

Female lawmakers decry lack of women on key Alabama Senate committees

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Kim Chandler -- The Birmingham News

By



MONTGOMERY, Alabama -- One-third of key Senate committees have no female members, a level of representation that women senators said has diminished since Republicans have been in control.

There are no women on seven out of 20 major Senate committees, including the education and judiciary committees. When the Senate was under Democratic control, said Sen. Vivian Davis Figures, D-Mobile, there were only three committees without female members.

"We cannot bring those views and perspectives if we are not appointed to key committees," Figures said.

Figures and other female senators asked Senate leadership Thursday to consider changing committee assignments, saying the level of representation does not reflect the number of women voters in the state.

There are five women in the 35-member Senate. All five took to the microphone Thursday morning, before the day's debate, to discuss the disparity in committee assignments.

Sen. Priscilla Dunn, D-Bessemer, said the views of women are being excluded on key committees.

"We want you to know that we are here. There are only five of us, but we are here," Dunn said.

Party politics likely plays a part in the gender disparity. Republicans since last year's election have the controlling majority in the Senate, but there are no female Republican senators. Four of the five women senators are Democrats. The other is independent.

Senate Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, told senators he would be willing to meet with them about assignments. Marsh said senators requested assignments and he was able to meet most of the requests from the female senators.

"At that point in time I thought people were pretty happy," Marsh said.

Figures said she tried to discuss the matter with Senate leaders, "But our cries fell on deaf ears."

Alabama falls near the bottom in the nation for the percentage of female legislators, ranking 48th among the 50 states, according to the Center for American Women and Politics.

The seven Senate committees without female members are: agriculture, conservation and forestry; banking and insurance; business and labor; education; energy and natural resources; judiciary; and tourism and marketing.

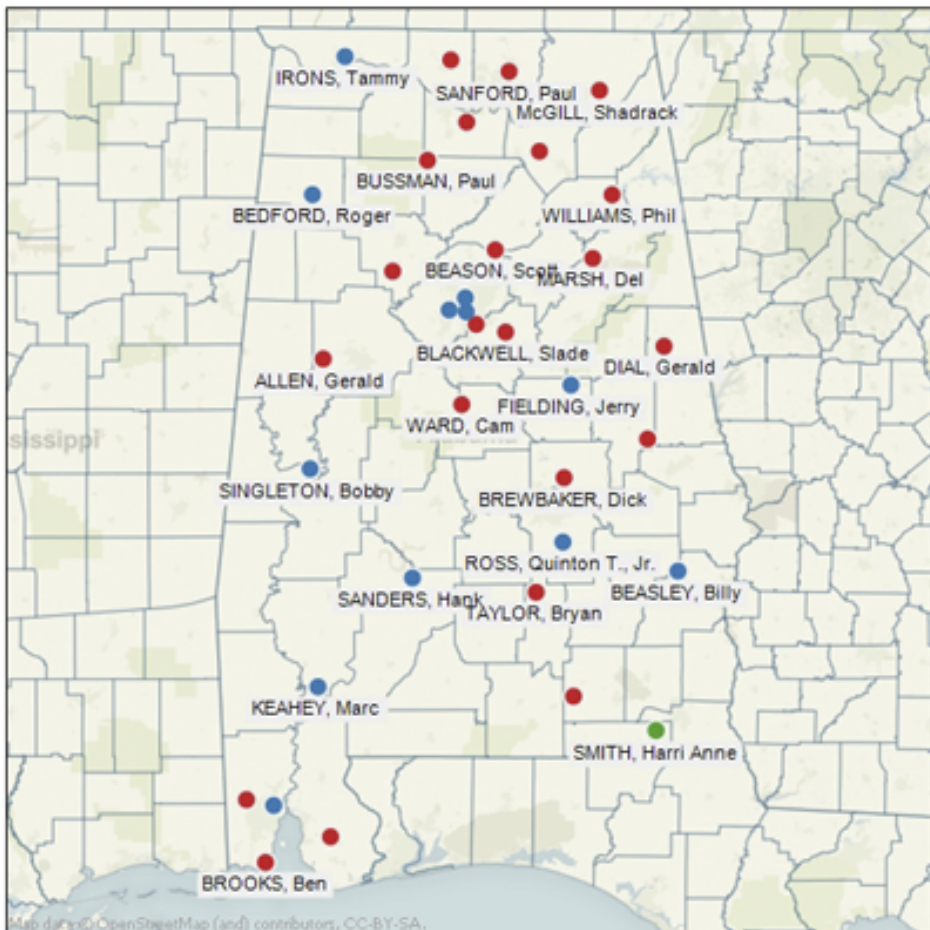
A look at the 2011 Alabama Senate

Select categories to filter the results. Roll over each dot to learn about each Senate member.

- Party**
- Democrat
 - Independent
 - Republican

- Gender**
- Female
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- Race**
- Black
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Click on a pie chart's section to filter the results. Click on it again to reset the fields.

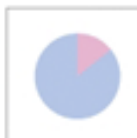
- Party**
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- Black
 - White



- Gender**
- Female
 - Male



Locations represent the geographical center of each legislator's district.

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