

How Many Women are Running for Congress in 2010?

From Mama Grizzlies to 'Year of Republican Women,' 2010 is Record-Breaking

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Looking at raw numbers alone, 2010 will go down in the history books as the year in which the number of women running for Congress broke all previous records.

According to the [Center for American Women and Politics \(CAWP\) at Rutgers University](#) , just under 300 women indicated their intent by filing to run for House and Senate seats in the 2010 midterm elections -- 298 in all (36 Senate, 262 House.)

But raw numbers don't tell the whole story.

Year of the Republican Women

What makes the 2010 election year stand out is the surge in the number of Republican women running for Congress -- a fact lauded by conservatives and highlighted by mainstream media.

With a record number of female GOP candidates throwing their hats into the ring (145 total, 17 Senate and 128 House), pundits soon began declaring 2010 as "[the Year of the Republican Women.](#)" (In comparison, 153 Democratic women filed to run for Congress in 2010 - 19 for the Senate and 134 for the House.)

Although the surge narrowed the gap, this year -- as in previous years -- more Democrats ran than Republicans. As noted by the CAWP, "Democratic women continue to outnumber their Republican counterparts among general election candidates for Congress."

Grizzlies and Redcoats

The heightened participation of GOP women seemed to set the stage for change. Sarah Palin's July stump speech tagged these rising female conservatives as "mama grizzlies" and the attention paid to them in local and national news stories magnified their power.

Their visibility suggested that by sheer numbers alone, they might push through the gender gridlock in Washington. Dressed in blazing suits and jackets, these women seemed to say that not only were the redcoats coming, they were poised to shake up Congress -- a traditionally male legislative body where women's participation has never exceeded 17%.

The Palin Effect

The fact that a groundbreaking number of 145 Republican female Congressional candidates filed in 2010 -- two years after Sarah Palin's game-changing 2008 vice presidential run -- has led many to conclude that [Palin's presence on the national](#)

[stage has ignited GOP women](#) . Added to the 153 Democratic women running for Congress, their numbers helped top the previous record set nearly two decades ago when 251 women filed to run for Congress in 1992.

However, intent did not pan out into reality for the majority of these women candidates.

A long primary season cut their numbers by half. By the time the final state primary was held in Hawaii on September 18, only 152 women survived their primary challenges to run in the general election on November 2.

Including incumbent Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) -- who lost her primary but decided to run as a write-in candidate -- the 2010 midterm elections will have a total of 153 women backed by a major party running for Congress.

By the Numbers

A breakdown of women running for Congress in 2010 as compiled by the Center for Women and Politics at Rutgers

36 women filed for Senate seats: 19 Democrats, 17 Republicans (beating the previous record in 1992 of 29 with 22 Democrats, 7 Republicans)

14 women won primaries: 9 Democrats, 5 Republicans

- 1 is running as a write-in candidate (Lisa Murkowski)
- 6 are incumbents: 5 Democrats, 1 Republican (who lost her primary but is running as a write in candidate)
- 5 are candidates for open seats: 2 Democrats, 3 Republicans
- 4 are challengers: 2 Democrats, 2 Republicans

1 Senate race in California pits two women against each other: Barbara Boxer (D) and Carly Fiorina (R)

Currently 17 women (13 Democrats, 4 Republicans) serve in the Senate; 11 were not up for re-election this year.

2010 U.S. House of Representatives races

262 women filed for House seats: 134 Democrats, 128 Republicans (beating the previous record in 1992 of 222 with 140 Democrats, 82 Republicans)

138 won their primaries: 91 Democrats, 47 Republicans

13 House races pit two women against each other

Currently 73 women (56 Democrats, 17 Republicans) serve in the House, along with 3 delegates from the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (all are Democrats.)

Source:

"Year of the Republican Woman? Yes and No: Women Candidates in the 2010 General Elections."⁴ Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University. CAWP.rutgers.edu. 20 September 2010.

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