

**Women in State Legislatures:
Influences, Encumbrances, and Policies**

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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Abortion, sexual discrimination, rape: Would policies regarding these issues still be hidden had there not been female legislators to bring them out? Would programs and legislation confronting child care, the homeless, equal pay, and battered women exist had there not been female influence in the legislature? Both state and the Federal legislatures have benefitted immensely from the entrance of female legislators into the political arena. Although the topics that will be brought forth during this discussion could easily apply to both the state and federal legislatures, it has been narrowed in this case to state legislatures.

This discussion centers on a brief history of womens' fight to gain equality, the problems and benefits of being a woman in the political process, and the issues and policy priorities of female legislators. Also included is an outlook for the 1990's.

Aristophanes predicted that "women in power would someday have a radical influence on politics (Flammang,1984, p.23)." It has taken three decades of incremental progression to make this influence an obvious reality in the United States. Women began realizing in the 1960's that they had to go beyond their male critics and beyond merely voting to get involved in the making of policies. They had to throw their talents and concerns as legislators into the political arena. As women reached this conclusion, they began voicing their concerns and began putting other women into office to do something about those concerns.

Their primary problems stemmed from the fact that they were women entering into a man's domain.

THE HISTORY OF THE POLITICAL WOMAN

Aristotle once said, "If liberty and equality as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in Democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in government at the utmost (Mandel,1981, p.250)." Women have spent the last thirty years trying to gain access to that liberty and equality, and each decade has brought with it a victory for the political woman. The 1960's produced the woman's movement: The 1970's brought the emergence of private issues, previously taboo issues, into the eyes of the public: and the 1980's provided the task of maintaining past accomplishments while fighting a continuous battle for political equality.

It is important to establish a brief history of the last three decades of women's strides in order to stress the impact that female contributions and issues have had on state politics. It is important to note also that the policies described in this section were enacted at the federal level; however, the state level was affected as well.

The 1960's

The 1960's are characterized as the start of what has come to be called the women's movement. Suddenly, "MEN ONLY" signs began disappearing from private clubs, college campuses, and religious institutions (Githens,1977, p.30). Women began feeling that their needs merited legitimate concerns to the public and to policy makers.

Furthermore, the enactment of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 afforded women rights that they had never had before concerning equal pay for equal work and discrimination respectively. But this was only the beginning.

The media took an interest in publicizing women's issues to the point where public interest and public dismay created continuous controversy. Women pushing for political equality were met by fierce discrimination and disrespect by both male legislators and male voters. Despite the increased publicity of women's issues, the programs and policies female legislators proposed were not taken seriously, and their ideas were mocked by male legislators. Female legislators merely provided entertainment to their male colleagues in legislative sessions (Boneparth,1988, p.1). However, despite the opposition, state legislatures produced many laws in this decade advancing women's rights in marriage and divorce, support, credit, and education (Boneparth,1988, p.1).

By 1969, there were 301 females in state legislatures (CAWP, 5/1/89), and they were determined not to let women's rights and concerns go unnoticed.

The 1970's

The 1970's brought more specific private issues into the public limelight and women began demanding more government attention to issues of importance to women. Issues such as contraception, pornography, and domestic violence suddenly were pulled out of closets and thrust into the political view.

The Equal Rights Amendment was responsible for much of this fervent need for publicizing equal rights for women. The ERA was proposed in 1923, failed to pass, and was brought into each legislative session after that. It was not until 1972, when women made headway with this amendment (Carroll, 1985, p.17). Although it fell three states short of the thirty-eight states needed for passage, it left behind a flurry of proposed programs geared toward the equality and needs of women.

Women were still anxious to get more women into elite positions inside politics. By 1979, the number of female state legislators had more than doubled. Women on the outside of politics had 770 female state legislators on the inside pulling for them (CAWP, 5/1/89).

The 1980's

The 1980's brought about still another challenge to women. They were forced to maintain the gains of the previous two decades, but to do so in an unfriendly climate (Boneparth, 1988, p.1). They were frustrated by discrimination and disrespect from males who doubted their intentions and abilities. Some males were totally against female involvement in the legislature.

This period also marks the time of the "gender gap" (Mueller, 1988, p.17). Women voters began to realize their importance at the polls and thus, female voter turnout increased dramatically. This era showed a marked difference between female and male votes (Mueller, 1988, p.17). Women had begun to make their own decisions at the polls and thus, to develop a strong sense of political efficacy that their vote could make a difference. This, coupled with the ties to other females already in office was bringing the dream of total political equality and political influence one step closer.

Women still fought for issues that concerned women, but they also wanted to know more about issues that affected the economy, the environment, and the national welfare. The more women learned about these issues, the more able they were to contribute information on policies concerning these issues.

By 1989, the number of women holding state legislative office had quadrupled to 1261 (CAWP, 5/1/89). This signified a victory in the advancement of women and the beginning of female political influence

Table 1 shows several of the events advancing women's rights and equality from 1963 to 1982.

Table 1

Events Advancing on Women's Issues

<u>Congress Year</u>	<u>Legislation or Programs for Equality</u>
1963	Equal Pay Act Ban on Job Discrimination based on Sex
1964	Civil Rights Act
1971-2	Equal Employment benefits for married women Proposal of the Equal Rights Amendment Equal Employment Opportunity Act Equal Credit Opportunity Act.
1975	Organize a national Women's Conference
1977	Ban on discrimination against pregnant workers
1980	Programs on rape control and rape victims
1982	Agriculture and Food Act for widows and single women

*Table 1 depicts the years and events that helped move women's rights along.

THE RECRUITMENT ENCUMBRANCES OF WOMEN INTO STATE POLITICS

Barbara Curran, a former New Jersey assembly women once said, "The biggest asset for a woman candidate is being a woman, and the biggest liability is not being a man (Mandel, 1981, p.31)." The journey into the political elite has not been an easy one for women. There has been no welcome mat for aspiring female politicians and thus, women have encountered many encumbrances throughout their struggle to gain equality. Their

problems often arise early in the recruitment process and may continue with them into legislative office. Problems with discrimination, limited support, occupational limitations, voter reluctance, incumbency, and role conflict contribute to the underrepresentation of women in the "eligible pool" from which candidates for public office are drawn (Darcy,1987, p.93). These problems will be discussed, as well as the actions women have taken in order to overcome these encumbrances.

First, however, it is important to note that women are represented differently from state to state. For example, people in some states are less ready to accept women in the political scene than in other states. Competition from state to state also varies, and in states with fierce competitions, women are often not able to successfully compete (Darcy,1987, p.49). This means that problems female legislative candidates may encounter are manifested more in some states than in others.

Discrimination

Discrimination can become a major hinderance to aspiring female politicians. Susan Gluck Mezey, political researcher, points out that discrimination is evident throughout all stages of the political process from the recruitment, nomination, and candidacy processes to actual membership in the legislature (Mezey,1980, p.64).

Throughout history, women have been considered second class citizens by males. Despite the changes leading toward female equality, the transition has appeared easier than it really has

been. Men still have trouble seeing females as equals, especially in the political arena. Furthermore, many men will refuse to support a female candidate in any way (Mandel,1981 p.112).

Once elected to office, women often encounter discrimination from within the legislature. The issues female legislators introduce are often ridiculed by their male colleagues. Female state legislators are stereotyped by male legislators as ignorant on issues that are not women's issues, but they are regarded as narrow minded if they back women's issues (Darcy,1987, p. 13). Unlike males, women have had to prove themselves competent and deserving of respect in areas such as economics, administrative matters, and legal matters, which do not run parallel to typical women's issues (Boneparth,1988, p.5).

Discrimination in any aspect of recruitment can play a major role in keeping women out of office. It can affect a woman's chance and desire to run for legislative office.

Limited Support for Access into Politics

The lack of acceptance of female political candidates into traditional organizations which facilitate access into politics has also hindered female candidates (Githens,1977, p.114). These organizations, primarily political parties, can provide candidates with much needed funding and support. However, despite the progress that female candidates have made, the male-dominated political parties are adamant about backing female candidates.

Susan Gluck Mezey notes that female candidates point to party bureaucracy and leadership as the real source of discrimination (Mezey, 1980, p.64). Political parties will often hesitate or fail to view women at an equal level; to give them a chance to participate in decision-making roles; and to have confidence in their motives and qualities for public office. The parties will not offer female candidates the funding that is often available to male candidates.

Furthermore, Darcy, Welch, and Clark point out that "it is a belief that political leaders are more apt to slate women as 'sacrificial lambs,' supporting them most often when the race is a hopeless cause and ignoring them when the party has a real chance of winning (Darcy, 1987, p.32)." A survey of southern state legislators showed that forty-seven percent of the men and seventy-five percent of the women agreed that men in party organizations kept women from leadership roles (Darcy, 1987, p.32).

Because of the lack of party support and funding for female candidates, women have turned to non-partisan organizations for support. Much of the time they derive their support from the help of other women. According to Susan Carroll, author of Women as Candidates in Politics, these women and women's organizations can help female candidates run effectively and contribute to a win (Carroll, 1985, p.163).

The National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) is an example of women helping women. It was organized in 1971 to encourage and back women pursuing political offices (Paulus, 1987, p.227).

Shortly thereafter, another group, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded with similar ideas. It's original concern involved legislative action, but it has since turned it's focus to electing more women to office (Kirkpatrick,1984, p.164).

A third organization, the National Women's Education Fund (NWEF) is instrumental in offering campaign training and resource materials to aspiring female politicians (Carroll,1985, p.164). Although women's organizations provide valuable support and funding, they do not provide enough to equalize the campaign funding of males. Lilly Spitz, a fundraiser for the Sacramento Women's Campaign Fund, suggested that since women can not compete with men in fund-raising, it would be beneficial to limit campaign expenses. She said, "One of the things we need to think about is political reform, because there is no way women are going to compete at the spending levels we're talking about (Darcy,1987, p.60)."

Female incumbents can also provide support for female candidates. Women already established in state legislatures, are publicly backing female candidates and encouraging their supporters and constituencies to do the same.

Occupational Experiences

Generally, women have not been afforded careers and occupations which could serve as stepping stones to political careers. Careers involving law or business which seem to dominate the legislative make-up, were virtually unheard of as female occupations (Mandel,1981, p.66). A study in the late

1970's indicated at least sixty-six percent of women would have to change their occupations to match the occupational distribution of males (Darcy,1987, p.97). Women instead occupied positions of secretaries, teachers, and social workers. These positions were viewed as providing irrelevant input into politics.

It is because of the unavailability of prestigious positions (law, business) that women were not able to acquire the necessary occupational credentials to compete with their male counterparts (Carroll,1985, p.69). This hindered their recruitment into politics.

Although many women do not appear to have adequate employment experience, many women are finding that the job experiences they do have are proving to be beneficial. As noted earlier women's occupations are typically in education, cultural affairs, domestic relations, human services, and volunteer services (Merritt,1980, p.120)(See Table 2). Based on these occupations, women find that they acquire skills that make them cue givers to male legislators who may have problems relating to issues involving people. Male legislators will listen to women on certain issues, and in many cases will make their decisions on the basis of their female colleagues recommendations. Those males who do listen, trust these women because they generally have been in occupational positions to obtain the knowledge concerning these issues. For example, a female teacher assuming a position in a state legislature, can supply the legislature with knowledge of the educational system. With this knowledge,

she is able to contribute information on legislation concerning educational needs. The same is true for a past social worker. A past social worker turned legislator is more apt to understand the needs of the homeless and the poor, and therefore, may contribute valuable information to a male legislator who may be unaware of a certain social services issues.

Skills in the home can also provide benefits to female candidates or legislators. Hazel Gluck, a New Jersey state official, compares home management to politics in an article entitled "The Difference" (Gluck, 1987, p.225). She points out that home management supplies women with the experience of communication with people at their own levels regardless of sex, education, or age. Home management also allows women to have insight into what motivates people in various situations. Being a homemaker turned legislator gives female legislators the ability to communicate at many given levels and to motivate the people at those levels for potential political support.

Women who engage in volunteer work acquire benefits from their experiences as well. They gain access to unions and professional organizations, which could eventually contribute support for women political candidates.

Table 2

Occupations of Female Legislators

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Statewide</u>
Elementary and secondary teacher	19.0%
Social and community work	4.2
Profession and technical	50.0
Lawyers	22.7
College professors	4.5
Managers and administrators	40.9
Public officeholders	22.7
Clerical and secretarial	18.3
Sales workers	10.0
No Occupation	19.0
Other	5.0

*Table 2 presents the occupations of the female state legislators in 1985 (Carroll,1985, p.124).

Voter Reluctance

Another factor contributing to problems in the recruitment process hinges on the reluctance or hostility of voters. Female candidates are frequently met by discriminatory comments from voters. One female legislator noted that while door to door campaigning, a male voter said to her, "I wouldn't vote for a woman for dog catcher (Mandel,1981, p.114)." Needless to say, she did not expect his vote.

Voter reluctance is most often evident at the polls. Voters may view female candidates as ominous based on their entrance into the male-dominated area of politics. Ruth Mandel, author of In the Running, said that it is frequently an unwritten custom that voters only accept a certain number of women in legislative offices (Mandel,1981, p.111). They may, therefore, limit the number of votes they will give to women candidates.

Darcy, Welch, and Clark suggest that it is likely, however, that some of the bias expressed by voters prior to voting may not be carried out at the polls when faced with the choice of a woman in one's own party or a man in the opposing party (Darcy,1987, p.150).

Despite the segment of the public who claim to not support a woman because she is a woman, there is also a growing number of people who will support a woman for the same reason (Diamond,1977, p.85). Generally, supporters view female legislators as honest, dependable, and available. Furthermore, female legislators are perceived by their supporters as easier to contact and communicate with on a personal level than male legislators (Diamond,1977, p.87). This trust provides opportune circumstances for legislators to further build rapport with constituencies. Not only will their supporters continue to back women, but they will influence others to support women as well.

Incumbency

Incumbency is the greatest hinderance to women in the recruitment process. About ninety percent of the members in state legislatures who run are re-elected (Darcy,1987, p.150). Men overwhelmingly comprise the majority of incumbents. The majority of the challengers on the other hand, are women. Incumbency brings with it voters, and financial and party support. The challengers, whether male or female, do not have those tight bonds to aid them. Furthermore, while incumbents run on records and name recognition, the challegers are forced to

denounce those records in order to gain votes (Mandel,1981, p.40).

Legislative districts are often gerrymandered to aid incumbents. Gerrymandering can be very detrimental to a challenger because it groups the incumbent's supporters into legislative districts (Darcy,1987, p.160). This practically insures a victory for re-election.

Ruth Mandel calls being both challenger and female a "double whammy" because women must face both discrimination and incumbency (Mandel,1981, p.100). She also notes that the primary difference between male and female challengers, lies in the fact that women "stand farther outside inner [political] circles and are seldom let in" (Mandel,1981, p.101). That is, female challengers must work harder than male challengers to accomplish the same incumbency defeat.

Female political candidates have found that one way to overcome the problem of incumbency lies in their ability to downplay their position as challenger (Mandel,1981, p.17). Using this method, voters may be persuaded to lose sight of the incumbent and turn support to the challenger. If this is not possible, however, an attack on the incumbent's record may be the only chance to remove him (Mandel,1981, p.42). Women are learning that this requires much aggressiveness and determination on their part, but it seems to be an effective approach.

Darcy, Welch, and Clark suggest that strategies to reduce incumbency powers benefit women who represent a relatively large portion of challengers. They also suggest that changes in

campaign financing and disclosure laws could provide greater opportunities for female challengers, and that more neutral gerrymandering would provide female challengers with greater opportunities (Darcy,1988, p.160).

Role Conflict

The traditional role assigned to women makes it difficult for women to enter public office. The role of wife and mother has tendency to isolate women from political activities. Men can be breadwinners and political leaders as well as fathers, but being a wife and mother is viewed as a full-time job (Darcy,1987, p.94). It can become difficult for some women to cope with families and a political career. The problem stemming from this particular situation is called role conflict.

Role conflict arises when the roles that women assume, pull them in different directions. It affects female legislators in two different aspects. First, women must "simultaneously avoid becoming separated from other women, be respected by male legislators, and refrain from projecting a threatening, non-feminine image (Githens,1977, p.114)." In other words, women must assume the role of female supporters, be knowledgeable legislators, and still remember that they are women. Women can not forget the responsibility to themselves to be a woman, yet they must compete aggressively to maintain their position with their male counterparts.

Secondly, they must be responsible to their families as a wife/mother and still maintain a career. Marianne Githens summed this up by saying,

Women who have moved into the political elite feel intense pressure of two conflicting groups. Much time, effort, and energy goes into seeking some reconciliation of the roles of wife and politician. As the politician, women want to be respected by their male colleagues; yet they also feel the need to serve dinner on time, clean the house and so forth (Flammang, 1984, p.48).

When women have to make sacrifices to their families for their careers and vice versa, they suffer from what William Goode coined "role strain" (Mandel, 1981, p.76). Role strain often results in a female candidate's withdrawal from the political recruitment process.

Role conflict may also provide a basis for lack of spousal support. Traditionally, the "woman's place" has been in the home. Many husbands are content with their home-bound wives, yet there is growing discontent among the wives. Many women who leave the home to pursue political careers for themselves, may be met with strong opposition from their spouses. Their husbands may feel that careers will conflict with the responsibilities to the family. Many husbands, therefore, are adamant about supporting political wives. As a result, female candidates hesitate to pursue political careers. A poll of several females overwhelmingly showed that lack of spousal support would severely hinder, if not halt, their pursuit of political careers (Mezey, 1980, p.63). Darcy, Welch, and Clark point out that women will be elected in states where a dual domestic-public role is

supported (Darcy,1987, p.95). In other words, women are more likely to be elected in states that tend to offer women support as both wives/mothers and as politicians.

Table 3 summarizes the problems female candidates may encounter throughout the recruitment process.

Table 3

Problems of Female Candidates

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Statewide</u>
Resources: Money, People time	69%
Problems in the campaign: visibility, issue positions, opponents	24
Organized support: party, organizations, media	6
Voters: voter apathy, voter contact	5
Sex-related problems: being a woman, women's issues lack of female support	28
Incumbency	60

* (Diamond,1977, p.78).

POLICY PRIORITIES OF WOMEN IN STATE LEGISLATURES

Female legislators are known to differ from male legislators in the policies that they propose and support. This difference is based on the relevance that women and men give certain issues and the general nature and attributes of women and men.

Priorities

Generally, women represent women. That is, the policies that female legislators support and propose often reflect the issues that women find important. Men and women have different spheres in society, and as a consequence, women have insights into some matters men do not (Darcy,1987, p.223). Women usually choose to back issues that are "people" oriented. That is, their policies respond to the needs of people, especially women and minorities. As noted throughout this paper, women's priorities include equality, abortion, rape protection and prosecution, ending sexual discrimination, childcare, and the advancement of other women.

As a result of female legislators' dedication to these issues, many of the states have installed programs and/or legislation for arranged child care, battered women's shelters, rape crises centers, child support programs, contraception awareness, and a variety of other programs geared toward the needs of people.

In addition many states now allow men and women to take paternity and maternity leaves and/or flexible work schedules. This allows working parents to maximize free time spent with their families (Kirkpatrick,1984, p.144). Women are now entitled to pensions and equal pay (Flammang,1984, p.135). The homeless are given shelter and food (Flammang,1984, p.135). All of these policies and programs dedicated to the needs of people, were made possible by the proposals and influence of women in the legislature.

It appears, however, that women do not stress women's issues when running for office. According to Carroll (Table 4), few female state legislators highlighted women's issues as a primary concern in campaigns. Only twenty-five percent of the state legislators discussed only women's issues during the course of their campaign. Twelve and one half percent discussed women's issues when asked about their stands on them. Eighteen and one eighth percent initiated discussion on some women's issues and forty-three and one eighth percent did not discuss women's issues at all during the course of their campaigns (Carroll, 1985, p.102). Those who either did not, or only sometimes, discussed women's issues felt that they won their seats based partly on campaign strategies to downplay women's issues (Carroll, 1985, p.102). Those who only discussed women's issues said if they had it to do all over again they would limit their discussion of those issues (Carroll 1985, p.102). Table 4 indicates the extent to which women's issues were discussed.

Table 4

Strategies on Women's Issues
in State Legislatures

Did not discuss	43.8%
Discussed only when asked	12.5
Initiated discus- sion of some	18.8
Discussed only	25.0

*(Carroll, 1985, p.102).

Women make unique contributions to the legislature. Men, who primarily focus on "thing" issues, are turning to women for

advice on policies concerning female areas of expertise or "people" issues. Women can often relate to and explain these issues to males who may be unfamiliar with them.

As noted earlier, female candidates and legislators are also expanding the realm of their issues to include "thing" issues which are often attributed to males. They are increasing their knowledge and expertise in the areas of economy, budget, and foreign relations. Not only are they more well-rounded with the inclusion of these issues, but, they are able to propose legislation in many different areas of policy. This makes them more knowledgeable and competent candidates.

Female and Male Attributes

Shirley Chisolm said that it was "women who can bring empathy, tolerance, insight, patience, and persistence to government. Our country needs women's idealism and determination (Gluck, 1987, p.223)." In other words, women possess different attributes to apply to policies than males.

In proposing policies, men and women often take different approaches to policies. Women tend to be less militaristic on issues of war and peace. According to the Center for American Women in Politics, women legislators are more likely to oppose military action, military aid to foreign countries and invasion by force than their male colleagues (CAWP, 7/86).

Female state legislators are more apt to support strict handgun regulation, and more likely to favor measures to protect the environment with policies concerning EPA laws, and nuclear

power regulation (CAWP, 7/86). As noted throughout, female legislators are more likely to support programs to help the economically disadvantaged, to reduce the rich/poor income gap, and increase spending for social security (CAWP, 7/86).

Instead of confrontation, female legislators are more apt to negotiate when they are faced with a problem (Katz,1987, p.213). Instead of short-term solutions to problems, women think of policies in terms of generations to come (Gluck,1987, p.225). Female state legislators tend to see the gray area of compromise, rather than seeing only the ultimate goal. Women state legislators are likely to fill in the details of legislation proposed by men (Gluck,1987, p.225). Where male legislators create opportunities for acquaintances, women tend to realize the importance of role models for their female followers. They create opportunities for other women (Gluck,1987, p. 226).

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE 1990'S

Women now comprise seventeen percent of all state legislatures (CAWP, 5/1/89). As of this year, every state has at least three women in its state house, and only Louisiana has no women in its senate (5/1/89).

Today, there are no significant differences between new male and female candidates (Darcy,1987, p.59). Incumbency remains the greatest barrier to female candidates, but as women win more legislative seats, the problem of competing with male incumbents will diminish (Darcy,1987, p.151).

Voters remain reluctant to support female candidates, yet the number of female candidate supporters continues to grow. In fact, once party and incumbency are taken into account, women candidates do as well as men in elections (Darcy,1987, p.150).

Campaign funding is getting easier as women in politics become more widely accepted. In many cases, they not only have the traditional support of non-partisan organizations, but political parties are nominating them more frequently as well. One reason for this is that political parties recognize potential advantages from increasing the number of candidates in their pools, and the disadvantages of being perceived as the party not concerned with bringing women into the political mainstream (Darcy,1987, p.157). Political parties are now more willing to accept the female entrance into politics and provide them with the financial support essential to campaigning.

Occupational choices among women have changed in a direction that hold promise for public office holding. Women are getting the education needed to obtain jobs desirable for office holding.

Female state legislators are prolonging marriage and families to pursue their careers; thus, minimizing political role conflict.

Women are beginning to hold seats associated with power. Two women, Vera Katz (D-Or) and Jane Hull (R-AZ), occupy positions of Speaker of the House in their states.

Women continue to gain respect from their colleagues and constituencies, thus increasing their credibility and

responsibility. They are proving that they provide valuable input, and frequently assume the roles of cue givers to their male counterparts.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout history, women have lacked political equality. The last thirty years have provided noticeable changes in the political rights of women. The role of women in politics is changing. Barriers are dropping, and women are running for office in record numbers. Female state candidates and legislators have battled problems with discrimination, political support, occupational limitations, voter reluctance, incumbency, and role conflict. They have been able to overcome many of these problems by using their talents and qualifications. They have used their supporters to gain additional backing. They have utilized women's groups for additional training and financing. Their employment experiences have helped them become cue-givers. They have increased their chances to beat incumbents. They have expanded their knowledge of issues, not only to compete with males, but also out of sheer interest in a broad array of topics.

Male and female legislators tend to support different policies. Women tend to be against measures that utilize violence and/or manipulation. They also tend to understand and support issues that deal with the plight of people.

Finally, the present decade looks promising for political equality. Female legislators now take responsibility for their

own careers, and take charge to see that these careers follow their selected course. The pitfalls and encumbrances that have always provided barriers to women in politics are slowly vanishing as new doors of opportunity are opened each year. The equality and influence that female legislators, and women in general, have fought so hard for are now within their grasp.

Female office holding involves benefits to a society from increased competition for public office. If the female half of the population enters into political competition with the same intensity as the male half, the quality of political leadership will increase based on the number of people involved (Darcy, 1987, p.13).

Women in the legislature have had great influence in making politics what they are today. Policies regarding "private" issues, such as abortion and sexual discrimination, would still be taboo had women not gotten tired of the secrecy and neglect of these particular topics.

The male-dominated legislatures seem to be more receptive to women's issues. Had women not stood strongly for their rights and beliefs, these issues may have been handled behind closed doors, as not to draw attention away from seemingly more important male issues.

The programs and legislation that have been enacted and proposed by women probably would have either been overlooked or handled by men who held different priorities. These policies may have shunned women entirely.

Perhaps it is true that the woman's place is in the House.

On the other hand, who is to say she does not belong in the Senate? Either way, politics will never be the same.

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