

Thursday, October 28, 2010

Search

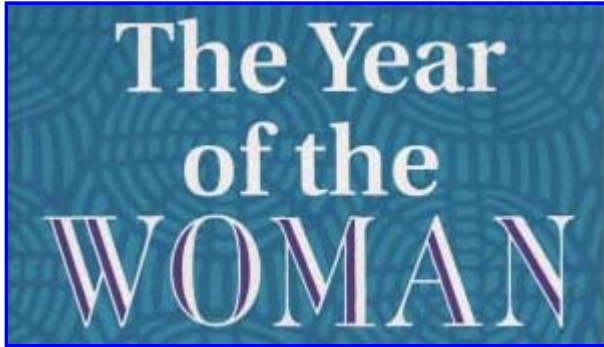
<http://womensvoicesforchange.org/election-2010-the-year-of-the-woman-not-exactly.htm>

Election 2010: The Year of the Woman? Not Exactly.

October 26, 2010 by [Women's Voices For Change](#)

Since the first Congress, 11,699 people have served in the House or Senate. Of these, 259—just about 3 percent—have been women.

Thankfully, the times are changing, but the numbers bring both good and not-so-great news.



If not now, when?

As reported by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University, [just under 300 women indicated their intent to run by filing candidacies](#) for House and Senate seats in the 2010 midterm elections. Of the 298 women candidates, 36 filed for the Senate, 262 for the House.

The Huffington Post reported in June that [2,300 people filed to run for Congress](#) in this political season. So in a country where women are the majority, men still dominate the race for elective office, by a margin of roughly 7 to 1.

When you think about it, it's not really surprising. It's been reported that women often hold full-time jobs and rear families while seeking office—generally without the benefit of a wife at home to help keep the many balls in the air.

Now that the primaries are history, we see that about half of the declared women candidates survived to gain a major party line on the ballot. A total of 153 women with major-party backing are running for Congress. Who are these candidates? A breakdown of women running for Congress in 2010, as compiled by the [Center for American Women and Politics](#) gives us the following group profile:

2010 U.S. Senate races. Currently [17 women](#) (13 Democrats, 4 Republicans) [serve in the Senate](#); 11 were not up for re-election this year.

- 36 women filed for Senate seats: 19 Democrats, 17 Republicans (besting the previous record, set in 1992, of 29: 22 Democrats, 7 Republicans)
- 14 women won primaries: 9 Democrats, 5 Republicans
- One woman ([Lisa Murkowski](#)) is running as a write-in candidate
- 6 are incumbents: 5 Democrats, 1 Republican (again, Lisa Murkowski, the 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 has [two women vying against each other](#): Barbara Boxer (D) and Carly Fiorina (R)

2010 U.S. House of Representatives races. 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).

- 262 women filed for House seats: 134 Democrats, 128 Republicans (again beating the previous 1992 record of 222: 140 Democrats, 82 Republicans)
- 138 won their primaries: 91 Democrats, 47 Republicans
- 13 House races have two women going head-to-head

A quick glance at gubernatorial races shows that 37 states will elect governors this year. A record-tying 10 of them have women running on one of the major parties' tickets: 5 Democrats and 5 Republicans. Still, of the 74 major-party gubernatorial candidates, fewer than a seventh are women. Two states, New Mexico and Oklahoma, will have a woman governor for the first time: both major party candidates are women.

These statistics give us a sense how much ground women have claimed in the political landscape, and how much further we have to go. But there's one more question to focus on, and that's age.

It's interesting to note that the average age of all members in Congress is 57.2: for men, it's 57.3, for women, 57.1. Not much of a difference there.

If we take the incumbent senate races as representative of congressional races in general, we see that 'women who weren't born yesterday' have no fear of the political trenches and plenty of energy for the battles to be waged there.



The women of the current U.S. Senate.

Five of the six the women incumbents running for Senate are over 50. Barbara Boxer (D-California) is 69. (Her opponent for Senate, Carly Fiorina, is 54). Incumbent Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) is 50. Patty Murray (D-WA) is 52. Lisa Murkowski (R-AL), the much-watched write-in candidate and senate incumbent from Alaska, is 53. Seniority in this group belongs to Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), who is 74. (The whippersnapper is New York's Kirsten Gillibrand, age 43).

Of course, the Senate is regarded, rightfully or not, as requiring a bit more gravitas than the House, and the age requirement for candidacy is 30 in comparison to the House's 26. So perhaps the balance is skewed a bit more toward the gray-haired, though probably not by much.



What we can see from 2010 so far is that women are running in greater numbers than ever. And even though women are not taking up political candidacy to the same extent as men (and oh, how we wish they did!), the brave are paving the way for all women—especially those looking to affirm that youth is not a prerequisite to success, and that age more than holds its own when the rubber hits the road of responsibility.

That's the story on women candidates in 2010. But there's one more group to focus on, and that's women *voters*. Most of us are not running for office this year, but few of us have an excuse for not stepping into the voting booth on November 2 and checking the boxes for the candidates we believe are the best for the job. With luck, at least some of those candidates are women. And with support from all of us, they'll be on the ballot in even greater numbers in 2012.

6

Tweet

You may also like -



[Laura Chinchilla, Costa Rica's New President: Another to Rule the World](#)



[VIDEO: Taking on Media Sexism As Fall Election Season Begins](#)



[On Valentine's Day: Hating the Hearts and Flowers](#)



[Ursula Burns, Xerox, and the Grace of 'Do For Self'](#)



[Poetry Friday: Snow](#)

powered by [nrelate](#)

ShareThis Share

Like Be the first of your friends to like this.

Comments

Tell us what you're thinking...
and oh, if you want a pic to show with your comment, go get a [gravatar!](#)