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Big Story for Women’s Political Progress is Top of Ticket; Numbers of Women Nominated Down-Ballot Less Historic

(New Brunswick, NJ) While history is being made in 2016 by Hillary Clinton as the first female major party presidential nominee, the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) reports little progress for women further down the ballot. Numbers of nominees for the Senate and House are close to past levels, with 167 women nominated for the U.S. House of Representatives and 16 for the Senate.

As has been the case in recent years, Democratic women running for Congress far outnumber Republican women.

“This year is historic because of the first woman nominated for President, but the news at lower levels is less dramatic,” noted CAWP director Debbie Walsh. “The numbers vary only slightly from recent years. While many hope a woman presidential candidate will inspire other women to run for office, we need a few more years to see whether that bump occurs.”

“But noting that women are more than half the U.S. population, we have yet to achieve reasonable representation – let alone parity,” Walsh added.

Three states have never elected a woman to either the U.S. Senate or House, but one of those states, Delaware, could elect its first woman to the House in November. Lisa Blunt Rochester is the Democratic candidate for the at-large seat that has been held by Democrats since 2011.

A record of at least two, and possibly more, women of color will serve in the next Senate. Four women of color are nominees for Senate seats, including two who are facing off in California, ensuring that the state will send a woman of color to the Senate. Only two women of color have served in the Senate to date, and never more than one at a time.

For details, see our [candidate summary](#) and [detailed listing of women candidates for Senate, House and statewide offices](#).

U.S. Senate

A total of 15 women (11D, 4R) are major-party nominees for the Senate, and another woman (1D) is a candidate in Louisiana’s November 8 open primary for an open seat. The nominees include 3 incumbents (1D, 2R), 4 women running for open seats (3D, 1R) and 8 running as challengers (7D, 1R).

Forty women (28D, 12R) filed for Senate seats this year, besting the previous record of 36 set in 2010 and reached again in 2012. The record number of women nominated for the Senate was 18 (12D, 6R) in 2012.

Two incumbent women senators are retiring this year: Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). Fifteen women senators (11D, 4R) are holdovers whose seats are not up this year.

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U.S. House of Representatives

A total of 167 women (120D, 47R) in 42 states have won major-party nominations for the U.S. House. This tops the previous record of 166 (118D, 48R) set in 2012. This year's candidates include 73 incumbents (54D, 19R), 19 women running for open seats (14D, 5R) and 75 challengers (52D, 23R).

The number of women who filed for House seats was 274 (178D, 96 R), far below the 2012 record of 298; that means that a larger proportion of candidates who filed this year emerged as their parties' nominees.

Eleven women (8D, 3R) who serve in the House in 2016 will not be returning. They include four who ran for U.S. Senate seats, one who ran for county supervisor, four who chose to retire, and two who lost their primaries.

Statewide Offices

While few statewide races are conducted in presidential election years, two women (2D) emerged as general election candidates for governor: incumbent Kate Brown in Oregon and open seat candidate Sue Minter in Vermont. Six women (3D, 3R) filed in the 11 states with gubernatorial races. In addition, there are six general election candidates (4D, 2R) for lieutenant governor from among 16 (10D, 6R) who filed.

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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