

Set your CNN.com Edition  CNN U.S.  CNN International SET EDITION

ElectionCenter2008

updated 12:18 p.m. EST, Thu November 13, 2008

# Women gaining political power

### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Women's progress in this election "creeping and leaping," analyst says
- 74 women will be in 435-member House; 17 female senators out of 100
- "Do we have equal representation? No. Are we closer to it? Yes."
- Obama may appoint women; Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin made strides

[Next Article in Politics »](#)

By Ashley Fantz  
CNN

TEXT SIZE - +

(CNN) -- Shirley Chisholm, elected in 1968 as the first black woman in the U.S. Congress, once said: "I've always met more discrimination being a woman than being black."



The U.S. Senate gained one more woman this election in New Hampshire Senator-elect Jeanne Shaheen.

1 of 3

Slightly more than three years after Chisholm's death, Barack Obama will be sworn in as president, a huge step forward for African-Americans.

But for women, progress this election year was defined by "creeping and leaping," said CNN contributor Hillary Rosen, the Washington editor-at-large for Huffingtonpost.com.

Rosen favored Hillary Clinton, but she and other influential women pundits and activists note that Clinton and Gov. Sarah Palin's loss at the polls does not diminish the strides they made for their gender.

"Women are about 54 percent of the vote," Rosen said. "Do we have equal representation? No. Are we closer to it? Yes."

In the House, 10 new congresswomen will join the 64 incumbents who were re-elected, according to

[Rutgers University's](#) Center for American Women and Politics, bringing the number of women in the 435-seat body to a record 74. The 100-member U.S. Senate gained one woman, Democrat [Jeanne Shaheen](#) of New Hampshire, who became the 17th female senator.

And several women could be appointed to prominent roles in Obama's administration.

Shaheen will be [New Hampshire's](#) first female senator. She won in a bitter battle against Republican incumbent John E. Sununu, tying him to the unpopular President Bush.

"It was an extraordinarily hard year for Republicans," said Leslie Sanchez, a CNN contributor, Republican strategist and former adviser to President Bush. "You didn't have to go much further than relying on how unhappy people are with the administration."

North Carolina elected Beverly Perdue, who becomes the state's first woman governor. Perdue is the first pro-choice female governor of a Southern state since the late Ann Richards of Texas, according to Emily's List, which raised \$43 million in 2007-2008 to help develop the candidacies of Democratic women.

### Don't Miss

- [Karen Kornbluh, Obama's 'brain'](#)
- [North Carolina elects first woman governor](#)
- [In depth: Transition to Power](#)

"This is the state of Jesse Helms!" said New York Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a Democrat, referring to one of the most polarizing figures in American political history. Helms opposed civil rights and a holiday honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "It's always a big deal when a woman is elected to high office, but this was a significant shift," Maloney said.

Perdue and North Carolina Democrat Kay Hagan, who beat Republican U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, are strongly pro-Obama and pro-public education. North Carolina Association of Educators mobilized a massive get-out-the-vote campaign for them.

Perdue was the subject of a GOP ad that pictured Obama with his arms around her as his former pastor Jeremiah Wright's incendiary sermons play in the background. In the closing days of the campaign, Dole ran an ad that insinuated Hagan was "godless."

"With our R3M technology, we're able to listen to the earth's response to electromagnetic fields, assess that data, and find hydrocarbons with minimal environmental impact."

Erik Oswald  
Senior Research Geoscientist

explore our technologies

ExxonMobil  
Taking on the world's toughest energy challenges™

ADVERTISEMENT