Utah Politics: A 2017 Update

In 2014, the *Utah Women & Leadership Project* (UWLP) released four research and policy briefs on the status of women in Utah politics, education, nonprofits, and business. These were initially prompted by the *Center for American Progress* report titled “The State of Women in America: A 50-State Analysis of How Women Are Faring Across the Nation”<sup>1</sup> that ranked Utah last in terms of women being in positions of decision making and leadership. Soon after, a series of other national reports also gave Utah poor rankings,<sup>2</sup> and most used the following four criteria: 1) gender wage gap, 2) educational attainment, 3) women in management roles, and 4) women serving in state legislatures. Research released through the *Utah Women & Education Initiative* and the *Utah Women & Leadership Project* has also confirmed that Utah is below the national average in these areas.

It has been three years since the release of the first set of UWLP status briefs. This report updates the 2014 brief titled “*The Status of Women in Utah Politics*.” Tracking progress through updated status reports is an important way to help decision makers and other influencers clarify what is working and to determine and refine best steps moving forward. For this brief, we have removed the section on voter participation as those statistics appear in the 2016 Utah Women Stats research snapshot titled “*Voting and Civic Engagement Among Utah Women*.” We have added new sections on elected county positions, city councils, and boards of education. This update provides both Utah and national data for the following seven areas: Congress, statewide executive offices, state legislatures, counties, mayors, city councils, and boards of education. The brief concludes with a discussion focused on understanding why more women do not run for public office and offers suggestions on how Utah can *move the needle* in future years.

### Congress

#### National

The most current 2017 data show that, at the national level, women hold 19.4% of seats (104 of 535) in the 115<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress (House and Senate),<sup>3</sup> which is an increase of 0.9% from the 113<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress.<sup>4</sup> With 21% of U.S. Senate seats held by women, the total number of women serving in the chamber is at a record high (21 of 100).<sup>5</sup> Of the 21 female Senators, only five are Republican. In addition, 19.1% (83 of 435) of the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives—up from 79 seats reported in our 2014 brief—are now held by women, with 74.7% of them being Democrat (62 D, 21 R).<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that of the 83 women who are serving in

the House in 2017, two defeated incumbents in their district, eight won open seats, and 73 were re-elected as incumbents.<sup>7</sup>

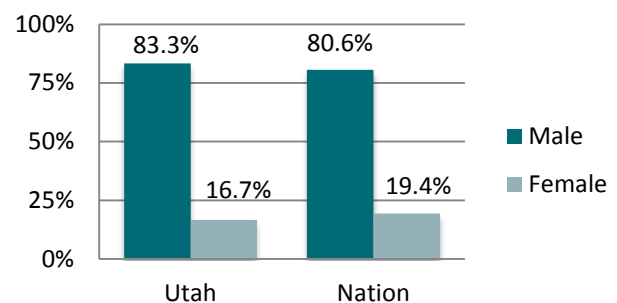
In the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, 37 of the 50 states have at least one woman serving in Congress, leaving 13 states with no women serving in their congressional delegation (there were 15 such states in 2014).<sup>8</sup> Also, three female delegates represent the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam in the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>9</sup> The three states of New Hampshire, Washington, and California continue to have both of their Senate seats filled by women.<sup>10</sup> New Hampshire is the only state that has all of its national delegation seats held by women (four).<sup>11</sup> The number of states that still have yet to elect a woman to serve in Congress is down to two, Vermont and Mississippi; Delaware recently dropped from the list, electing its first female representative in 2016. In addition, the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress has the highest count of women of color in U.S. history, with 31 Democrats and three Republicans, a total of 34 seats.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Washington elected the first Indian American Woman to the Congress in 2016.

Historically, the first woman in the House, Jeanette Rankin, a Montana Republican, was elected in 1917. However, it was not until 1978 that a woman, Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-KS), was elected to the Senate without having previously filled an unexpired term.<sup>13</sup> Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House in 2007 (D-CA).

#### Utah

Utah has six seats in its national delegation (two senators and four representatives). Most recently, Congresswoman Mia Love was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014, taking office in 2015, which puts Utah at 16.7% (1 of 6) of its congressional delegation as female; Love was re-elected in 2016. Congresswoman Love was the first Utah woman elected to Congress since 1995. Figure 1 compares Utah with the national average in terms of congressional seats by gender.

**Figure 1: U.S. Congress by Gender (Utah vs. Nation)**



Prior to Congresswoman Love’s victory, only three Utah women had served in Congress since its statehood: Rep. Reva Z. Beck Bosone (1949–1953), Rep. Karen Shepherd (1993–1995), and Rep. Enid Greene Waldholtz (1995–1997).<sup>14</sup> Two of the three served only one two-year term. Utah has never elected a woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, but, in electing a woman to its congressional delegation, the state has made some progress since our initial brief was published.

## Statewide Executive Offices

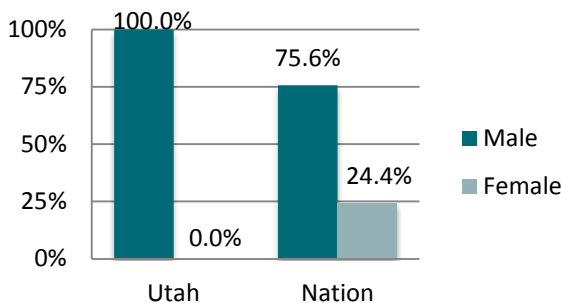
### National

At the national level, 2017 data show that women now hold 24.4% (76 of 312) of the statewide executive offices (SEO) (33 D, 43 R), picking up additional seats since our last brief.<sup>15</sup> The six most often discussed SEOs include the positions of governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, and state auditor. As of the close of 2016, 37 women (22 D, 15 R) had served as governors in 27 states.<sup>16</sup> Of these female governors, 25 were elected in their own right, three replaced their husbands, and nine became governor by constitutional succession, with three of them subsequently winning a full term. The largest number of women serving as governors at the same time is nine, which occurred in 2004 and again in 2007.<sup>17</sup> In 2017, five states have female governors (Oregon, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Rhode Island), two Democrats and three Republicans,<sup>18</sup> while 14 states have females serving as lieutenant governors (5 D, 9 R).<sup>19</sup> In 2016, eight of the 50 (16%) state attorney general seats in the U.S. were held by women (5 D, 3 R). Finally, 13 (26%) secretary of state seats, eight (16%) state treasurer seats, and nine (18%) state auditor seats in the country were held by women.<sup>20</sup> All of these numbers reflect increases from the national findings reported in our 2014 brief.

### Utah

There are currently no women serving in Utah SEO.<sup>21</sup> Of the statewide offices up for election in 2016 (governor/lieutenant governor, attorney general, state auditor, and state treasurer), no party (major or third) nominated a female candidate.<sup>22</sup> Figure 2 compares Utah with the national average in terms of SEO by gender.

**Figure 2: Statewide Executive Office Seats by Gender (Utah vs. Nation)**



Throughout its history, Utah has never elected a woman to serve as governor. However, Utah has had one female governor and lieutenant governor. Olene Walker served as lieutenant governor to Mike Leavitt from 1993–2003, until he was nominated by the Bush Administration to serve as the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Walker was then appointed as governor to serve until the end of Leavitt’s term from 2003–2005. She sought re-election but did not win the Republican nomination at convention. The only other woman to serve in a Utah statewide officer role was Jan Graham (D), who was attorney general from 1993–2001.<sup>23</sup>

## State Legislatures

### National

According to the *Center for American Women and Politics* (CAWP) at Rutgers, 1,828 women are serving in state legislatures in 2017 (24.8%).<sup>24</sup> According to CAWP, a total of 1,526 women have been elected this year (911 D, 598 R, three independents, four Progressives, one Working Families Party member, and nine elected in non-partisan contests). An additional 302 women are holdovers who were not up for election in 2016 (192 D, 105 R, one independent, four non-partisans).<sup>25</sup> Overall, the percentage of women in state legislatures has increased through the years as follows:

- 1971: 4.5%
- 1981: 12.1%
- 1991: 18.3%
- 2001: 22.4%
- 2011: 23.7%
- 2013: 24.2%
- 2015: 24.3 %<sup>26</sup>
- 2017: 24.8%<sup>27</sup>

In 2016, Colorado and Vermont set the national highs for women in their legislatures (42.0% and 41.1%, respectively), followed by Arizona (35.6%), Washington (34%), Minnesota (33.3%), Illinois (32.8%), Maryland (31.9%), Nevada (31.7%), Montana (31.3%), and Oregon (31.1%). Utah was among ten states with the lowest percentages, which are ranked as follows: Mississippi (13.2%), Wyoming (13.3%), South Carolina and Oklahoma (14.1%), Alabama (14.3%), West Virginia (14.9%), Louisiana (15.3%), Utah (15.4%), Kentucky (15.9%), and Tennessee (16.7%).<sup>28</sup>

It is also interesting to note that, nationally, Democrats make up 60% of the total women elected in legislatures, with elected Republican women making up 39% and the remaining 1% of seats being held by independents, non-partisans, and other parties. According to one CAWP report,<sup>29</sup> the numbers of Democratic women legislators has actually continued to increase, while the numbers of female Republican legislators declined between 1981 and 2009.

*Utah*

In 2016, Utah was ranked 43rd in the nation in terms of women serving in the state legislature;<sup>30</sup> that ranking will likely improve in the 2017 legislature, as Utah had a 3.8% increase in female representation in that body compared to the prior year. In 2017, 21% of the Utah Senators, or six of 29 (3 D, 3 R), and 18.7% of the House of Representatives, or 14 of 75 (9 D, 5 R), are female.<sup>31</sup> This means that since 2014 Utah women have gained one additional seat in the Senate and two more seats in the House of Representatives. Overall, 19.2% (20 of 104) of Utah legislators are women. Figure 3 compares Utah with the national average in terms of Utah state legislative seats by gender.

**Figure 3: State Legislative Seats by Gender (Utah vs. Nation)**

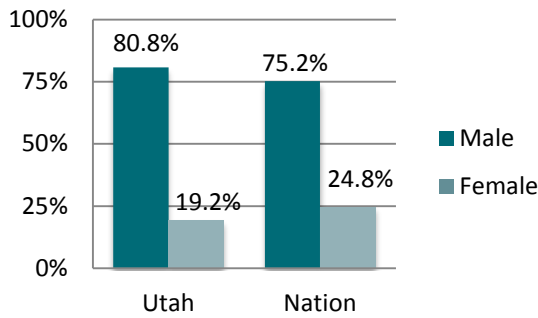


Table 1 illustrates the Utah state legislature numbers and percentages since 1971 by party and gender. It is interesting to note that in 1971, 8.2% of Utah state legislators were women, while at the national level only 4.5% of seats were held by women. By 1981 Utah had slipped below the national average. In Utah, data also show that female legislators are more likely to be Democrat than Republican.

**Table 1: Female Utah State Legislators<sup>32</sup>**

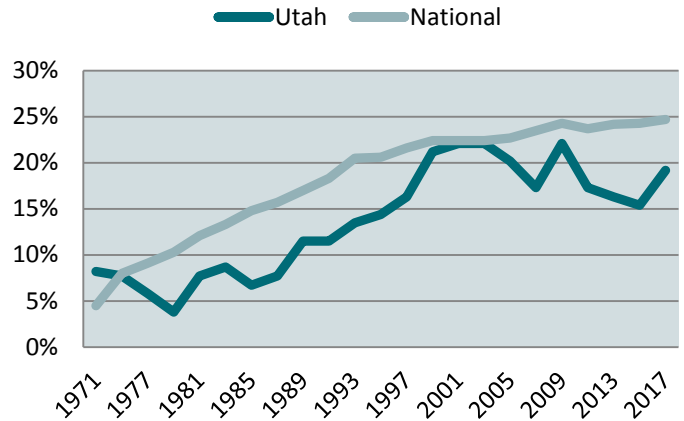
Year	Democrat	Republican	Total	%	Rank
1971	7	1	8	8.2	-
1981	4	4	8	7.7	36
1991	6	6	12	11.5	40
2001	12	11	23	22.1	26
2011	12	6	18	17.3	43
2013	11	6	17	16.3	46
2015	10	6	16	15.4	44
2017	12	8	20	19.2	-

The total number of women serving in Utah’s state legislature had actually been decreasing since 2009 until this year. The percentage of women serving in the legislature increased by 3.8% between the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions (see Figure 4 for a comparison of this national versus Utah trend).

In our 2014 brief, six states had women serving as Speakers of their House of Representatives, with Utah’s own late Becky Lockhart accounting for one of them.<sup>33</sup> In 2016, that number had decreased to four.<sup>34</sup> In terms of 2017 legislative leadership in Utah, of the eight leadership positions in the

House of Representatives, two are held by women, both Democrats, Minority Assistant Whip Angela Romero and Minority Caucus Manager Sandra Hollins.<sup>35</sup> Like the House, the Senate has eight leadership positions, three of which are held by women, also all Democrats, Minority Whip Karen Mayne, Assistant Minority Whip Luz Escamilla, and Minority Caucus Manager Jani Iwamota.<sup>36</sup> None of the legislature’s Majority (Republican) leadership positions are held by women.

**Figure 4: Female State Legislature Trends**



**Counties**

*Nation*

Despite often being overlooked, county government plays an important role in the lives of individuals and the governing of counties within the state. The National Associations of Counties (NACo) points out that county leadership does in fact matter as counties deal heavily with transportation and infrastructure, community health, criminal justice, and public safety.<sup>37</sup> In addition, they deal with important community issues such as agriculture, workforce development, energy, land use, and education.<sup>38</sup> Working with NACo’s research team, we were able to collect data from the last gender study they conducted of county elected officials in 2015. According to NACo, women made up roughly 12.7% of county boards and just 7.8% of county executives. Interestingly, women held 38.2% of elected county row officer seats (e.g., clerk, auditor, treasurer, recorder, assessor, sheriff, controller, district attorney, register of wills, coroner). Overall, women make up 24.8% of elected county positions nationally.<sup>39</sup>

*Utah*

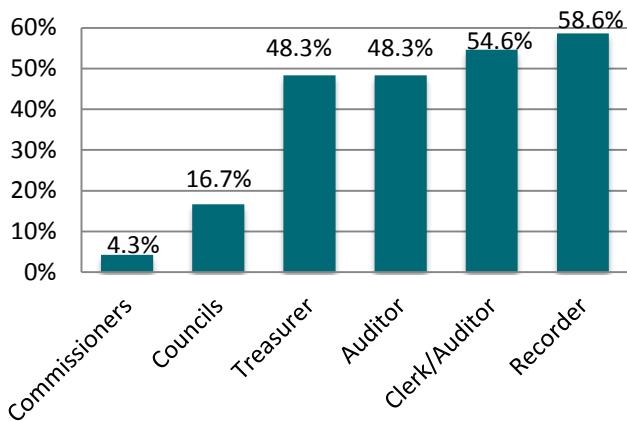
For Utah, we collected 2016 county data from links listed on the Utah Association of Counties website. We then compared the 2016 database with the lieutenant governor’s online election results site to determine the number of county officials elected in 2016. These results were then verified through contacting county clerks’ offices. Of the 29 counties in the Utah, 23 have elected commissioners, while just six have elected county councils (Cache, Grand, Morgan, Salt Lake, Summit, and Wasatch). In addition, each county elects a clerk/auditor, treasurer, recorder, and assessor. In 2017, of the 69 county commissioners in Utah, 66 (95.7%) of them are

men and three (4.3%) are women, who serve in the counties of Beaver, San Juan, and Sanpete. Of the six county councils with a total of 42 seats, 35 (83.3%) council members are men, while seven (16.7%) are women. It is also interesting to note that of the 42 elected county council positions, eight of them are “at-large” positions, representing the entire county; seven (87.5%) of these are currently held by men, and just one (12.5%) is held by a woman (Salt Lake County).

Additional elected county positions for 2017 revealed that, of the 33 county clerk/auditor seats, 18 (54.5%) are held by women, and 15 (45.5%) by men. There are more than 29 positions, as some counties split the position of clerk and auditor, while most combine the two into one position. The position of county treasurer is split fairly evenly, with 48.3% of seats held by women and 51.7% held by men. Women hold 16 of 29 (55.2%) county recorder seats. The position of county auditor is held by 15 men (51.7%) and 14 women (48.3%). We were able to collect county data from both 2016 and 2017 and review the election results to see how many seats were gained and lost. Five seats held by women in 2016 were filled by men in 2017.

Overall, the legislative bodies of county commissions and councils in Utah are overwhelmingly held by men (91%), while 52.5% of the predominately full-time elected positions of clerk/auditor, treasurer, recorder, and assessor are held by women. See Figure 5 for a summary of county offices held by Utah women in 2017.

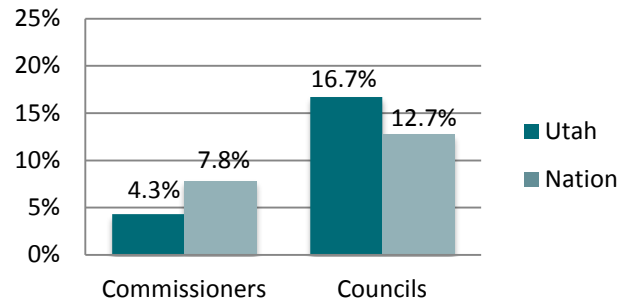
**Figure 5: County Seats Held by Utah Women**



Compared with the 2015 national data, it may appear that Utah is slightly ahead of the national trend, with 31.2% of all county elected official positions held by women, compared to the nation at 27%. However, it is important to note that our data did not include many of the male-dominated positions (e.g., sheriff, attorney), and that most counties in Utah do not have the more male-dominated county row officer seats that are often included in counties across the U.S. Hence, it is difficult to compare Utah to nation accurately.

In 2017, of the 29 counties, only three have exclusively male county elected officials from top to bottom (Davis, Utah, Washington). Twenty-two of the 29 counties have two or more females serving in county elected positions. Yet, of the 23 counties that elect commissioners, just three counties have a female commissioner, and all represent rural areas. Of the six county councils, five have at least one female county council member (Cache, Grand, Morgan, Salt Lake, and Summit), while the Wasatch County Council is all male.

**Figure 6: County Seats Held by Women (Utah vs. Nation)**



## Mayors

### Nation

According to the *National Foundation for Women Legislators*,<sup>40</sup> the number of women serving as mayors, on city councils, and as county commissioners is slightly on the rise. In 2016, the percentage of female mayors of cities with a population of at least 30,000 (1,391) increased to 18.8%, a 1.2% increase since 2014.<sup>41</sup> Three Utah mayors were included on this list: Paula Larsen (Kearns), JoAnn B. Seghini (Midvale), and Jackie Biskupski (Salt Lake City).<sup>42</sup> Among the 100 largest cities in the U.S., 20 had women mayors (20%) in 2016, which is a slight increase from what we listed in our 2014 report.<sup>43</sup> It appears that 52 (21.8%) of the 238 U.S. cities with a population over 100,000 had women mayors in 2016.<sup>44</sup>

### Utah

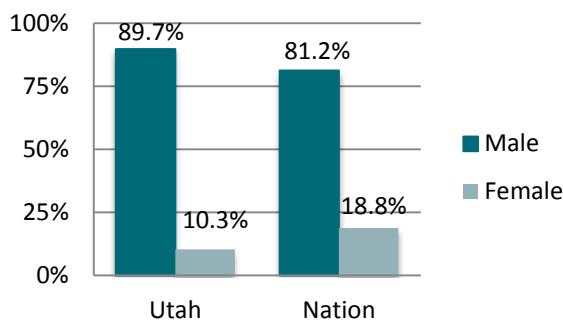
The *Utah League of Cities and Towns* lists 242 municipalities in the state. All but about 30 had websites with mayor information, and calls were made or emails sent to the remaining city or town offices. Of the 242 municipalities studied, currently 22 have mayors who are women (9.1%), reflecting an increase from the 7% we reported in 2014. Of those 22 mayors, three represent cities with populations of 30,000 or more; in Utah, 29 cities have populations of that size, which means that 10.3% of mayors of those cities are women. Most female mayors in Utah serve cities with populations of 10,000 or less. See Table 2 with details regarding female mayors by municipality population.

**Table 2: Women Mayors in Utah by Municipality Population**

Municipality Population	No. of Female Mayors	Total No. of Mayors	% of Female Mayors
100,000+	1	4	25%
30,000–99,999	2	25	8%
20,000–29,999	1	8	12.5%
10,000–19,999	1	21	4.8%
5,000–9,999	3	27	11.1%
Less than 5,000	14	157	8.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

Available national data track the gender of mayors only in cities with populations of 30,000 or more, so Figure 7 represents a national average comparison with Utah in terms of mayoral seats in municipalities with that populace.

**Figure 7: Mayor Seats by Gender with Populations of 30,000 or More (Utah vs. Nation)**



## City Councils

### Nation

Unfortunately, the National League of Cities (NLC) no longer tracks gender data and has not for quite some time. However, we were able to find data on the gender balance of city councils of the 15 largest cities in the country for 2016. According to *Next City*, men were in the majority of all councils studied, “though by a relatively small margin in D.C. (where the council is 46 percent female) and in San Diego, Pittsburgh and Detroit (all 44 percent).”<sup>45</sup> Los Angeles had the worst gender imbalance by far with only 7% female members, with San Jose as the second worst at 18% female membership. This article noted that the loss or gain of one female member makes a big difference in percentage. The authors found that the overall share of women city council members in these specific cities declined from 33% in 2010 to 30% in 2016.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of more national historical data on city councils, the NLC reported that representation of women on U.S. city councils increased between 1989 and 2001. They found that the “proportion of women grew from 21 to 25 percent in small cities, 25 to 36 percent in medium-sized cities, and 33 to 36 percent in large cities.”<sup>47</sup> However, between 1979 and

1989, there was actually a drop in gender diversity on city councils from 32% to 26%.

### Utah

For Utah, we collected data from every municipality in the state that had a council (N=241). We gathered information from websites, and then emails and calls were made to obtain the data that was not available online. In Utah, 24.1% of city/town council seats were held by women in 2016 (see Table 3 for council member numbers and percentages by municipality population). The four largest cities in Utah had the fewest women represented (11.5%), while all other population ranges had between 21.2% and 27.5% females serving in elected positions.

**Table 3: Women Council Members in Utah by Municipality Population**

Municipality Population	No. of Females	Total No. of Seats	% of Females
100,000+	3	26	11.5%
30,000–99,999	34	126	27.0%
20,000–29,999	11	40	27.5%
10,000–19,999	28	102	27.5%
5,000–9,999	28	132	21.2%
Less than 5,000	164	685	23.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>1111</b>	<b>24.1%</b>

Our analysis showed that there are 58 councils with no women; yet, there were no clear patterns in terms of population size. One of those councils is West Jordan, which is one of the four largest cities in Utah (hence 25% of these municipalities had no women), while four of 25 cities with populations of 30,000–99,999 had no women (16% of them). Two of eight cities (25%) with populations of 20,000–29,999, four of 21 (19%) cities with populations of 10,000–19,999, nine of 27 (33.3%) with populations from 5,000–9,000, and 38 of 156 (24.4%) with less than 5,000 people had councils with no women. It appears that 112 councils in Utah had one woman serving in 2016, while 58 had two women, 12 had three, and only one—Marysville—had all four seats held by women. Overall, 24.1% of all council members in Utah municipalities are female, which puts Utah below the national average of data gathered historically in 1979 (32%), 1989 (26%), 2001 (25–36%), and 2016 (30–33%).

Only one town or city in Utah’s history has had an all-female mayor and city council. According to *Southern Utah News*, “Kanab made history in 1912, when its newly-elected mayor and city council took the oath of office making it the first time in the history of the United States where the town board and mayor were entirely comprised of women.”<sup>48</sup>

## Boards of Education

### Nation

In January 2014, the *National Association of State Boards of Education* provided a list of each state’s board of education

membership by gender.<sup>49</sup> It appears that, in 2014, 48.6% of state board members across the country were female. The states with the highest percentages of females at that time were Colorado (85%), South Dakota (78%), Alabama and Nebraska (75%), and Louisiana (72%). The states with the lowest percentages of females on boards of education were Missouri (16.7%), Mississippi (22.2%), and Oklahoma and West Virginia (25%).

Only two sources of national data have reported the gender of school district board members historically. First, a 2002 report<sup>50</sup> stated that 38.9% of board seats nationally were held by women at that time, with larger districts having higher percentages than smaller districts. However, a more recent 2010 National School Boards Association study<sup>51</sup> reported that 44% of school district board seats across the U.S. are now held by women. Although a more recent report has not been published, this number has most likely increased since 2010. This study also found that male board members dominated in small districts, where men constituted nearly two-thirds of board members, but they made up just under half in large- and medium-sized districts.

### Utah

In Utah, eight of 15 (53.3%) State Board of Education elected seats in 2016 were held by women; however, in 2017 that number moved to 11 of 15 (73.3%). This is a significant increase from past years and puts Utah as one of the highest states nationally for the percentage of women on a state school board. Currently the Utah State Charter School Board of Education has three of seven (42.9%) seats held by women, but these positions are appointed, not elected.

Utah has 41 school districts throughout the state, and each district has an elected board of education, typically with either five or seven seats. We collected data about these boards via websites, emails, calls, and then followed up by checking the lieutenant governor's election results website after the 2016 elections.<sup>52</sup>

The 2016 data reflect that, of the 234 total district board of education elected seats in Utah, women held 112 (47.9%). For 2017, the number decreased, but only by one (N=111). Hence, 47.4% of the 234 elected school district board positions are currently held by women. The Utah school district school boards that have the highest percentages of women include the following: Logan City (100%), Salt Lake City (85.7%), Emery (80%), Grand (80%), Murray (80%), Davis (71.4%), and Granite (71.4%). Fourteen other districts also had more than 50% female representation, while an additional 10 hovered around 40%. Two districts were at 28%, three at 20%, and the

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following five districts currently have no women serving: Duchesne, Millard, Morgan, Rich, and Sevier. It does appear that the larger districts have more women, and the districts that have no women are rural; yet, some rural districts have a strong percentage of women serving, so no pattern emerged.

Overall, Utah is above the national average in terms of the percentage of women serving on the state board of education (73.3% vs. about 50%) and is at least average, if not slightly above, for women holding district board seats.

### Summary

Overall, we are encouraged by these results as they show at least slight progress toward having more women serving in public office. Yet, there is still work to be done. Here is a summary of the findings:

- *U.S. Congress:* 16.7% of the Utah delegation to Congress is female compared to 19.4% nationally; this is progress for Utah.
- *SEO:* 0% of the Utah SEO seats are held by women compared to 22.8% nationally.
- *State Legislature:* 19.2% of Utah State Legislators are women compared to 25% nationally; although Utah still ranks low in the nation, this is slight progress.
- *Counties:* Utah county commissions and councils are overwhelming held by men (91%), while women hold 52.5% of the predominately full-time elected positions, of clerk/auditor, treasurer, recorder, and assessor.
- *Mayors:* 9.1% of Utah mayors are women, which is a 2.1% increase from 2014. Utah still falls well below the national average.
- *City Councils:* 24.1% of council members in Utah municipalities are female, which puts Utah below the national average of data gathered in 1979 (32%), 1989 (26%), 2001 (25–36%), and 2016 (30–33%).
- *Boards of Education:* Utah is above the national average in terms of the percentage of women serving on the state board of education (73.3% vs. about 50%) and at least average, if not slightly above, among women holding district board seats.

### Moving the Needle

National statistics have shown that women win elections at the same rate as men, but that fewer actually run.<sup>53</sup> The bottom line is that women will not get elected unless they run for office—if their names are not on the ballot, they cannot get votes. Dr. Jennifer Lawless, Director of the American University's Women and Politics Institute, recently stated in a *USA Today* article that “the issue isn't that [women] don't have the credentials or the background anymore. The issue is that that's not sufficient to get them to run for office.”<sup>54</sup> She explained that, according to studies, there are still just not

enough women running for office. This phenomenon was confirmed again in a 2016 article published in *The New York Times*, titled, “The Problem for Women Is Not Winning. It’s Deciding to Run.”<sup>55</sup> This is true both nationally and in Utah. This is one of many key challenges related to why Utah does not have more women serving in elected public office.

**So, why don’t more women run?** Although the answer is complex, we offered a few explanations in our 2014 brief. *First*, societal attitudes about electing women and the associated gender socialization still play a significant role in Utah. *Second*, women’s aspirations and motivations for public office are typically lower than those of men nationally, and may be even lower for many women in Utah. *Third*, women (more than men) need to have others suggest, support, and encourage them to run; however, women are encouraged less often to run for office. Yet, when they are encouraged and/or recruited, women are more likely to step forward and run. For more detail regarding these first three answers, see the UWLP brief, “[The Status of Women in Utah Politics](#).”

Other reasons include, *fourth*, that gender socialization is typically unconscious, and that girls and women are often socialized toward an “imposter syndrome” mentality, in which women do not feel they are qualified even when they may actually have more knowledge, skills, and abilities than their male counterparts.<sup>56</sup> In addition, studies have found that women face a “double-bind”—they are expected to be compassionate, kind, competent, and strong (not tough), but when people believe leaders need to be “tough” to “do the job,” then women do not “fit” a leader role.<sup>57</sup> Women struggle with feeling and being “authentic” within political environments because of pervasive social norms.<sup>58</sup> *Fifth*, there are differences, both perceived and literal, in female candidates’ treatment. Researchers<sup>59</sup> have found that women candidates experience widespread bias and are scrutinized for appearance and questioned about family responsibilities when men are not.

*Sixth*, national research shows that the “Good Old Boys Network” continues to have a stronghold in party politics, and Utah is no exception. Both conscious and unconscious biases continue to influence decision makers toward traditional practices, policies, and processes that keep women from running, networking, and succeeding if they do run. Yet, the evidence is clear (see “[Why Do We Need More Women Leaders in Utah?](#)”<sup>60</sup>): Utah residents, groups, organizations, and communities will benefit from having both men and women serve together in elected public offices. Extensive research has found that the “tipping point” is 30%, which means that to obtain the benefits outlined in the above brief, a leadership team, board, or political body, for example, needs to have at least 30% female representation. These are only six of many reasons that help answer the question related to why more women do not run for public office.

*After winning the right to vote, women must not limit themselves to casting a ballot. They must gain for themselves a place of real equality and . . . respect.*

~Eleanor Roosevelt

### ***What can Utahns do to prepare more girls and young women to run for office later in life?***

*First*, all children and youth can be taught to be involved in their communities, and they can learn that that it is a civic responsibility to serve in the community in various ways, including running for public office. The importance of community and civic engagement can be discussed and modeled in various settings throughout a person’s lifespan.

*Second*, we must help girls and women understand the importance of running for office, provide them with experiences that will increase their aspirations to do so, offer quality networking and mentorships, and create developmental opportunities that will help them see themselves as being able to positively influence people and policy.

*Finally*, girls, teens, and women can attend events and gatherings around the state (see <http://www.uvu.edu/uwlp/events/> for statewide listings) that help them become aware of the issues and that can also help strengthen the confidence, aspirations, ambitions, and motivations to lead. For example, the UWLP provides ongoing free events, typically for women ages 12 years and up (see <http://www.uvu.edu/uwlp/>). In addition, those in positions of influence (e.g., parents and relatives; school teachers, counselors, and administrators; political, business, and religious leaders; and college and university administrators, faculty, and staff) are encouraged to attend these events as well so that they can more effectively encourage, develop, and strengthen girls and women toward leadership.

***What are some more immediate solutions?*** Initial findings and national studies have shown that certain types of shorter-term efforts can also result in more women running for elected office and winning these elections.

*First*, Utah women can be actively engaged in their local precincts by attending their caucus meetings and running for delegate positions. Both major parties in the state operate on a caucus system, and even with the passage of SB 54 (enabling candidates to go the petition route), running as a state delegate can provide women with opportunities to participate in the local, state, and national levels of politics. This may provide them with opportunities to interact with other like-minded individuals, run on a lower scale for an elected position, and network with influential elected leaders in the state. Caucus dates and times are posted on both the Republican and Democrat State Party websites. In addition, women can also determine the issues and causes they are most passionate about. Becoming an advocate for these issues can build leadership and networking, and it can also compel women to do more.

*Second*, Utah women—whether they are interested in running for office or not—can attend [Real Women Run](#) (RWR) trainings and events to learn about becoming more civically

engaged. RWR is a “collaborative nonpartisan initiative to empower women to participate fully in public life and civic leadership through elected political office at all levels, appointments to boards and commissions, participation in campaigns, and engagement in the political system.”<sup>61</sup>

*Third*, women who are interested in running for elected office at the city, county, state, or national level can also join a cohort in the Women’s Leadership Institute’s Political Development Series. This six-month interactive and instructive program teaches women the how and why of running for public office.<sup>62</sup>

*Fourth*, female college students can join training and development programs that provide them with tools to be more engaged in running for student body offices on their own campuses. One such program is Elect Her,<sup>63</sup> which is a daylong workshop on why and how to run for public office—starting with student government. The American Association of University Women (AAUW), through a nonpartisan project, partners with universities around the country to host these on campuses. The program will soon be hosted by the non-profit, *Running Start*.

*Fifth*, those in leadership positions can strategically recruit more women for these roles. In addition, since the majority of Utah women who run and win do so through the Democratic Party, we call on local and state Republican leaders and politicians to carefully analyze the practices, processes, culture, and opportunities that, through unconscious bias, may be preventing women from running, winning, and serving. We also call on Republican women to step forward and lead in their party as well. However, progress can be made in strengthening the impact that women can have for the state of Utah through all political parties.

## Conclusion

This brief has summarized available research on the status of women in Utah politics. It was written to provide a more detailed look at the past and current state of affairs and, as was the 2014 brief, should be beneficial as a benchmark for measuring improvement in years to come. It was also written as a *call to action* for Utah residents and leaders to do more to encourage and support future efforts to diversify voices on Utah’s Capitol Hill and also in cities and counties around the state. Although there has been some progress in the last few years, we encourage Utah leaders and residents to do more to implement and support these efforts.

We also call upon Utah women to step forward and better serve our communities by adding their important voices to govern and lead Utah and its municipalities and counties. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “After winning the right to vote, women must not limit themselves to casting a ballot. They must gain for themselves a place of real equality and . . . respect.” And, in her introduction to the 1993 book, *Women*

*Legislators of Utah, 1896–1993*, former Utah Representative Beverly White provided the following advice to Utah women: “We won’t be hypocritical and say it will be easy. It won’t. It takes time, energy, funds and determination to be elected to any political office, but if you have resources to give either in education or experience, you should be willing to share them and give to the office you choose your loyalty and dedication. The rewards are further education for you and a satisfaction only you can understand and appreciate and a public that will be well served by the devotion of women who are giving of their time and talents to make this a better world in which to live.”<sup>64</sup>

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*Note:* If you are interested in receiving a monthly email that provides news about Utah women and leadership research, events, and resources, sign up at [www.uvu.edu/uwlp](http://www.uvu.edu/uwlp).

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