

November 12, 2013

Women Governors: 2014

Electoral Outlook and Historical Comparison

Kelly Dittmar, Ph.D., Assistant Research Professor

In 2014, 36 states will hold gubernatorial elections.¹

While only seven states will have open gubernatorial seats due to term limits or retirements, at least six other races are deemed “toss-ups” a year before Election Day.² These races present opportunities for women to increase their representation in states’ top executive offices, up from a dismal five of fifty governors nationwide today.

Just five months before the first state primary contests of 2014, 28 women (16D, 12R) from 19 states have put their names forward as candidates for governor.

- Four are incumbents running for re-election: Maggie Hassan (D-NH); Susana Martinez (R-NM); Mary Fallin (R-OK); and Nikki Haley (R-SC).³
- Ten women are running for open seats in seven states.
- Fourteen women are running as challengers in nine states, with seven women running in either Florida or Pennsylvania, both “toss-up” states for governor in 2014.

Based on today’s numbers, there are no women running for governor in 16 contests, including three of six “toss-up” races (IL, ME, MI). Women are running in all six states with open seat contests.

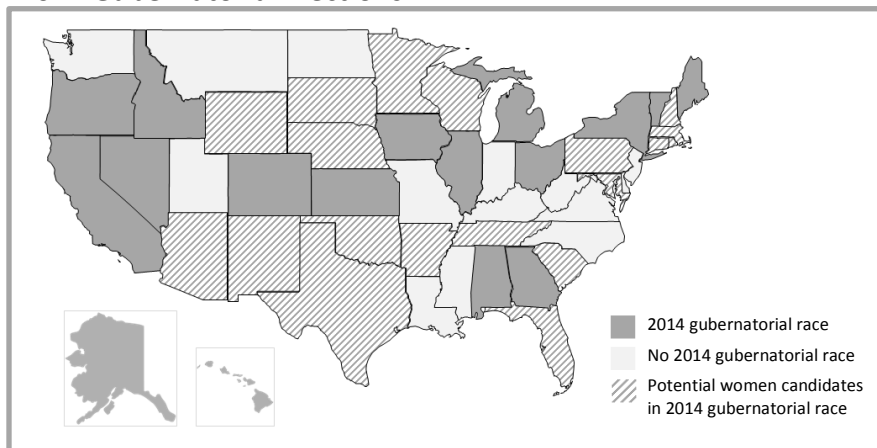
For the latest data on women in the 2014 elections, visit CAWP’s [Election Buzz](#).

Making History?

In 2010, 37 states held gubernatorial elections. That year, 23 races were for open seats. As of November 2009, 29 (15D, 14R) women had put their names forward as gubernatorial candidates. By January 2010, 31 women (15D, 16R) had made public their intentions to run for governor.⁴ In 2006, when a similar number of gubernatorial contests were for open seats – 9 of 36 – only 18 women (10D, 8R) had put their names forward by January 2006. The record for women filing in gubernatorial contests was 34 (18D, 15R, 1ACP) in 1994, a year with 36 contests, including 13 open seats.

Women also made history in 1994 for winning gubernatorial primaries, with 10 women (6D, 3R, 1IND) making it to general election ballots for governor. That record has been tied three times, in 2002, 2006, and 2010. To match this record in 2014, women would have to win primaries in at least half of the states in which they are currently running.

2014 Gubernatorial Elections



Potential Women Candidates for Governor, 2014

Candidate	State	Party	Status
Christine Jones	AZ	R	Open Seat
Debra Hobbs	AR	R	Open Seat
Toni Boucher	CT	R	Challenger
Marcelle Martelly	FL	D	Challenger
Nan Rich	FL	D	Challenger
Jessica Stewart	FL	D	Challenger
Elizabeth Cuevas-Neunder	FL	R	Primary Challenger
Martha Coakley	MA	D	Open Seat
Juliette Kayyem	MA	D	Open Seat
Heather Mizeur	MD	D	Open Seat
Julie Rosen	MN	R	Challenger
Annette Dubas	NE	D	Open Seat
Maggie Hassan	NH	D	Incumbent
Linda Lopez	NM	D	Challenger
Susana Martinez	NM	R	Incumbent
Mary Fallin	OK	R	Incumbent
Jo Ellen Litz	PA	D	Challenger

(continued on page 2)

¹ Two states – New Jersey and Virginia – held gubernatorial elections in 2013. In New Jersey, one woman – State Senator Barbara Buono – ran for and won her party’s nomination to challenge Republican Governor Chris Christie, but was defeated in the general election. No women ran for the open gubernatorial seat Virginia; in fact, there were no women candidates for any statewide elective executive offices in Virginia this year.

² See [The Cook Political Report, Governors Race Ratings](#)

³ Arizona Governor Jan Brewer (R) is ineligible to run for re-election due to term limits.

⁴ Due to drop-outs, only 26 women actually competed in primary contests in 2010.

To date, 35 women (20D, 15R) have served as governors in 26 states. The record number of women serving simultaneously is nine – hit in both 2004 and 2007. Currently, five women (1D, 4R) serve as governors.

Based on the current pool of potential women candidates, nine states could elect their first female governors in 2014: AR, FL, MD, MN, PA, RI, SD, TN, and WI. Among those states:

- Pennsylvania Congresswoman **Allyson Schwartz**, one of three Democratic women running, is currently leading in the polls against Pennsylvania incumbent Governor Tom Corbett.
- Maryland Delegate **Heather Mizeur** would also become the first openly lesbian candidate to run for governor on a major-party ticket if she can win her party’s nomination over two significant contenders.
- Rhode Island Treasurer **Gina Raimondo** leads her Democratic primary opponent and potential Republican general election opponent in the first poll for this open seat race.

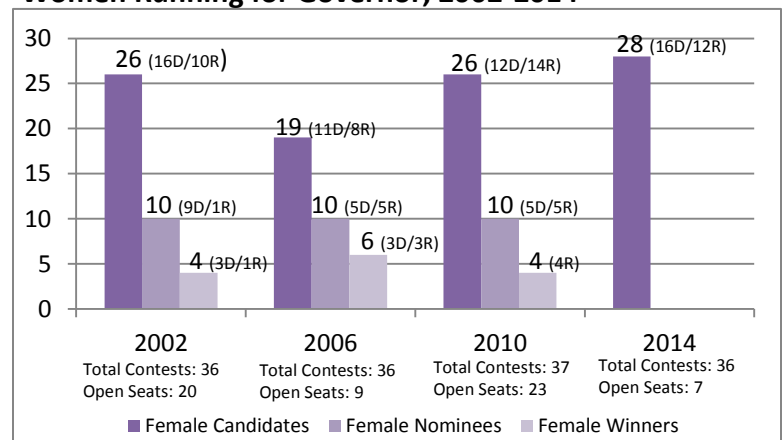
Candidate	State	Party	Status
Allyson Schwartz	PA	D	Challenger
Kathleen McGinty	PA	D	Challenger
Gina Raimondo	RI	D	Open Seat
Nikki Haley	SC	R	Incumbent
Lora Hubbel	SD	R	Primary Challenger
Sara Kyle	TN	D	Challenger
Wendy Davis	TX	D	Open Seat
Lisa Fritsch	TX	R	Open Seat
Miriam Martinez	TX	R	Open Seat
Mary Burke	WI	D	Challenger
Cindy Hill	WY	R	Primary Challenger

Source: Center for American Women and Politics

Other states to watch:

- **Texas**, where State Senator **Wendy Davis**, who received national attention for leading a filibuster against anti-abortion legislation, is now the likely Democratic nominee in a Republican-leaning state.
- **Massachusetts**, where Attorney General **Martha Coakley** and **Juliette Kayyem** are both competing with three other candidates for the Democratic nomination in a blue state. Coakley is leading in recent polls, benefitting from higher name recognition than her competitors.
- **Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, and Texas**, where non-incumbent women of color are running for governor. Three of those states (FL, GA, and TX) have never elected a person of color as governor.

Women Running for Governor, 2002-2014



Source: Center for American Women and Politics

Note: Total female candidates reflect the number of women who made it to primary ballots.

Making a Difference

Policy Battlegrounds: At a time of congressional gridlock, states have been more active sites for legislative decision-making. Due to legislative activity and gubernatorial decision-making, states have served as battlegrounds for those advocating on issues ranging from workers’ rights and reproductive freedom to education reform and implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Governors play essential roles in these policy debates and decisions.

Presidential Contenders: While only 20 of 44 U.S. Presidents have previously served as governors, gubernatorial service is often touted as a valuable credential in running for the nation’s top executive office. A recent analysis of modern primary campaigns shows that there is, at least statistically, a “governors’ advantage” in presidential primaries.⁵ This potential advantage may be maximized for women candidates, who face additional skepticism of their credentials when running for executive office.⁶

Executive Appointments: Beyond urging women to run for office, many women’s organizations have advocated for women’s appointments to boards, commissions, and executive posts at the state level. Particular efforts have been made to urge governors to appoint women upon taking office, with mixed results. Research, while limited, indicates that female governors may be more likely to appoint a greater percentage of women to executive posts,⁷ presenting a potential ripple effect of women’s gubernatorial success.

⁵ See [Nate Silver, “The Governors’ Advantage in Presidential Races is Bigger than you Thought”](#)

⁶ See [Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Duerst-Lahti 1997; Fox and Oxley 2003](#)

⁷ See [Riccucci and Saidel 2001](#)