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# The 2016 Election: Women in the Massachusetts Legislature

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# Fact Sheet

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy  
John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies

November  
2016

## The 2016 Election: Women in the Massachusetts Legislature

### The Rate of Female Representation: Slight Increase, But Slow Movement Toward Parity

- At present, just **one in four** Massachusetts legislators is a woman, putting Massachusetts behind all other New England states in the election of women to state legislative office.
- The rates of women holding state legislative office have not risen substantially since the 1992 election, when women's representation increased from 18.5% to 23%. The percent of women in the Massachusetts Legislature has hovered around **25% since 2000**.
- A total of **72** women across the Commonwealth ran for the Massachusetts Legislature in the general election on November 8th. This number of female candidates is higher than the last presidential election year (2012) when **68** women sought a legislative seat.
- Women were candidates for **15 of 40** State Senate seats and **51 of 160** House seats.
- 12** female Senate candidates won and **40** female House candidates were elected.
- 25%** of the House and **30%** of the Senate will be comprised of women; **26%** of legislators in total will be female.
- If all women running for the Massachusetts Legislature won on November 8th, the legislature would be made up of **33%** women; the rate would have been 32% in the House and 38% in the Senate.

### Women of Color in the State House: Seat Gained, Yet Underrepresentation Persists

- Women of color/minority women currently constitute **2%** of the legislature: **2** women serve in the House (Representatives Gloria Fox and Keiko Orrall), and **2** in the State Senate (Senators Sonia Chang-Díaz and Linda Dorcea Forry). The longest-serving woman in the House, Rep. Gloria Fox, elected in 1985, is retiring.
- According to self-identified information from campaign websites, **6** women of color ran in the general election and **3** were incumbents (Senator Chang-Díaz, Senator Forry, and Representative Orrall) and running without opposition. For the House of Representatives, Althea Garrison, Juana B. Matias, Keiko Orrall (incumbent), and Chynah Tyler were on the ballot.
- 2** women of color were (re)elected to the Senate and **3** were elected to the House.
- In the 188<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts General Court, a total of **5** women of color will serve – reflecting a slight increase in the rate of women of color serving as state legislators to **2.5%**.
- Of the **2** newly elected women of color to serve as legislators starting in January 2017, Juana B. Matias, who migrated from the Dominican Republic as a child, will represent the 16<sup>th</sup> Essex (Lawrence). Chynah Tyler who was born and raised in Roxbury will represent the 7<sup>th</sup> Suffolk (Roxbury, Dorchester, Fenway).

Women in the Massachusetts Legislature, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017-8				
	2012	2014	2016	2017-8***
House	24% (N=38)	24% (N=38)	23% (N=37)*	25% (N=40)
Senate	28% (N=11)	30% (N=12)	30% (N=12)	30% (N=12)
Legislature	25% (N=49)	25% (N=50)	25% (N=49)**	26% (N=52)
* House members total 159 due to August 2016 resignation of Rep. Garrett Bradley				
** N=199 officeholders in total				
*** 188 <sup>th</sup> Massachusetts General Court composition based on 2016 general election results.				

## Female Candidates in the General Election: By the Numbers

### State Senate

- In a total of **15** races, there were **16** female candidates.
- In **5** races, women faced opposition; **1** of these races had two female candidates; **10** women ran unopposed.
- In **1** race, a female incumbent faced a female challenger. **1** female incumbent had a male challenger.
- In **2** races, male incumbents faced female challengers.
- There were **3** open seats and **1** woman ran for an open seat.

### House of Representatives

- In a total **51** races, **56** women ran.
- In **25** of these races, women ran with opposition; there were a total of **30** women in races with opposition as some districts had more than one female candidate. **26** women ran uncontested.
- In **5** races, women ran for open seats.
- There were **37** female incumbents; In **4** races, a female incumbent faced a female challenger; **9** female incumbents had male challengers.
- **9** women challenged male incumbents.

\*Open seat signifies seat open before primary election.

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## About the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

Established in 1994, UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies works to advance women's public leadership and policies that make a difference in the lives of all women. Through its innovative Gender, Leadership, and Public Policy graduate programs (certificate and Master of Public Administration), public forums, and policy-relevant and action-oriented research, it aims to ensure that the voices, expertise, and experiences of all women are valued and included in civic discourse and in policy making. In partnership with nonprofit organizations, private companies, and all levels of government, the center helps strengthen democratic values in public life and build a prosperous economy for all, particularly low-wage workers and women of color. All center initiatives and research explore the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and class on policy making and politics.


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