

Campaign 2006: Women and Elections to the U.S. House of Representatives

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(A more current update is available at
<http://www.smu.edu/smunews/womenincongress/WomenUpdate-24oct2006.pdf>)

[1] **Women, as a proportion of all candidates running for the nomination to the U.S. House of Representatives, increased in 2006.** Approximately 16% of all candidates in the primaries were women and this represents a historic high. In addition, 2006 marks the ninth consecutive election cycle in which the proportion of female candidates has increased. The increase over these years has been quite gradual.
[See the left portion of Graph 1].

[2] **Women as nominees.** Women, as a percent of all nominees, basically held steady in 2006. [See the right portion of Graph 1]. In the 2006 cycle, 136 women won the nomination of their party (15.70%)¹; 2004 represents the historic high mark when 137 women won the nomination (15.75%).

[3] **Substantial Party Differences: The Gender Gap Widens.** [see Graph 2] These general results mask substantial party differences. Historically, there has been a “gender gap” among the parties. The female presence is greater within the Democratic Party. This “gender gap” has widened in the 2006 election cycle. Among Democrats, women represented 19.5% of aspirants from the nomination. The comparable figure among Republican women is 11.5%. The gap is even wider among nominees. 93 women won the Democratic nomination. This is 21.5% of all Democratic nominees (up from 19.5% in 2004). Among Republican nominees in 2006, 43 women won the nomination. This is 9.9% of all Republican nominees and represents a decline from 12% in 2004.

[4] **Incumbents, Challengers, and Open Seats.** The following table summarizes the electoral context for the 136 female nominees of 2006:

Strategic Situation	Democrats	Republicans	Total
Incumbents Seeking Reelection	42	23	65
Challenging Incumbent	39	14	51
Open Seat	12	6	19

¹ This count excludes two congressional districts in Louisiana where multiple candidates are running in the “free for all” November election. In the 2nd District, William Jefferson faces a challenge from eleven candidates. Two of these are women. In the 4th District, two men and a woman are challenging Republican incumbent Jim McCrery.

Total	93	43	136
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67 women currently serve in the 109th Congress. Democrat Cynthia McKinney (GA, 4) was defeated for re-nomination. Katherine Harris (FL, 13) is the Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate in Florida. As a result, there are 65 female incumbents facing reelection in 2006. The “gender gap” in House elections is best illustrated in the challenger category. 39 female Democrats are challenging Republican incumbents whereas only 14 female Republicans were nominated to challenge Democrat incumbents. Twelve female Democrats are nominees in open districts compared to six female Republicans.

[5] **Most female incumbents are electorally secure.** Of the 65 female incumbents seeking reelection, only seven are involved in competitive races. Five of these are Republicans:

Ann Northup (KY, 3) facing John Yarmuth
Marilyn Musgrave (CO, 4) facing female challenger Angie Paccione
Nancy Johnson (CN, 5) facing Chris Murphy
Debra Pryce (OH, 15) facing female challenger Mary Jo Kilroy
Heather Wilson (NM, 1) facing female challenger Patricia Madrid
Thelma Drake (VA, 2) facing Phil Kellam

Note that three of these Republicans are facing female challengers; as a result, the outcome of these races will not produce a net loss in the number of women in the House. The lone Democrat is Melissa Bean (IL, 8) who is being challenged Peter McSweeney.

[6] **The performance of female candidates is crucial to party control of the U.S. House of Representatives.** The Democrats need a net gain of 15 seats to win control of the House. As of October 5, analysts have identified the 45 most competitive House races. These are listed in the table on the next page. Of the 45 races, 17 (38%) involve female candidates. Women enjoy a “larger presence” in these races; how they conduct their campaigns in the next four weeks will play a critical role in determining whether the Republicans retain control of the U.S. House.

Most Competitive Races for the House of Representatives, 2006

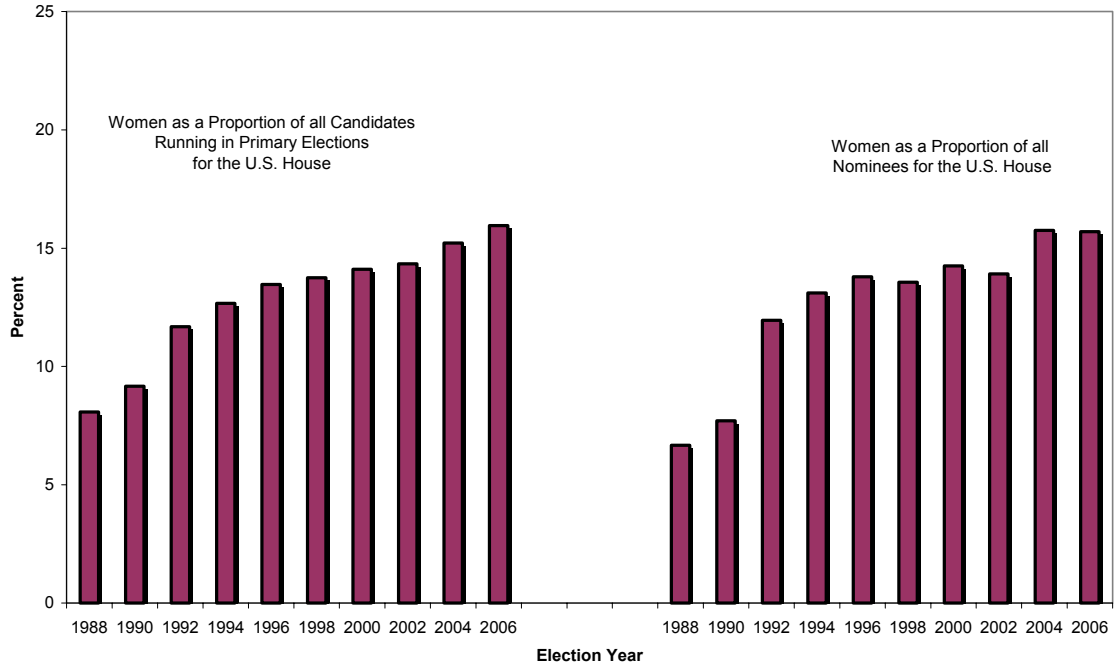
<i>Category (Sabato)</i>	<i>State & District (Open & Party)</i>	<i>Republican Candidate</i>	<i>Democratic Candidate</i>
Likely Republican	Colorado, 4 Kentucky, 3 New Hampshire, 2 New York, 29	Marilyn Musgrave** Ann Northup ** Charly Bass** Randy Kuhl**	Angie Paccione John Yarmuth Paul Hodes Larry Massa
Leans Republican	Arizona, 5 Connecticut, 5 Florida, 13 (Open-R) Indiana, 2 New York, 20 North Carolina, 11 Ohio, 1 Ohio, 15 Pennsylvania, 7 Pennsylvania, 8 Pennsylvania, 10 Texas, 23 Washington, 8 Wisconsin, 8 (Open-R)	J.D. Hayworth** Nancy Johnson** Vern Buchanan Chris Chocola** John Sweeney Charles Taylor** Steve Chabot** Debra Pryce** Curt Welden** Mike Fitzpatrick** Don Sherwood** Henry Bonilla** Dave Reichert** John Gard	Harry Mitchell Chris Murphy Christine Jennings Joe Donnelly Kirsten Gillibran Heath Schuler John Cranley Mary Jo Kilroy Joe Sestak Patrick Murphy Chris Carney Rick Bolanos Darcy Burner Steve Kagan
Toss Up	Arizona, 8 (Open-R) Colorado, 7 (Open-R) Connecticut, 2 Connecticut, 4 Florida, 16 (Open-R) # Florida, 22 Illinois, 6 (Open-R) Illinois, 8 Indiana, 8 Indiana, 9 Iowa, 1 (Open-R) Kentucky, 4 Minnesota, 6 (Open-R) New Mexico, 1 New York, 24 (Open-R) Ohio, 18 (R) Virginia, 2	Randy Graf Rick O'Donnell Rob Simmons** Christopher Shays** Mark Foley/Joe Negron Clay Shaw** Peter Roskam David McSweeney John Hostettler** Mike Sodrel** Mike Whalen Geoff Davis** Michelle Backman Heather Wilson** Raymond Meier Joy Padgett Thelma Drake**	Gabrielle Giffords Ed Perlmutter Joe Courtney Diane Farrell Tim Mahoney Ron Klein Tammy Duckworth Melissa Bean** Brad Ellsworth Baron Hill Bruce Braley Ken Lucas Patti Wetterling Patricia Madrid Michael Acuri Zack Space Phil Kellam
Leans Democrat	Georgia, 8 Georgia, 12 Iowa, 3 Louisiana, 3 Ohio, 6 (D) Pennsylvania, 6 Texas, 17 Texas, 22 (R) ## Vermont, AL (I) West Virginia, 1	Mac Collins Max Burns Jeff Lamberti Craig Romero Chuck Blasdell Jim Gerlach** Van Taylor Delay/ Sheila Sekula-Gibbs Martha Rainville Chris Wakim	Jim Marshall** John Barrow** Leonard Boswell** Charlie Melancon** Charlie Wilson Lois Murphy Chet Edwards** Nick Lampson Peter Welch Alan Mollohan**

** Incumbent

#Negron was selected by the Florida Republican Party to replace Representative Mark Foley who resigned. Foley's name will remain on the ballot with all votes for Foley going to Negron.

Tom DeLay won the Republican primary and later withdrew from the race and resigned his seat in the House. His name appears on the ballot. Sheil Sekula-Gibbs is running a write-in campaign.

Women as Candidates in House Elections, 1988-2006



The Partisan Gender Gap in House Elections, 1988-2006

