Contents

Foreword 13
Introduction 16

Chapter 1: Have Women Made Substantial Gains in US Politics?
Overview: Women in US Elective Office as of 2012 21

Center for American Women and Politics
The percentages of women elected to the US Congress, statewide elective offices, and state legislatures have grown from, respectively, 3 percent, 11 percent, and 10 percent in 1979 to 16.8 percent, 23.3 percent, and 23.7 percent in 2012.

Yes: Women Have Made Substantial Gains in US Politics

The Burdens of Female Politicians 27

Monica Potts
Female politicians have become more common since 1984, when Geraldine Ferraro became the Democratic candidate for vice president. Despite the fact that female politicians often have disappointed feminists, the answer is to encourage more female candidates to run for office so that progressives do not have only one choice on the ballot.

Hillary Clinton’s Run for President Had a Positive Effect on US Politics 31

Jessica Valenti
Even though she lost, Hillary Clinton’s presidential run sparked a national conversation about women’s political participation. It also encouraged young women to run for office and reminded people of how pervasive sexism still is in American society.

Women Made Modest Gains in the 2008 US Elections 35

Linda Feldmann
In 2008, a woman—Hillary Clinton—was almost elected president, and there were modest gains for women in the US Congress, with women gaining one seat in the Senate and three in the House. And in the states, a record number of women ran for office in a presidential election year, resulting in an increase in the number of women serving in state legislatures, from 23.7 percent to 24.2 percent. Women’s advocates hope these examples will encourage a new generation of women to run for office.

Women’s Political Gains Have Increased Women’s Economic Power

Carolyn Maloney

Recent decades have witnessed a period of political gains for women, and these political gains have been accompanied by economic gains. Women today are more highly educated, and they work and earn more than the previous generation of women. There is more work to be done, however, to provide women with workplace equality.

No: Women Have Not Made Substantial Gains in US Politics

Kate Linthicum

A decline in the number of women on the Los Angeles City Council mirrors a national trend of decreasing numbers of female lawmakers. Prominent female politicians at the national level, such as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, may send a false signal about women’s political influence. In reality, fewer women are running for office.

The 2010 Midterm Congressional Elections Produced a Historic Decrease in the Number of Women in the US Congress

Meghan Smith
Although more women ran for US Congress than ever before in the 2010 midterm elections, the election resulted in a decline in the number of women in Congress from 17 percent to 16 percent—the first decrease in thirty years. In addition, many female members of Congress lost leadership roles as Republicans took over the House of Representatives—most notably Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), who was the first woman to become Speaker of the House. Women, however, made progress in state gubernatorial races, where three states elected their first female governors.

**Women Have a Long Way to Go to Reach Parity with Men in Congress**

*Nicholas Kusnetz*

Martha Coakley’s failure to win a Senate seat in the 2010 Massachusetts special election is one of the latest reminders of how far women have to go to be equal with men in US politics. About 216 women ran for the House and the Senate in 2010, far below 251—the number of women who ran for Congress in 1992. The main problem is that not enough women are running for office, partly due to sexist media coverage of candidates.

**Chapter 2: What Is the Status of Women in World Politics?**

*Chapter Preface*

*Women Are Leaders of or Running for Office in the World’s Largest Countries*

*Jenna Goudreau*

Women are winning some of the most powerful political positions in some of the largest nations in the world. Examples include German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff. Although women still have a long way to go, these examples show that women can be competent leaders and that people are ready to elect them or appoint them to positions of great power.

*Women Lag Behind Men in Political Power Even in the Developed World*

*Jesse Ellison*
Women have made progress around the world in various fields, including politics. Women now hold top political jobs in a number of countries, but even in the developed world, women remain far below men in political power. It is difficult to measure the impact of women in politics, because there have been so few female politicians. But it is clear that liberating women helps boost the economies of countries and the world.

**Women’s Overall Gains in World Politics** 68

*Melanne Verveer*

Women have made significant gains in world politics. These successes offer hope but women still hold less than one-fifth of the important positions in national governments, and continuing incidents of sexual violence remind us that women’s rights are not truly protected. Yet the evidence is overwhelming that the participation of women in politics translates into national prosperity, so it is important to encourage women politicians as part of efforts to encourage democracy.

**Gender Issues Are Preventing Women from Making Greater Progress in World Politics** 71

*Farida Jalalzai and Mona Lena Krook*

Women have made significant gains in world politics in recent years and have won a record number of legislative seats as well as a number of higher offices, such as president and prime minister positions. However, gender stereotypes still exist in most countries, preventing women from achieving true political parity.

**Chapter 3: Does the Participation of Women Improve Politics?**

*Overview: Most People Believe Men and Women Make Equally Good Leaders* 84

*Pew Research Center*

Paradoxically, while the public rates women equal to or better than men on seven of eight leadership characteristics, only 6 percent of the respondents to a Pew Research Center survey found women to be superior political leaders. However, more than half of the respondents say men and women make equally good leaders.
Yes: The Participation of Women Does Improve Politics

Women Are Better Politicians than Men
Sarah Galer
A 2011 study by a University of Chicago scholar found that women in Congress consistently outperform males based on measures of job performance such as bringing home federal projects and sponsoring legislation. This may not mean that women are inherently better than men, but rather that, as a result of sex discrimination, women must be more talented and ambitious to run and get elected.

Women Politicians Are Involved in Fewer Sex Scandals than Male Politicians
Lane Wallace
Female politicians hardly ever become involved in sex scandals; since 1976, only one out of fifty-three political sex scandals involved a woman politician. This is partly because there are not as many women politicians, but also because the culture does not consider power sexy in women, and because women do not view sex as a reward for achieving power like many men do.

Sarah Palin’s Self-Promotion Has Improved Politics for Other Women
Libby Copeland
Former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin will no longer be in the news since her announcement that she will not run for president, but even people who dislike her must admit that she is very talented at self-promotion—a talent most women do not have. Politics demands this type of ego, and Palin has done women a service by making female brashness a permissible behavior.

No: The Participation of Women Does Not Improve Politics

More Female Politicians May Not Mean Better Results
Kay Hymowitz
Many women think that more women in politics will mean more attention will be paid to women’s issues such as child care and equal pay. The 2010 midterm elections dispelled this notion as many conservative women were elected into legislatures. Women candidates such as former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, Representative Michele Bachmann (R-MN), and others are more concerned with government debt and excessive regulation, so it is no longer safe to assume that electing women will further the cause of women’s issues.

**Women Cannot Rule the World Like Men**

*Sandra Tsing Loh*

Several recent books written by women promote the idea that more women in politics would be a good thing because women are better than men at communication and creating consensus. However, women often are not as good as men at competition and winner-take-all elections—the foundation of democracy. Instead, women should focus on changing the world by building networks to accomplish their key goals.

**Chapter 4: What Steps Should Be Taken to Encourage More Women to Enter Politics?**

**Chapter Preface**

**Removing Barriers to Women in Politics Is Not Enough**

*Joelle Schmitz*

The United States ranks 90th out of 186 countries in terms of women’s representation in government—far below many smaller, poorer nations. Many commentators blame women’s failure to run for office but actually, because men make up the majority of Congress and incumbents win most of the time, women face structural barriers. The United States therefore should take robust and continuing actions to encourage women to enter politics.

**Recruitment and Training Can Bring More Young Women into Politics**

*Barbara Lee*
The future of politics lies with women who are now graduating from college. In order for women to achieve equal representation in government, the barriers must be surmounted with active, early recruitment and training of girls and young women. A number of programs are already working to achieve these goals, and today's graduates should consider politics as a potential career.

**Women's Underrepresentation in Politics Should Not Be Blamed on a Lack of Political Ambition**

*J. Goodrich*

A 2008 study concluded that women have an inner glass ceiling—a lack of political ambition that explains their underrepresentation in politics. But focusing on biological differences ignores very real cultural and gender limitations on women, such as women's role as primary child caretakers and bad treatment of women candidates by the press. The United States must work to remove barriers and encourage women's participation in politics.

**We Must Actively Recruit More Women to Run for Political Office**

*Jennifer Lawless*

Women remain woefully underrepresented in US politics. Three reasons explain this phenomenon: the fact that women tend to be responsible for childcare and homes; women's failure to view themselves as viable candidates; and a gender gap in political recruitment that favors men. We must correct these gender inequalities and, most importantly, we must recruit more female candidates to change this problem.

**A Team Approach Is Needed to Encourage More Women to Run for Office**

*Kevin Drum*

Research has shown that women are more willing to compete in teams than as individuals. In politics, this phenomenon has been proven in countries that have party-list proportional representation—a system that produces twice the female representation rate in legislatures than single-member districts. A study should be done to see if running on a slate increases the number of US women running for political office.