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Women Make Strides in State-Level Primaries in 2018

Following the state-level primary in New York State, the majority of primaries have now come to a close, and women have made advances in statewide executive races and as state legislative candidates across the country. Data collected by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) shows that women broke records and marked new milestones in state races in 2018.

“Women have secured a record number of nominations for executive and legislative offices at the state level,” says CAWP Director Debbie Walsh. “As states across the country gear up for redistricting in 2020, the winners of these races will play an important role in the shaping of our nation’s politics for the next decade.”

Here’s a summary of women’s state-level primary successes, with primary results for Louisiana to be determined on November 6th.

Records

- 16 women (12D, 4R) have been nominated for gubernatorial seats this year, up from the previous record of 10 (6D, 3R, 1 Ind.), first set in 1994.
 - This year marks a new record (12) for Democratic women gubernatorial nominees. The previous record was 9, first set in 2002.
 - There are not a record number of Republican women gubernatorial nominees this year. In 1986, 5 women were Republican nominees for governor, 1 more than this year.
- 128 women (81D, 46R, 1NP) have won nominations for statewide elected executive offices (including governor) this year, up from the previous record of 121.
- 3379 women (2374D, 984R, 12NP, 3I, 5PRG, 1WFP) have won nominations for state legislatures around the country. The previous record, set in 2016, was 2649 (1727D, 900R, 4I, 12NP, 1 WFP, 5PRG)
 - In 34 of 46 states holding state legislative elections this year, a record number of women have been nominated. However, these milestones vary by party. 35 states have hit a new high for Democratic women nominees for the state legislature. 10 states have hit a new high for Republican women nominees for the state legislature.

Context

- While it is a record-breaking year for women’s candidacies, women are still underrepresented as a proportion of all gubernatorial and statewide executive nominees, with significant disparities by party.
 - Women are 22% of gubernatorial nominees, including one-third of Democratic and 11% of Republican nominees for governor.

- Women are 33% of all statewide executive nominees, including 43% of Democratic and 24% of Republican nominees for statewide elected executive offices (including governor).

Milestones

- Of the 16 states with women gubernatorial nominees in 2018, 4 have never had a woman governor: Idaho, Georgia, Maine, and South Dakota. In Iowa, where incumbent Kim Reynolds (R) – who was appointed last year – is on the ballot, no woman has ever been *elected* governor.
- Women of color, who currently hold just 8 (2.6%) of statewide elected executive offices, are 10% of all nominees and 30% of women nominees for statewide elected executive office (including governor) this year.
 - **Tish James** (D), running for New York Attorney General, is likely to become the first woman of color to win statewide elective office in New York.
 - In Illinois and Minnesota, women of color were selected by both major-party candidates for governor as nominees for lieutenant governor. The last time that two women of color competed against each other for lieutenant governor was in 2002 in Ohio.
 - In Illinois, incumbent Republican **Evelyn Sanguinetti**, who is Latina, and Democrat **Juliana Stratton**, who is Black, are nominees for lieutenant governor.
 - In Minnesota's gubernatorial race, both male nominees have selected Native American women as running mates: **Peggy Flanagan** (DFL) and **Donna Bergstrom** (R). Either woman would be the first woman of color elected statewide in Minnesota and the first Native American woman lieutenant governor elected nationwide.
 - **Debra Call**, Alaska's Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor, would – if elected – be the first woman of color elected to statewide office in Alaska and just the second Native American woman elected to statewide executive office in the U.S.
 - If elected in Arizona, **January Contreras** - the Democratic challenger for attorney general - would become the first Latina and **Kimberly Yee** - the Republican nominee for state treasurer - would become the first Republican woman of color elected statewide.
- Women of color are 5 of 16 (31%) gubernatorial nominees – and one-third of Democratic women nominees for governor – this year. If successful in November, any one of the 4 Democratic women of color nominees would be the first Democratic woman of color elected governor in the United States.
 - **Stacey Abrams** (D-GA) became the first Black woman to secure a major-party gubernatorial nomination in the United States. If successful, she would be the first Black women governor in the United States.
 - If elected in November, **Michelle Lujan Grisham** (D-NM) and **Lupe Valdez** (D-TX) would be first Democratic Latinas elected governor in the United States.
 - **Paulette Jordan** (D-ID) became the first Native American woman nominated for governor in the United States. She would be the first Native American woman governor, and just the second Native American woman elected to a statewide executive office in the United States.

- **Andria Tupola** (R) is the only Republican woman of color nominee and the only Asian/Pacific Islander woman on a general election gubernatorial ballot in 2018
- Vermont's **Christine Hallquist** (D) became the first openly transgender person to win a major-party primary for governor in the country. Among all women nominees for governor this year, 3 – **Hallquist**, Oregon Governor **Kate Brown** (D), and Texas Democratic nominee **Lupe Valdez** – openly identify as LGBTQ.

For more information and greater detail, along with visualizations of our data, see our [summary page of the 2018 state-level primary](#). Our [summary of congressional primary outcomes for women](#) is available here. Finally, our full election information, as well as candidate lists and historical information, is available through our [Election Watch](#) page.