



PARITY POSTPONED

An analysis of women's representation
and the 2022 elections

NOVEMBER 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022 election cycle reminds us that progress towards gender parity in politics is neither linear nor guaranteed, but we need to keep working to remove systemic barriers in order to move forward.

Over the last two decades, women have been making steady gains towards gender parity at a rate of one to two points per cycle at most levels of office. There were bright spots in the 2022 election. A record 12 women were elected governor, bringing women's representation in this statewide office closer to the current rates of other offices. And Colorado became the second state with a majority-women legislature, joining Nevada as the only two states to achieve gender parity. However, in many areas women's gains stagnated. The number of women serving in Congress remains flat, as does the number of women elected to state legislatures.

Taken as a whole, the results from the 2022 election cycle remind us that progress is not always linear or guaranteed.

At The Ascend Fund, we're committed to accelerating the pace of change toward gender parity in U.S. politics. If we are to achieve our goal of women holding 50% of elected offices, in all 50 states, by 2050 (50x50x50), we must continue to normalize women's leadership and establish pathways for more women to see themselves as candidates. To that end, Ascend supports organizations that bridge existing gaps by providing training, support, and financial resources to ensure that when women step up and run they are successful. And to truly transform the system, we're working to dismantle the systemic barriers women face so elected officials reflect the diversity of our community.

Current state of representation

24%

Women Governors

28%

Women in Congress

31%

Women in State Legislatures

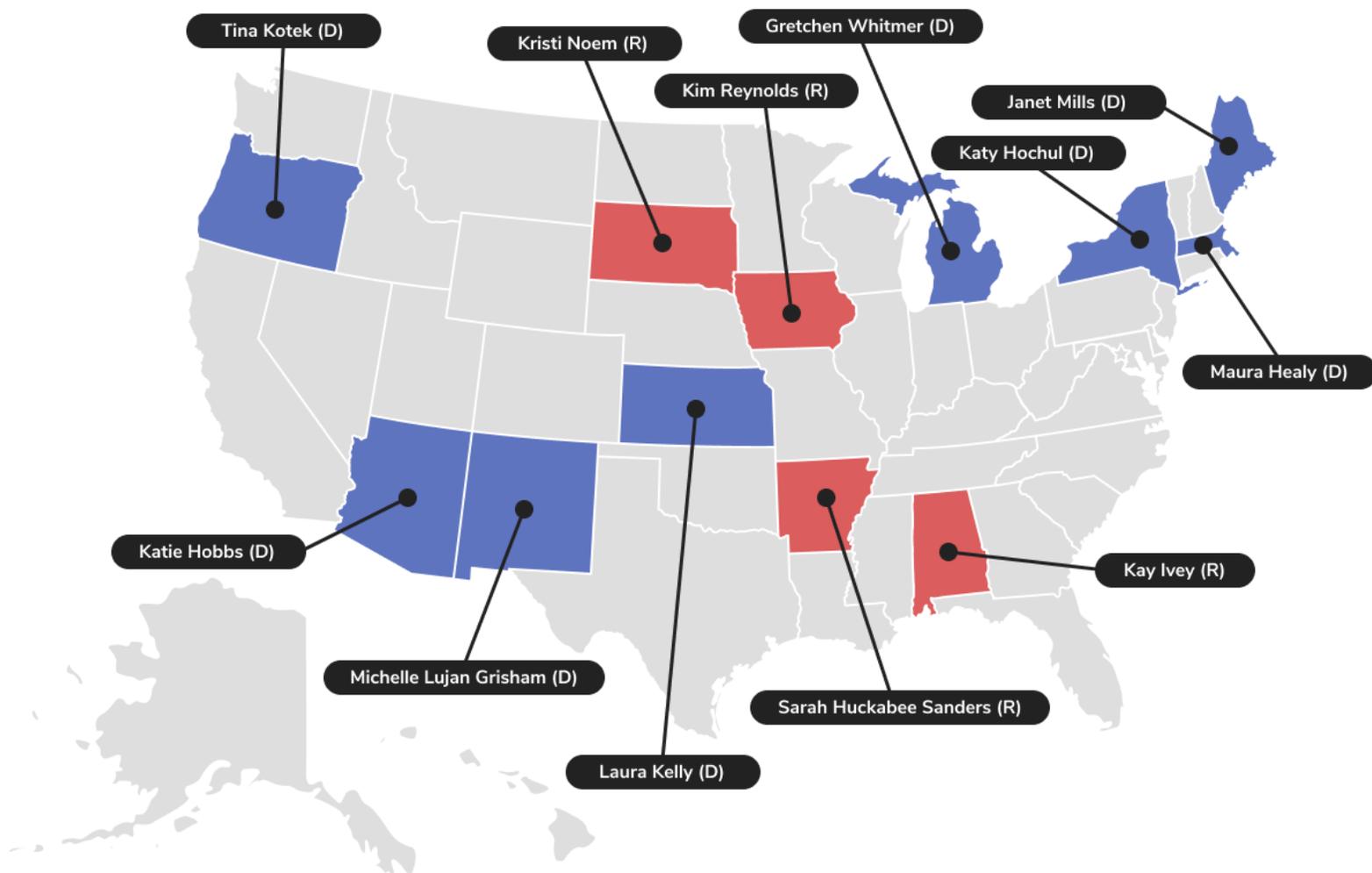
Acknowledgement: This analysis is possible thanks to data provided by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). CAWP is the leading source of scholarly research and current data about women's political participation in the United States. We encourage you to explore their [website](#), [Database of Women Elected Officials](#), and [2022 Election Watch Tracker](#).

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Longstanding record for women governors shattered

A record 12 women governors were elected in 2022, shattering the longstanding high of nine first set in 2004. Voters have long been hesitant to elect women to executive level positions, so this is a major victory in our quest for gender parity.



Other notable firsts:

- **Arkansas, Massachusetts, and New York** elected their first woman governors
- **Massachusetts and Oregon** elected the first openly lesbian governors in the nation – Healy (MA) and Kotek (OR)
- **Arkansas and Massachusetts** elected women for both governor and lieutenant governor for the first time in any state

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Halfway there

Women have broken through a longstanding ceiling with these gains, but we're still only halfway to parity – women now comprise 24% of the nation's governors. And while there is partisan diversity, that is often lacking at other levels of office, there is very little racial diversity among the new class of governors. Of the 12 women governors, 11 are white. Only one woman, Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico, is a Latina – and no Black women have been elected governor in any state.

WOMEN HAVE BROKEN THROUGH A LONGSTANDING CEILING WITH THESE GAINS, BUT WE'RE STILL ONLY HALFWAY TO PARITY.

Women's representation in Congress stalls

Women will continue to account for just 28% of members in Congress, including 25% in the Senate and 29% in the House. While a record number of women ran for the Senate, the number elected does not exceed the record of 26 set in 2020. Likewise, women were a record number of major party nominees for the House in the general election, and the number elected exceeds the record of 123 set in 2021 by one.

WOMEN ELECTED TO 118TH CONGRESS

SENATE		HOUSE	
DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS
16 (0)	9 (+1)	90 (-1)	33 (+1)

In recent years, both political parties have begun to prioritize recruiting more women to run for office. This oftentimes sets up woman vs. woman races, resulting in no net gains. Women are also often slotted to run in highly competitive districts, meaning they are more likely to lose in subsequent election cycles, hindering long-term progress.

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Highlights from the U.S. Senate

- Women will gain one seat in the Senate with the election of Katie Britt (R-AL). Britt replaces Sen. Richard Shelby, for whom she worked as chief of Staff.
- Incumbent Senator Lisa Murkowski will face Kelly Tshibaka in a runoff on Dec. 6th, but a woman will continue to represent Alaska in the U.S. senate regardless.
- Rep. Val Demings (D-FL) and Chief Justice Cheri Beasley (D-NC) ran for the Senate, but both lost their races, leaving
- the Senate with no Black women.



Senator-elect Katie Britt (R-AL)

Highlights from the U.S. House

- Women gained one seat in the U.S. House.
- Notably, two Republican women lost their primaries: Rep. Liz Cheney (WY) and Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA). Both voted in favor of impeaching President Trump, and both were replaced by women.
- Democrats lost three women due to redistricting: Rep. Marie Newman (IL), Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux (GA), and Rep. Carolyn Maloney (NY).
- A record seven new Latinas were elected to the House, including four Democrats and three Republicans.



Andrea Salinas (D-OR)



Anna Paulina Luna (R-FL)



Delia Ramirez (D-IL)



Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR)



Marie Gluesenkamp-Perez (D-WA)



Monica De La Cruz (R-TX)



Yadira Caraveo (D-CO)

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Women's representation in state legislatures holds steady

The number of women serving in state legislatures across the country increased slightly following the 2022 election. Women will now account for 31.7% of state legislators, up from 31.1%¹.

Women gained seats in 25 states, including Minnesota, Florida, and Wyoming. Whereas women lost seats in 11 states, including New York, Oregon, and West Virginia, which was already ranked last in the nation for women's representation. Women's representation was flat in two states.² This illustrates the need to focus on sustaining gains once achieved.



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Colorado becomes second state with women in majority in legislature

Following the 2022 election, women will hold 51 of 100 seats in the Colorado Legislature. It is only the second state to achieve a women majority; Nevada became the first in 2016. However, women will only be a majority in the Colorado's House of Representatives. In Colorado's Senate, where women picked up five seats, they will still only account for 34% of members.

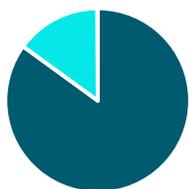
GENDER COMPOSITION OF COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE		HOUSE	
MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
23 (-5)	12 (+5)	26 (-1)	39 (+5)

Only 4,606 women filed to run for 6,278 state legislative seats on the ballot in 2022. However, nearly 80% of these women won their primaries, and more than 60% of those went on to win their general elections.

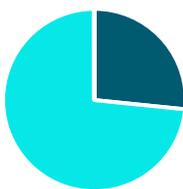
As the data continues to show year after year, election after election – when women run, women win. The simplest and most effective way to achieve gender parity faster is to support and encourage more women to run for office.

State Legislative Seats



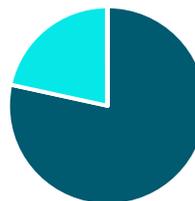
■ Up for Election
■ Not Up for Election

Seats Where Women Ran



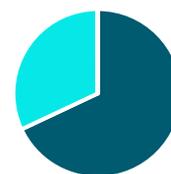
■ No Women ■ Women Ran

Primary Election



■ Women Won
■ Women Lost

General Election



■ Women Won
■ Women Lost

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Positive results from pilot states

Our goal is to elect women majorities in all 50 states legislatures, something that had only been achieved in Nevada to date. Michigan and Washington, two of our three pilot states, made significant progress towards that goal this cycle.

Approaching parity in Washington state

Women will account for 46% of state legislators next year, a new record for the state.

Additionally, Washington's congressional delegation will remain majority women with the re-election of Patty Murray to the Senate and a win for Democrat Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, who narrowly beat Republican Joe Kent who defeated incumbent Jaime Herrera Beutler in the primary.

Progress towards parity in Michigan

Women also set new records in Michigan, where women will hold 40% of the seats in the statehouse.

Michigan reelected women to three of the four statewide positions—governor, attorney general, and secretary of state—and pickups by women in the legislature were key to flipping the House and Senate blue for the first time in 40 years.

Issues affecting women's representation

No election exists in a vacuum and the 2022 midterm was no different. The political environment and the issues at play affected who voters cast their ballot for and directly affected the number of women elected.

Party in power

Typically, the President's party has averaged a loss of 28 House seats and four Senate seats.³ Given that Democratic women outnumber Republican women by more than two to one, it could have spelled disaster for women's representation. However, for the first time in history the party in the White House did not lose a single state legislative chamber.

Democracy on the ballot

More than 370 candidates running for office in 2022 denied or cast doubt on the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.⁴ This included high profile women like Kari Lake, gubernatorial candidate in Arizona, and Kristina Karamo, who ran for Secretary of State in Michigan. Both Lake and Karamo lost their campaigns, proving that voters will reject extremists and candidate quality really does matter.

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The abortion election

Women have reliably turned out to vote in higher numbers since the 1980s and this year was no different as they were highly motivated by the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. Abortion was literally on the ballot in five states and was supported in all five: In California, Vermont, and Michigan voters codified abortion access in the state's constitution. In Kentucky voters rejected an amendment denying constitutional protections for abortions, and in Montana voters rejected a pro-life referendum.⁵

Inflation fears

Women are not a monolith and proved to not be single issue voters when it came to reproductive rights. The economy and inflation were also salient issues for women voters, particularly white suburban women who favored Democrats by 12-points in August and Republicans by 15-points in November.⁶

Where we go from here

With the 2022 midterm election nearly in our rearview mirror, it is never too early to look ahead to 2024. At The Ascend Fund we're working to achieve gender parity in politics because we understand that when women lead, our nation is transformed. There's power in political representation and our elected officials should reflect the diversity of our communities.

In other words, it's past time to elect a woman president!

To do so, we must expand our collective imagination of what a leader looks like. We must fight to reduce the electability bias against women in executive positions and women of color. And we must commit to doing the hard work to sustain gains once achieved. Here are our key takeaways from this election to take forward as we prepare for 2024:

1. Encourage Women to Run

Until women are 50% of candidates, it's unlikely they will be 50% of elected officials. Reach out to women you know and encourage them to run. It's also helpful to connect them to a training program or support network, like those offered by [our partners](#).

2. Elevate Diverse Women

In very few places are Indigenous women, women of color, and LGBTQ women [adequately represented](#). Support organizations that serve as political homes for underrepresented communities.

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3. Build the Bench

We need women at all levels of office. Political gatekeepers should look to women already in the pipeline and slate them into winnable seats, and incumbent women should create succession plans and mentor up and coming women.

4. Invest in Women Candidates

The 2022 election is projected to cost over \$15 billion, yet women are underrepresented as donors and women candidates must [work harder to raise more](#). Financially supporting women, particularly women of color early in a campaign can make all the difference.

5. Dismantle Systemic Barriers

From [low legislative pay](#) to [childcare responsibilities](#), there are numerous challenges women must overcome to run for and serve in elected office. Transformational change is going to require transformation leaders.

6. Tone Down the Rhetoric

Increasing threats and political violence discourage women from running for office, and from those already in office from seeking reelection.

You can learn more about **The Ascend Fund** and the work of our partners at TheAscendFund.org

¹ We expect this number to increase slightly as approximately 50 races with women candidates remain too close to call.

² As of 11/21/22, six states have races with women that are too close to call, which could positively or negatively affect women's representation. Four states have "off-year" elections and did not hold legislative elections in 2022 (LA, MS, NJ, VA).

³ The American Presidency Project – [The 2022 Midterm Elections: What the Historical Data Suggests](#)

⁴ New York Times – [See Which Election Deniers and Skeptics Won and Lost in the Midterm Elections](#)

⁵ New York Times – [Abortion on the Ballot](#)

⁶ Wall Street Journal – [White Suburban Women Swing Back Towards Republicans for Congress](#)

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ASCENDS
WE
ALL
RISE



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