

Is It Really The Year of the Republican Woman?

Despite High Profile Candidates For Governors, Republican Women Lacking in Congress, State Houses

By Z. BYRON WOLF

July 30, 2010

Republicans are happily proclaiming 2010 as the year of the Republican woman, with Sarah Palin's Mama Grizzlies and other female candidates on a roaring tear in primaries nationwide, seemingly adding a diversity to the GOP that even many Republicans say is long overdue.

The perception of a wave of Republican women is due to the number of high-profile governors races, including the all-woman [governors races in Oklahoma](#), and New Mexico and a highly touted slate of women candidates for 6 other governors' mansions from [California to South Carolina](#).

The perception is also fueled by Palin, a potential 2012 Republican Presidential nominee, who has made electing women one of her causes. She likens them to Mama Grizzlies, rising up on their hind legs, to protect their young, and she recorded a [famous video posted on the Internet](#) to inspire Republican women. She predicts a "stampede of pink elephants crossing the line."

Other national Republicans are also jumping at the chance to appear inclusive and diverse.

"There's going to be six to eight next-generation folks who are not middle-aged white guy CEOs," said Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who also has eyes on a run for President in 2012. "So it's going to be a new day, a new era in terms of the face and voice and tone of the Republican Party, and I think that's really good," he said.

"What you're going to see as a confirmation of the Republican Party modernizing, while still being true to its values, is these new next-generation, forward-leaning leaders," he told reporters during a trip to Washington.

The selection Tuesday in Oklahoma of Mary Fallin as the Republican candidate for Governor bolstered the party's case.

Democrats Irked by Perception Of Increased Republican Women

Any mention of 2010 as the year of the Republican woman piques Democrats, who point out they have just as many female candidates for governor as Republicans.

"We're glad to welcome Republicans to 2010, decades after Democrats have been nominating female candidates. We're always gratified when more women and minorities become part of the political process," said Emily DeRose, who speaks for the Democratic Governor's Association.

Other Democrats point quietly to the growing pains Republicans have had with their women candidates for this year. Nikki Haley in South Carolina won her nomination for governor despite public allegations of infidelity from her challengers.

And there is trouble plaguing Republican female candidates running for other offices. In Colorado, Republican Senate candidate Ken Buck tried to make light of an ad by attacking him by fellow Republican Jane Norton, where she questioned his manhood.

He told a voter in an unscripted moment to vote for him "[because I do not wear high heels.](#)"

Buck said he wears cowboy boots with "real bullshit" on them, not Washington bullshit. The remarks were condemned by Norton.

Republican Sen. David Vitter, who is running for reelection, has been criticized for retaining a staffer who assaulted a female staffer on the payroll.

Republican "Wave" May Ebb

But for all the attention given to the Republican candidates for governor, it is a different story when the makeup of state legislatures and the Congress are taken into account, according Debbie Walsh, who runs the nonpartisan Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers. The center tracks female candidates nationwide. Read their assessment of the 2010 race so far [right here](#).

Walsh said she applauds every woman running, but the numbers do not bear out a sweep of Republican women into office.

"What I don't want to see is a misconception that women are running everywhere and women are on the ballot in every state because that is not the case," she said from Louisville, Kentucky, where she was attending an annual gathering of state legislators from around the country.

It is true, she said, that more Republican women sought higher office this year than ever before. But they won't all be in office in November. "While we did have a record number of Republican women running, we've also had a record number of Republican women losing their primaries," said Walsh.

"Republican women tend to be more moderate than their male counterparts and they have a tougher time making it through primaries," she said,

generalizing, but noting that a larger portion of the Democratic caucus is made up of women th 31 percent of Democratic state legislators are women, compared to 15 percent of Republican state legislators. 24 percent of all state legislators are women.

Regardless of a [woman's party affiliation](#), Walsh said women make good governors.

"They make a difference when they get elected," she said. "They bring a different set of life experiences to the table in making policy."

Copyright © 2010 ABC News Internet Ventures