



# CAWP

## *Election Watch*

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### **Women's Votes Critical to Democrats Retaining Control of the U.S. Senate**

Women's votes made the difference in the outcomes of several high-profile races that helped Democrats retain control of the U.S. Senate, according to an analysis of Edison Research exit polls conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. In seven high-visibility races where exit polls were conducted, men voted for the losing Republican candidate, while a majority of women cast their ballots for the winning Democratic candidate.

Democrats Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin, Sherrod Brown in Ohio, Bob Casey in Pennsylvania, Joe Donnelly in Indiana, Tim Kaine in Virginia, Jon Tester in Montana, and Elizabeth Warren in Massachusetts were all elected because of the votes of women (see table below). In addition, in Connecticut, men split their votes evenly between Democrat Chris Murphy and Republican Linda McMahon, while women showed a clear and decisive preference for Murphy.

In the two U.S. Senate races where Republican candidates made controversial comments about rape, women's votes played important roles in the victories of the Democratic candidates. In Indiana, a majority of women voted for Democrat Joe Donnelly, while a majority of men cast ballots for Republican Richard Mourdock. In contrast, in Missouri, a majority of both men and women voted for Democrat Claire McCaskill, although women were 7 percentage points more likely than men to vote for McCaskill.

Susan J. Carroll, senior scholar at CAWP, observed, "The composition of the United States Senate in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress would look very different if it were not for the votes of women in these races. It's clear that in a significant number of U.S. Senate races, women and men preferred different candidates and women's preferences prevailed."

Gender gaps in voting, ranging from 5 to 13 points, were evident in all but one of the 23 U.S. Senate races in 2012 where exit polls were conducted. Women were more likely than men to support the Democratic candidates -- and less likely to support the Republican -- in each race where there was a gender gap, defined as a measurable difference in the proportions of women and men who voted for the winning candidate. The sole exception was the contest in Maine, which was won by independent candidate Angus King.

Some of the largest gender gaps were in races where Democratic women won, including incumbent Senators Amy Klobuchar (13 pts.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (12 pts.) and newcomers Elizabeth Warren (12 pts.), and Tammy Baldwin (10 pts.). According to CAWP director Debbie Walsh, “The gender gap is not about the gender of the candidate, but about the issues. Still, the presence of a Democratic woman in the race can slightly increase the size of the gender gap.”

A 10 percentage-point gender gap was also apparent in U.S. House races. Nationally, 55% of women, compared with 45% of men, voted for the Democratic congressional candidates in their districts; 44% of women, compared with 53% of men, voted for Republican U.S. House candidates. A majority of women showed a preference for Democratic candidates, while a majority of men preferred Republican candidates, resulting in a narrow advantage for Democratic candidates overall.

### **About CAWP**

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a university-based research, education and public service center. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women’s changing relationship to politics and government and to enhance women’s influence and leadership in public life. CAWP is a leading authority in its field and a respected bridge between the academic and political worlds.

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## 2012 Exit Poll Data: Vote in U.S. Senate Races

State	Candidate	Party	Overall	Gender Gap	Women's Vote	Women	Men
AZ	<b>Jeff Flake</b>	R	50%	8 pts.	+1% Carmona	46%	54%
	Richard Carmona	D	45%			47%	43%
CA	Elizabeth Emken	R	39%	7 pts.	+28% Feinstein	36%	43%
	<b>Dianne Feinstein</b>	D	62%			64%	57%
CT	Linda McMahon	R	43%	11 pts.	+21% Murphy	39%	49%
	<b>Chris Murphy</b>	D	53%			60%	49%
FL	Connie Mack	R	42%	8 pts.	+20% Nelson	39%	47%
	<b>Bill Nelson</b>	D	55%			59%	51%
IN	Richard Mourdock	R	44%	6 pts.	+12% Donnelly	41%	47%
	<b>Joe Donnelly</b>	D	50%			53%	47%
ME	Charlie Summers	R	31%	1 pts.	N/A	27%	34%
	Cynthia Dill	D	13%			16%	10%
	<b>Angus King</b>	I	53%			54%	53%
MD	Daniel Bongino	R	27%	8 pts.	+35% Cardin	24%	29%
	<b>Ben Cardin</b>	D	55%			59%	51%
MA	Scott Brown	R	46%	12 pts.	+18% Warren	41%	53%
	<b>Elizabeth Warren</b>	D	54%			59%	47%
MI	Pete Hoekstra	R	38%	7 pts.	+26% Stabenow	36%	42%
	<b>Debbie Stabenow</b>	D	58%			62%	55%
MN	Kurt Bills	R	31%	13 pts.	+45% Klobuchar	27%	35%
	<b>Amy Klobuchar</b>	D	65%			72%	59%
MS	<b>Roger Wicker</b>	R	57%	5 pts.	+10% Wicker	55%	60%
	Albert Gore	D	40%			45%	35%
MO	Todd Akin	R	39%	7 pts.	+20% McCaskill	36%	43%
	<b>Claire McCaskill</b>	D	55%			58%	51%
MT	Denny Rehberg	R	45%	6 pts.	+9% Tester	42%	49%
	<b>Jon Tester</b>	D	49%			51%	45%
NV	<b>Dean Heller</b>	R	46%	9 pts.	+6% Berkley	42%	51%
	Shelley Berkley	D	45%			48%	41%
NJ	Joe Kyrillos	R	40%	8 pts.	+28% Menendez	35%	44%
	<b>Robert Menendez</b>	D	58%			63%	55%
NM	Heather Wilson	R	45%	6 pts.	+11% Heinrich	43%	48%
	<b>Martin Heinrich</b>	D	51%			54%	48%
NY	Wendy Long	R	27%	12 pts.	+55% Gillibrand	22%	33%
	<b>Kirsten Gillibrand</b>	D	72%			77%	65%
OH	Josh Mandel	R	45%	8 pts.	+14% Brown	42%	50%
	<b>Sherrod Brown</b>	D	50%			56%	48%
PA	Tom Smith	R	45%	9 pts.	+18% Casey	40%	50%
	<b>Bob Casey</b>	D	53%			58%	49%
VT	John McGovern	R	25%	8 pts.	+54% Sanders	21%	30%
	<b>Bernie Sanders</b>	I	71%			75%	67%
VA	George Allen	R	48%	7 pts.	+12% Kaine	44%	51%
	<b>Tim Kaine</b>	D	52%			56%	49%
WA	Michael Baumgartner	R	40%	5 pts.	+24% Cantwell	38%	43%
	<b>Maria Cantwell</b>	D	60%			62%	57%
WI	Tommy Thompson	R	46%	10 pts.	+15% Baldwin	41%	51%
	<b>Tammy Baldwin</b>	D	51%			56%	46%

\* The gender gap shown for each poll in the table is based on the responses for the winning candidate. Contest winners are bolded where results are final.

\*\* Exit polls were only conducted in 31 states.