

The Status of Women in Utah Politics

The *Center for American Progress* recently released a report titled, “The State of Women in America: A 50-State Analysis of How Women Are Faring Across the Nation.”¹ This September 2013 document ranked Utah last in terms of women being in positions of decision making and leadership. The focus was on both the percentage of women in elected office (state and national levels) and also women holding private sector management positions, but it did not provide the depth needed to fully understand the issue. To provide leaders and residents with more detailed research, four 2014 briefs will be released that compare Utah with national data on the status of women and leadership in politics, education, nonprofit, and business. This first brief will focus on the status of women in Utah politics and will provide data for the following five areas: Congress, Statewide Executive Offices, State Legislatures, Mayors, and Voter Participation. It will conclude with a discussion focused on understanding why more women do not run for public office and offer suggestions on how Utah can *move the needle* in future years.

Congress

National

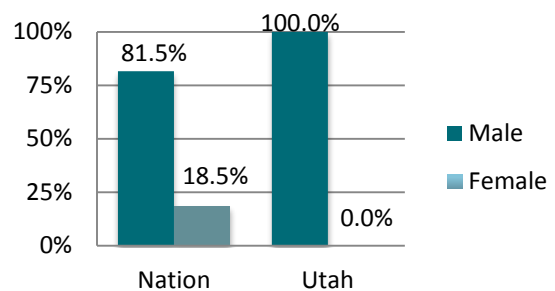
At the national level, women currently hold 18.5% of seats (99 of 535) in the 113th U.S. Congress.² Twenty percent (20 of 100) of the U.S. Senate seats are held by women, with only four being Republican. Currently, 18.1% (79 of 435) of the seats in the House of Representatives are held by women, with 76% of them being Democrat. Only 31 of the 50 states have at least one woman serving in Congress. Interestingly, the first woman in the House, a Republican from Montana, was elected in 1917. The first woman elected to the Senate without having previously filled an unexpired Congressional term, however, was not until 1978 (R-KS).³ Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House in 2007. Three states currently have two women serving in the Senate, 14 states have one, and 33 states have none. New Hampshire is the only state that has all four of their national delegation seats held by women.⁴ There are 15 states that do not have any women serving in Congress, and there are four states that still have yet to elect a woman to serve in Congress (Delaware, Iowa, Mississippi, and Vermont).⁵

Utah

Utah has a total of six seats in its national delegation (two senators and four representatives). Utah has not had a woman elected to Congress since 1995. Only three Utah women have served in Congress since its statehood: Rep. Reva Z. Beck Bosone (1949-1953), Rep. Karen Shepherd (1993-1995), and Rep. Enid Green Waldhotz (1995-1997).⁶ Two of these three

women only served one two-year term. Utah has never elected a woman to serve in the U.S. Senate and is currently one of the 15 states that do not have any women serving in Congress. Figure 1 compares Utah with the national average in terms of Congressional seats by gender.

Figure 1: Congress Seats by Gender (Utah vs. Nation)



Although no information could be located on how many women have run throughout history for a Congressional seat in Utah’s delegation in Congress, data were obtained from both the Utah GOP Nominating Convention and General Election results for the 2012 election cycle. Before the primary and general elections, both Democrats and Republicans hold a nominating convention where delegates are able to nominate the party’s candidates. Because Utah is a heavily Republican state, the candidates nominated at the Republican State Convention are, in large part, those who will win in the General Election. At the Utah Republican Nomination Convention, of the 32 candidates running for the four congressional districts and one senate seat, only three were women.⁷ One of them earned the party nomination and moved onto the General Election, while two of the five Democrat candidates running for Congress were women.

Statewide Executive Offices

National

At the national level, women hold 23% (73 of 318) of the statewide elective executive offices (37 Democrat; 36 Republican). The six most often discussed include the positions of governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, and state auditor.⁸ Interestingly, 35 women (20 Democrats; 15 Republicans) have served as governors in 26 states. Of these female governors, 23 were elected in their own right, three replaced their husbands, and eight became governor by constitutional succession, with three of them subsequently winning a full

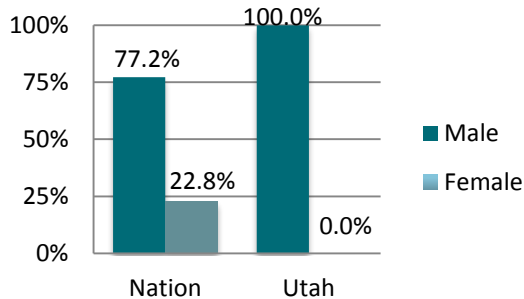
term. Currently, five of the 50 states have female governors (Arizona, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and South Carolina), and four are Republican.⁹ There are seven states that still have yet to elect a woman as governor or lieutenant governor. In 11 states, women are currently serving as lieutenant governors, with six being Republican and five being Democrat. Eight of the 50 (16%) attorney general seats in the U.S. are held by women, with seven of the eight being Democrat. Finally, 12 of the 50 secretary of state seats (22%), 7 of 50 (14%) state treasurer seats, and 7 of 50 (14%) state auditor seats in the country are currently held by women.¹⁰

Utah

There are currently no women serving in Utah statewide executive offices.¹¹ Throughout 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. She 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 1993-2001.¹²

In 2012, no women ran as candidates at the Utah GOP Convention to become the Republican Party’s nominee for a statewide elected office; therefore, no Republican women ultimately ran on Election Day.¹³ Democrats also did not put forth a female candidate for a statewide executive office seat.¹⁴ Figure 2 compares Utah with the national average in terms of statewide executive office seats by gender.

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



State Legislatures

National

Currently, 24.2% of state legislature seats are held by women. According to the *Center for American Women and Politics* at Rutgers, “In 2013, 1,789, or 24.2% of the 7,383 state legislators in the United States are women. Women currently hold 411, or 20.8% of the 1,972 state senate seats and 1,378,

or 25.5%, of the 5,411 state house or assembly seats. Since 1971, the number of women serving in state legislatures has more than quintupled.”¹⁵ 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%

Vermont and Colorado set the national highs for women in their legislatures (41.1 and 41.0% respectively), followed by Arizona (35.6%), Minnesota (33.8%), and New Hampshire (33.3%). States with the lowest percentages include the following: Louisiana (11.8%), South Carolina (12.9%), Oklahoma (13.4%), Alabama (13.6), Utah and West Virginia (16.3%), Tennessee and Wyoming (16.7%) and Arkansas and North Dakota (17%).¹⁶

According to one *Center for American Women and Politics* report,¹⁷ the numbers of Democratic women legislators has actually continued to increase, while the numbers of female Republican legislators have declined between 1981 and 2009.

Utah

Utah is ranked 46th in the nation in terms of women serving in the state legislature. Currently, 17% of the Utah senators (5 of 29), and 16% of the House of Representatives (12 of 75) are female.¹⁸ Overall, only 16.3% 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)

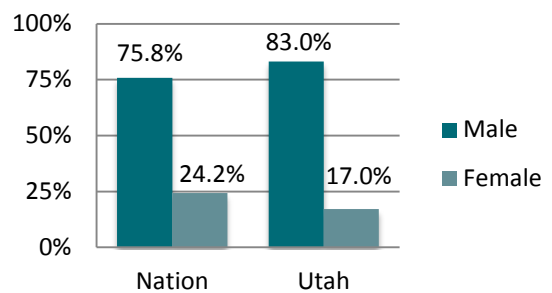


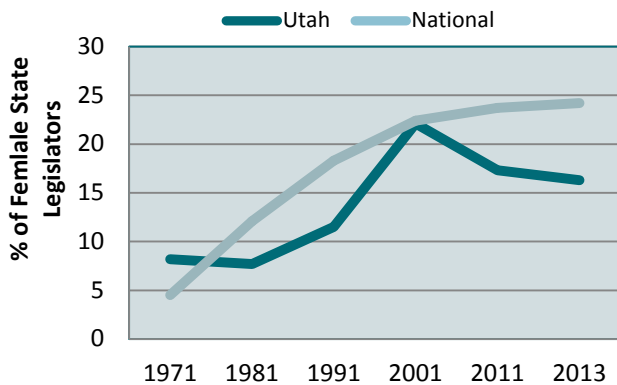
Table 1 illustrates the Utah state legislature numbers and percentages since 1971 by party and gender. It is interesting to note that in 1971, 8.2% of Utah state legislators were women, while at the national level only 4.5% of seats were held by women. By 1981 that trend had reversed. In Utah, data also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

Table 1: Female Utah State Legislators¹⁹

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

The total number of women serving in Utah’s State legislature has actually decreased since 2001 (see Figure 4 for a comparison of this national versus Utah trend).

Figure 4: Female State Legislature Trends



Only six states have women serving as speakers of their House of Representatives, and Utah accounts for one of those six.²⁰ In addition, of the 11 total leadership roles in the Utah House of Representatives, three are currently filled by women (speaker, minority leader, and minority assistant whip).²¹

Mayors

Nation

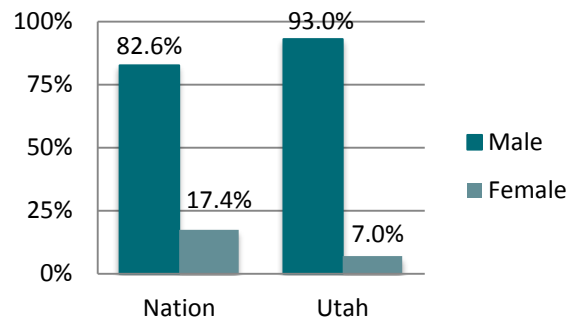
According to the *National Foundation for Women Legislators*,²² the number of women serving as mayors, on city councils, and as county commissioners and supervisors is at least slightly on the rise. Among the 100 largest cities in the U.S., 12 currently have women majors. “Of the 252 mayors of U.S. cities with populations of 100,000 and over, 17.6% (44) are women,” and “of the 1,248 mayors of U.S. cities with populations of 30,000 and above, 17.4% (217) are women.”²³ Yet, in a September 2013 USA Today article titled “Women still struggling to win big-city mayoral jobs,” Jennifer Lawless, director of American University’s Women and Politics Institute, stated that “The issue isn’t that they don’t have the credentials or the background anymore. The issue is that that’s not sufficient to get them to run for office.”²⁴ She explained that, according to studies, there are still just not enough women running for 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

Utah

The *Utah League of Cities and Towns* lists 245 municipalities in the state. Of these, 161 had websites that listed information about its mayor. Of the 161 Utah mayors researched, 12 seats (7%) were held by women and 149 by men. Of those 12 mayors, only three represent cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Most female mayors in Utah serve cities with populations of 10,000 or less. Available national data only track the gender of mayors in cities containing populations of 30,000 or more, so Figure 5 represents a national average comparison with Utah in terms of mayoral seats in municipalities with that populace.

Figure 5: Mayor Seats by Gender (Utah vs. Nation)



*This graph includes only cities and towns with populations of 30,000 or more.

Voter Participation

Nation

The 19th amendment, guaranteeing the right for American women to vote, was passed by Congress on June 4, 1919 and ratified on August 18, 1920.²⁵ Across the nation, women have outnumbered men among *registered voters* for decades. In every presidential election since 1980, the proportion of eligible females across the country who *actually voted* has exceeded the proportion of eligible males who voted. For example, women accounted for 54% of voters in the 2008 election.²⁶

Utah

Utah was the second state to give women the right to vote, and Utah women were the first females to vote in a national election.²⁷ Data suggest that slightly more Utah women vote than men. For example, in 1996 Utah had the highest women’s turnout in the nation with 76% of eligible women voting in that election.²⁸ Unfortunately, more recent data

on Utah turnout rates by gender are not available; however, Utah Colleges Exit Poll data can provide some insight into what percentage of voters coming out of the polling places were male and female. In 2004, 48% of these individuals in Utah were male and 52% were female (margin of error is ±1.13), and in 2008, 48.3% were male and 51.7% were female (margin of error of ±1.27).²⁹ Although these data

suggest that, in terms of relative proportions, the gender gap for voting may be slightly smaller in Utah than the rest of the country, somewhat more Utah women may be voting than Utah men.

Moving the Needle

So, how does Utah *move the needle* in terms of getting more women into public office? Statistics show that women win elections at the same rate as men, but fewer actually run.³⁰ 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. So why don't more women run? Although the answer is complex, we will offer a few explanations, along with some ideas for positive change.

First, societal attitudes about electing women are not as much a deterrent as they were in past years, but research tells us that gender socialization still plays a substantial role in whether individuals “self-identify with politics and express ambition to seek elected office.”³¹ Role socialization starts during childhood and extends into adolescence and adulthood.

Second, women’s aspirations and motivations for public office are typically lower than those of men. However, research from the past decade continues to confirm that women are as effective and successful in leadership positions as men.³² Yet, studies³³ have found that women are more likely than men to struggle with envisioning themselves as leaders (leadership identity). If they do not see themselves as leaders and/or do not believe they can be leaders, they will not step forward to do so. Even though men and women often have the same qualifications, one study³⁴ reported that women are significantly less likely than men to view themselves as qualified to run for office. Women often have different motivations to lead as well (leadership purpose). They focus, to a larger extent, on their desires to help the community, to be a voice for those who cannot speak, and to make a difference in people’s lives. If they do not see a leadership role as giving them an opportunity to do these things (or do not understand that a particular role may offer these opportunities), they most likely will not step forward to run.

Third, research continues to confirm that more women will run for office if others suggest they do so and provide support and encouragement. In 2008, the *Center for American Women and Politics* conducted a national study³⁵ attempting to understand the reasons women decided to run for public office. Researchers found that women and men seek state legislative office for somewhat different reasons. They asked, “Other than your desire to serve the public, what was the single most important reason that you decided to seek the office you now hold?” Of the six primary replies, women responded significantly higher than men to the following: 1) “a party leader or an elected official asked me to run or

serve”; and 2) “my concern about one or more specific political issues.” Men responded significantly higher to the following two reasons: 1) “my longstanding desire to be involved in politics”; and 2) “my desire to change the way government works.”

One study³⁶ found that a key factor in explaining the gender gap was that women were far less likely than men to be encouraged to run for office. Interestingly, other researchers³⁷ discovered that women were actually more likely than men to run for their first elected office *because* they were recruited. This was the primary response in one survey where participants were asked about their decisions to seek office (see Table 2 for the results). The bottom-line is this: women are encouraged less often to run for office, but when they are encouraged and/or recruited they are more likely to step forward.

Table 2: Initial Decision to Seek Office

	Representatives		Senators	
	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %
I had not seriously thought about running until someone else suggested it.	53	28	46	26
I had already thought seriously about running when someone else suggested it.	22	29	25	33
It was entirely my idea to run.	26	43	28	42

Center for American Women and Politics (2009). *Poised to Run: Women’s Pathways to State Legislatures*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers Universities

So what can Utahns do based on these findings? First, all children and youth can be taught to become involved in their communities and 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 the 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 influencing people and policy. Finally, we can encourage more women to run for office, and those in leadership positions can strategically recruit more women for these roles.

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 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. Researchers³⁸ continue to confirm that more diverse groups and teams result in more effective and ethical choices and decisions.

Other states provide examples of successful initiatives for Utahns to consider when creating future strategies toward increased the number of women running for public office. Fortunately, Utah does have one collaborative bipartisan effort (Real Women Run)³⁹ that is already providing training and support for Utah women to help this happen. Yet, there is still much more to be done. Utah leaders (e.g., government, business, education, nonprofit) and residents are encouraged to do more to implement and support these efforts.

Finally, we call upon the 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. In her introduction of 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."⁴⁰

¹ Chu, A., & Pasner, C. (2013). *The state of women in America: A 50-state analysis of how women are faring across the nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/StateOfWomen-4.pdf>

² Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *Women in U.S. Congress 2013*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/cong.pdf

³ Ibid.

⁴ Center for American Women and Politics (2012). *Record number of women will serve in Congress; New Hampshire elects women to all top posts*. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/press_room/news/documents/PressRelease_11-07-12.pdf

⁵ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *State fact sheet: Mississippi*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/resources/state_fact_sheets/MS.php

⁶ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *State fact sheet--Utah*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/resources/state_fact_sheets/UT.php

⁷ Utah Republican Party (n.d.). Convention 2012. Retrieved from <http://utahgop.wordpress.com/convention-2012/>

⁸ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *Statewide elective executive women 2013*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/stwide.pdf

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ National Foundation of Women Legislators (2013). *Facts about women legislators*. Retrieved from <http://www.womenlegislators.org/women-legislator-facts.php>

¹¹ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *State fact sheet--Utah*.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Utah Republican Party (n.d.). Convention 2012.

¹⁴ Utah Lieutenant Governor Elections (n.d.). Retrieved from

<http://elections.utah.gov/election-resources/election-results>

¹⁵ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *Women in state legislatures 2013*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/stleg.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Sanbonmatsu, K., Carroll, S. J., & Walsh, D. (2009). *Poised to run: Women's pathways to the state legislatures*. Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers.

¹⁸ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *State fact sheet--Utah*.

¹⁹ Ibid; the 1971 data were obtained from the following website

(<http://le.utah.gov/asp/roster/roster.asp?year=1971>) and was confirmed in the following book: White, Beverly (1993). *Women legislators of Utah, 1896-1993*.

²⁰ Center for American Women and Politics (2013). *Women in state legislative leadership positions 2013*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/leglead.pdf

²¹ State of Utah House of Representatives (n.d.). Leadership. Retrieved on December 23, 2013 from <http://le.utah.gov/443/house2/leadership.jsp>

²² National Foundation of Women Legislators (2013).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Moore, M. T. (2013, September 19). Women still struggling to win big-city mayoral jobs. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/09/18/women-mayor-quinn-greuel-richie/2833261/>

²⁵ National Archives (2013). *19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's right to vote*. American's Historical Documents. Retrieved from <http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/document.html?doc=13&title.raw=19th%20Amendment%20to%20the%20U.S.%20Constitution%3A%20Women's%20Right%20to%20Vote>

²⁶ Sanbonmatsu, K., Carroll, S. J., & Walsh, D. (2009).

²⁷ Haddock, M. (2010, Feb. 8). Utah women voted earlier than most in U.S. *Deseret News*. Retrieved from

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700008024/Utah-women-voted-earlier-than-most-in-US.html?pg=all>

²⁸ Davidson, L. (1996, March 13). Utah women are tops in voter-turnout tallies. *Deseret News*. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/477166/UTAH-WOMEN-ARE-TOPS-IN-VOTER-TURNOUT-TALLIES.html>

²⁹ The Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy. (2004, 2008).

Presidential and Statewide General Election: Exit Poll Report. Retrieved from <http://exitpolldata.byu.edu/>. The Center takes no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented on their website.

³⁰ Real women run. (n.d.). *Homepage*. Retrieved from <http://www.realwomenrun.org/>

³¹ Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2004, January). *Why don't women run for office*. Taubman Center for Public Policy, Brown University.

³² Zenger Folkman. (2012). *A study in leadership: Women do it better than men*. Retrieved from <http://www.zfco.com/media/articles/ZFCo.WP.WomenBetterThanMen.031312.pdf>

³³ Madsen, S. R. (2007). *On becoming a woman leaders: Learning from the experiences of university presidents*. Jossey Bass; Madsen, S. R. (2008). *Developing leadership: Learning from the experiences of women governors*. University Press of America.

³⁴ Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2005). *It takes a candidate: Why don't women run for office*. Cambridge University Press.

³⁵ Sanbonmatsu, K., Carroll, S. J., & Walsh, D. (2009).

³⁶ Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2005).

³⁷ Sanbonmatsu, K., Carroll, S. J., & Walsh, D. (2009).

³⁸ Madsen, S. R. (comp.). (2013). *Asilomar declaration and call to action on women and leadership. The International Leadership Association Women and Leadership Affinity Group Inaugural Conference 2013*. Pacific Grove, CA. Retrieved from http://www.ila-net.org/Communities/AG/asilomar_declaration2013.pdf

³⁹ Real Women Run website: <http://www.realwomenrun.org/>

⁴⁰ White, Beverly (1993). *Women legislators of Utah, 1896-1993* (p. 3).

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