

New York Times, Salon Analyses Refute Tropes About 'Year Of The Woman'

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With female candidates competing in several high-profile races, the midterm elections prompted some pundits to dub 2010 a political "Year of the Woman." An article and two opinion pieces explain why these predictions faltered.

~ *New York Times*: Despite media attention on female candidates -- particularly on Republican women -- "2010 will not go down as the new Year of the Woman," according to a *Times* analysis of last week's midterm elections. For the first time in 30 years, the number of women in Congress will not increase as a result of the election. Although a record 128 Republican women filed for House runs, only 47 won their primaries, compared with 91 Democratic female nominees. Moreover, the female Republican candidates who attracted much of the media attention -- Senate contenders Sharron Angle in Nevada and Carly Fiorina in California; gubernatorial candidates Linda McMahon in Connecticut and Meg Whitman in California; and House hopeful Christine O'Donnell in Delaware -- lost their bids. Jennifer Lawless, director of the American University [Women and Politics Institute](#), noted that these candidates "had interesting personal stories or personalities that garnered so much national attention, which obscured the fact that they represented actually a very small portion of the actual candidates." Debbie Walsh, director of the Rutgers University [Center for American Women and Politics](#), said 2010 was a "missed opportunity" for GOP women "because in a year where there was such a Republican sweep, they simply did not have the kind of numbers of women running in the general to take advantage of that sweep and increase their numbers" (Parker, *New York Times*, 11/5).

~ Gail Collins, *New York Times*: Columnist Collins writes that she "think[s] it is time to take back the mama grizzly," which former Alaska Gov. and 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin used as a symbol of GOP female candidates in the midterm elections. Feminist writer and activist Gloria Steinem told Collins that real female grizzly bears "are famous for their reproductive freedom." She added that they "mate later than other bears," have fewer cubs, wait longer between pregnancies and "re-absorb the embryo into their body" if they are faced with a poor situation for raising cubs. Collins notes that "the most infamous of Palin's pet candidates" -- Angle and O'Donnell -- were best known for "their tendency to say, um, crazy stuff. They lost." She writes, "Goodbye, loopy mama grizzlies," adding, "We're left with a passel of normal conservatives of both sexes along with a cadre of male and female wackos ..." (Collins, *New York Times*, 11/5).

~ Caryl Rivers, *Salon*: Several conservative female candidates in the midterm elections "invoked feminism in one way or another, but all backed policies harmful to women," *Salon* contributor Rivers writes in an opinion piece, adding, "The 2010 Year of the Woman was mainly about candidates who supported policies traditionally advanced by white men." According to Rivers, this "is not just an isolated political accident" but "part of a pattern that has dire consequences for women." She argues that there is a "new 'soft' war against women [that] is less a frontal assault than an ongoing, and very effective, guerilla movement," adding, "Under a veneer of success, women are losing ground in a myriad of ways." Rivers continues, "The many ways and the many arenas in which women are slipping behind are obscured by narratives about men failing (which some of them are, but not elite white men) and about the ways in which achievement can only bring women misery and pain. (And, by the way, destroy society in the process)" (Rivers, *Salon*, 11/7).

Television Coverage

On Friday's "The Rachel Maddow Show," Amanda Marcotte of *Slate*'s "Double X" [discussed](#) how women fared in the midterm elections, including whether female candidates received support from women and how abortion-rights issues influenced voters' decisions (Maddow, "The Rachel Maddow Show," MSNBC, 11/8).

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