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WOMAN UP

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GOP Is Fielding More Minorities, as Well as Women, for Office

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We've heard a lot this year about high-profile Republican women -- from Sarah Palin (not on any ballot, but virtually omnipresent), to Carly Fiorina and Meg Whitman on the West Coast, to Christine O'Donnell and Linda McMahon on the East Coast. Much as been made about the Tea Party's influence, the role of religion, Palin's endorsement magic, the ability of women to raise (and spend) big money (with a debt of gratitude to both Palin and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton).

But there's a storyline we're overlooking this year: The *diversity* of the Republican field.

Overall, 14 African-Americans across the country are running as GOP nominees for Congress. As the Frederick Douglass Foundation has pointed out, if just three of them win, it would mark the first time since Reconstruction that more than two African-Americans from the Republican Party have served in Congress.

Martinez (left), Herrera (Facebook)

And, as the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics has reported, six Republican women are running for U.S. Senate seats, and 128 Republican women filed and ran in primaries for the House, with 47 winning and moving on to the general election.
Are these earth-shattering numbers? No. And I'm certainly not naïve: The GOP, as with the Washington establishment overall, is largely a white-male bastion. But, this year's slate of Republican candidates is perhaps the most diverse ever. And nationally, we're just not hearing much about some of these races.

Among the races that *are* getting ample attention is Nikki Haley's gubernatorial bid in South Carolina. Haley, an Indian-American, leads her opponent, state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, by a substantial margin. But we should pay attention to other candidates as well. I draw your attention to two women in particular:

- In New Mexico, Republican Susana Martinez, a district attorney, faces Lt. Gov. Diane Denish for the governorship. This is only the third time in U.S. history that two women are campaigning for the top job in a state. (It's also happening in Oklahoma, where Congresswoman Mary Fallin is leading Lt. Gov. Jari Askins in the governor's race.) In New Mexico, the campaign is tight, with competing polls showing Martinez ahead or locked in a dead-heat
- Jaime Herrera, a 31-year-old state representative, is running for Congress in Washington's 3rd District. She's also locked a close race, with recent polls showing her slightly ahead or statistically tied with her opponent, Democrat Denny Heck.

These are two races to watch -- not just because they include dynamic, Hispanic women with a real shot at victory, but because they (and others) offer a glimpse of what the future might hold for a more diverse, more inclusive GOP. Or so we hope.
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