



Press Release
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Fewer Women Running in State Elections Than in Previous Years

NEW BRUNSWICK/PISCATAWAY, N.J. – After climbing steadily for decades, the number of women running for state elective offices has declined, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

In the five states with “off-year” elections this fall, where there are no congressional or presidential contests, the number of women running for statewide and state legislative offices is down from peak levels, the center reported.

“ We watched the numbers of women candidates and office-holders edge upward for three decades,” observed Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP, “but in the last few election cycles, we’ve reached plateaus in some cases and even seen some drop-offs.”

Many factors are contributing to the downturn, including term limits, which force long-term incumbents out of office in the 16 states where they have been enacted. “Unless more women step up and run – whether in term-limited or nonterm-limited states -- the important gains we’ve made will be reversed,” Walsh predicted.

In the four states electing legislators to both state chambers this fall, the number of women candidates is down from peak levels, CAWP reported. Only in Mississippi is the number of women candidates up, and the increase there is only by one candidate, from 32 in 1999 to 33 this year.

In Louisiana, 27 women are running for state legislator, down from a high of 52 in 1995. In New Jersey, the number is 45, down from 51 in 1997 and 2001. The ballot in Virginia includes 23 women, compared with 40 in 1999.

With races for 22 statewide offices at stake in three states this year, a total of six women are running for four seats, CAWP reported. Kathleen Blanco, a Democrat, is running for governor of Louisiana. In Mississippi, Barbara Blackmon, also a Democrat, opposes Republican incumbent Amy Tuck in the race for lieutenant governor. In Kentucky, two women are running for state auditor, and one is running for agriculture commissioner.

State	Women candidates for state senate	Women candidates for house/assembly	Total women candidates	Total women candidates in best year
Louisiana	6 (5D, 1R)	21 (15D, 6R)	27 (20D, 7R)	52 (1995)
Mississippi	11 (9D, 2R)	22 (16D, 6R)	33 (25D, 8R)	33 (2003)
New Jersey	12 (7D, 5R)	33 (16D, 17R)	45 (23D, 22R)	51 (1997, 2001)
Virginia	9 (8D, 1R)	14 (8D, 6R)	23 (16D, 7R)	40 (1999)