

ISU Catt Center hopes women are ready to take advantage of new political opportunities

By [Lynda Waddington](#) | 05.13.11 | 6:30 am

Iowa women considering an elected office, or who want to serve on local boards and commissions, will soon have an opportunity to learn the ins-and-outs of politics. More importantly, the campaign training comes at a time when redistricting and state gender-balancing policies have opened up new opportunities for women.

If ever there was a time for women to explore opportunities to run for public office, it's now, says Dianne Bystrom, director of Iowa State University's [Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics](#).

Legislative redistricting typically opens up new opportunities for women to be elected to public office, and redistricting couldn't have come at a better time for women, says Bystrom. The November 2010 election marked the first time in 31 years that the number of women elected to the U.S. Congress decreased. Iowa has yet to break its own political "glass ceiling," being one of four states — along with Delaware, Mississippi and Vermont — to never elect a woman to the U.S. Congress.

That's why the Catt Center is presenting "[Ready to Run Iowa: Campaign Training for Women](#)," on June 10. The workshop is designed for anyone interested in running for all levels of office, getting appointed to public boards and commissions, working on a candidate or issue campaign, or learning more about the political system. It will take place from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at ISU's Scheman Building, Iowa State Center.

"This is a big year [for women in politics] for many reasons," said Bystrom. "When new districts are drawn — not only on the federal level but on the state level — redistricting causes changes and opens up opportunities for women."

In addition, a new Iowa law extending general balance to local and county boards and commissions also creates opportunities for women's public service.

"Another thing we push in our Ready to Run Campaign School is not just running for office; it's serving on local and state boards and commissions," Bystrom said. "Iowa has had a gender balance mandate on state boards and commissions since 1987. That was extended to local and county boards by the 2010 legislature and it goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2012. So 2012 presents numerous opportunities for Iowa women to step up and run for political office or serve on boards and commissions."

The workshop addresses both of those opportunities by offering participants one of two tracks — one for women who might be considering a run for public office, and the other for women who may desire greater political leadership to have an impact on important issues. Several current and former female elected officials, authors and campaign strategists will be in attendance and leading a variety of educational sessions.

Registration is available [online](#) and will cost \$75 on or before May 28 and \$100 after that date. The fee includes all sessions and training materials; breakfast, lunch and afternoon refreshments; workshop notebook; and a campaign training manual. Scholarships are also available for travel and registration.

Ready to Run™ was established by the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. It has helped New Jersey climb from the bottom third of all states in the proportion of women in legislature to 12th.