

# *Assembling, Amplifying, and Ascending*

## RECENT TRENDS AMONG WOMEN IN CONGRESS, 1977–2006



*One of the major legislative triumphs for women in Congress during the 1990s was the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994, which allocated more than a billion dollars to prevent domestic abuse and other violent crimes against women. Such legislation also raised awareness about a scourge long kept out of the national dialogue. This stamp, released by the U.S. Postal Service a decade later, was part of the continuing effort to educate the public about family violence.*

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The fourth wave of women to enter Congress—from 1977 to 2006—was by far the largest and most diverse group. These 134 women accounted for more than half (58 percent) of all the women who have served in the history of Congress. In the House, the women formed a Congresswomen’s Caucus (later called the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues), to publicize legislative initiatives that were important to women. By honing their message and by cultivating political action groups to support female candidates, women became more powerful. Most important, as the numbers of Congresswomen increased and their legislative interests expanded, women accrued the seniority and influence to advance into the ranks of leadership.

Despite such achievements, women in Congress historically account for only a small fraction—about 2 percent—of the approximately 12,000 individuals who have served in the U.S. Congress since 1789, although recent trends suggest that the presence of women in Congress will continue to increase. Based on gains principally in the House of Representatives, each of the 13 Congresses since 1981 has had a record number of women Members.

A defining moment of change was the general election of 1992 dubbed the “Year of the Woman.” The arrival of 28 new women in Congress resulted from the confluence of historic circumstances that have not recurred since. Yet, the doubling of the number of women in Congress virtually overnight had far-reaching effects on the way women were perceived in the institution. Elected to the House in 1992, Lynn Schenk of San Diego, aptly summarized the changes. “After years in the trenches, more women are finally moving up to the front lines.”<sup>1</sup> The elections of 1992 inaugurated a decade of gains for women in Congress—in regard to their number and their seniority. These gains were capped by the election of Representative Nancy Pelosi as House Democratic Leader in 2002. It was the first time a woman held the top post in a major U.S. political party.

### NEW PATTERNS: FAMILIAL CONNECTIONS AND POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

During this period, the number of women elected to Congress via a familial connection—particularly widows of Congressmen—while still statistically significant, was far smaller. Of the 134 women who came to Congress during this period, just 12 (9 percent) were widows who succeeded their late husbands. Three women directly succeeded their fathers: Representatives Susan Molinari of New York, and Lucille Roybal-Allard of California, and Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. In all, 11 percent of the Congresswomen from this period arrived in Congress through a familial connection.

The elections of Jo Ann Emerson of Missouri, Lois Capps of California, and Mary Bono of California—each succeeding her late husband—to the House between January 1997 and April 1998 were portrayed by the national media as a testament to the power of the marital connection. But an important factor

distinguished this trio and the modern congressional widows: their professional and political résumés were more evolved than those of their predecessors. Earlier widows in Congress, such as Mae Ella Nolan of California, Katharine Byron of Maryland, and Irene Baker of Tennessee, were to various degrees involved in their husbands' political careers. But the widows of the late 20th century had their own careers distinct from their husbands'. Whereas earlier widows, even if they were politically savvy, tended to run for office to complete their husbands' legislative agenda—in effect, to honor their husbands' memory—later widows were more likely to pursue interests related to careers they established before coming to Congress. For example, in 1998, Lois Capps succeeded her late husband, Walter, a theology professor-turned politician. Having worked as a nurse and medical administrator for decades, Capps eschewed her husband's focus on religious issues and became an advocate for health care professionals and reform within the industry. In March 2005, Doris Matsui of California won a special election to succeed her late husband, Robert, head of the Democratic Party's congressional campaign committee, after years as a White House staffer in the William J. Clinton administration.

Since many present-day congressional marriages unite partners with impressive political résumés, the influence of the widow's—or perhaps the widower's—mandate will likely persist.<sup>2</sup> But while personal tragedy and matrimonial connections will undoubtedly continue to bring women into Congress, candidates will be judged less on familial ties than on prior political experience and professional accomplishments.

A matrimonial role reversal occurred in the U.S. Senate early in the new millennium. In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton of Arkansas and Senator Bob Dole of Kansas emerged as party leaders and faced off against each other in the 1996 presidential election. By 2001, both had retired from politics. Their departure marked a moment of arrival for their wives, Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York and Elizabeth Hanford Dole of North Carolina, who had subordinated their own political aspirations to further their husbands' careers. In November 2000, Hillary Clinton won election as New York's first woman Senator, becoming the first First Lady to hold political office. Elizabeth Dole, who had served as Secretary of Transportation and Secretary of Labor, contended for the GOP presidential nomination in 2000 and was elected to the Senate two years later, becoming the first woman to represent North Carolina in the Senate. While their husbands were guests on political talk shows

on network television, Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole debated policy on the Senate Floor as spokespersons for their respective parties.

While the importance of the widow's mandate waned, the number of women elected to Congress with federal, state, and local electoral experience surged. Sixty-four women elected since 1976 (48 percent) had served in state legislatures; 12 had held state executive office positions including lieutenant governor, treasurer, and secretary of state; eight had held federal positions ranging from U.S. Ambassador to Cabinet Secretary to head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and several had been mayors of large cities. In all, nearly 60 percent had held elective or appointed office at the state or federal level.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the level of education of women in Congress, which had always been higher than average, exceeded that of previous generations. All but two of the women from this period (98.5 percent) had some postsecondary education, and the vast majority of these had four-year degrees. By contrast, according to the 2000 Census, just 51 percent of Americans had at least some college education. Moreover, 60 of the women (45 percent) elected to Congress during this period had held graduate degrees (among them were 23 lawyers, five doctors of philosophy, and one medical doctor), again far eclipsing the level of education in the general population (in 2000 eight percent of the U.S. population held a masters degree or a more advanced degree).<sup>4</sup> The average age at which women were first elected or appointed to Congress between 1977 and 2006 dropped nearly two years from that of the third generation, to 48.4 years.<sup>5</sup> The youngest woman elected to Congress in this period was Susan Molinari of New York, at age 31 years, 9 months. The oldest woman to enter Congress during this period was Jocelyn Burdick of North Dakota—a 70-year-old widow appointed to the Senate to succeed her late husband, Quentin Burdick, for the brief remainder of his term.

A significant number of the women who were elected had young families and thus were required to balance their careers with their family life. The structure of the modern congressional workweek, the necessity of frequent trips to the district, and increasing demands on Members' time strained family life. As in American society generally, divorce became more prevalent in Congress during the third and fourth generations of women. Many Members' families remained behind in the district instead of moving to Washington, D.C., increasing the time families were separated. Representative Lynn Martin of Illinois became an influential House Member in the 1980s, with a seat on

the powerful Budget Committee and an elective position in the GOP leadership. But family concerns competed with political responsibilities. “The first time I was in Ronald Reagan’s office, I called Caroline, my 9-year-old, and I said, ‘I have just been in with President Ronald Reagan,’” Martin recalled. Her daughter replied, “Are you going to be here tomorrow for the carpool?” And I said, ‘I have just been . . .’ and she said, ‘I heard you. Are you going to be here tomorrow for the carpool?’ I mean, oh my Lord: ‘I’m deciding the fate of the Western World and you’re worrying about a carpool?’ And the answer was, ‘Yes, I am.’”<sup>6</sup> Some Congresswomen chose not to raise a family in order to devote themselves to the rigorous demands of public office. “I think one of the reasons I’ve never married and had children is because of the guilt I would feel taking time from them,” Marcy Kaptur of Ohio said in 1992. “To me, one of the great achievements of my life has been not wounding a child. To raise children in this job? You can count on one hand the number of women in this job who have.”<sup>7</sup> Three incumbent Congresswomen gave birth later in the decade—Utah Republican Enid Greene Waldholtz (a daughter in 1995), New York Republican Susan Molinari (a daughter in 1996), and Arkansas Democrat Blanche Lambert Lincoln (twin boys in 1996).

## ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS:

### *Congressional Women’s Caucus*

After the dean of women in the House, Leonor Sullivan of Missouri, retired in 1977, momentum for a women’s caucus developed rapidly. Sullivan had energetically opposed the formation of a caucus, fearing it would increase tensions with male colleagues and undo decades of women’s efforts to work their way into the institutional power structure. Her departure, along with the retirements of veterans like Edith Green of Oregon and Julia Butler Hansen of Washington, removed the greatest roadblock to forming a caucus. Organizers acted quickly. Among the core founders were Elizabeth Holtzman of New York, Margaret Heckler of Massachusetts, Shirley Chisholm of New York, and Barbara Mikulski of Maryland. The Congresswomen’s Caucus convened for its first meeting on April 19, 1977. Its primary purposes were to 1) inform Members about women’s issues, 2) identify and create women’s legislation, 3) follow floor action and support caucus legislation by testifying before committees and 4) monitor federal government initiatives affecting women.<sup>8</sup> Holtzman and Heckler served as the first co-chairs, imparting the bipartisan cast the group would retain. Fifteen women joined the caucus.

Three women—Marilyn Lloyd of Tennessee, Marjorie Holt of Maryland, and Virginia Smith of Nebraska—initially declined membership because they felt their constituents would disapprove but later joined the caucus. The group also received a boost from important noncongressional entities, winning the enthusiastic endorsement of advocacy groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC), which had long sought a forum to convey policy ideas to women Members.

The Women’s Caucus waged its first battle in 1977, obtaining an extension for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The statute proposing the amendment passed Congress in March 1972, pending that three-quarters of state legislatures, ratified the amendment within seven years. By the end of 1973, 30 states had ratified it. Five more states approved the amendment between 1974 and 1976. In the meantime, four of the states that had approved the ERA indicated their intention to rescind support. Thus, in 1977 the ERA was still short of the 38 states it needed for ratification before its expiration in 1979. In October 1977, Holtzman introduced legislation to obtain a seven-year extension. The Women’s Caucus campaigned to win support for the measure when it was taken up before the House Judiciary Committee. In the end, the House voted 230 to 189 to extend the deadline for ratification three years to June 30, 1982. The Senate concurred, 60 to 36. However, the ERA lapsed, failing to obtain approval in any other state, and was not incorporated into the Constitution.

The Women’s Caucus experienced a transition several years after its creation, as ideological differences emerged among Members and several key Members left Congress. In 1979, Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey resigned when the organization accepted outside contributions at a fundraiser for the Women’s Research and Education Institute (WREI), which provided resources for education and outreach for the caucus and published the caucus newsletter, *Update*. “I don’t think it’s appropriate for Members of Congress to form a group and get deductibility for contributions made to that group,” Fenwick said later.<sup>9</sup> Congresswoman Holtzman, one of the founders of the caucus, left Congress in 1981 when she lost a bid for a U.S. Senate seat from New York. In addition, Representative Gladys Spellman of Maryland, the caucus secretary and an important mediator among Members, suffered a heart attack in late 1980 and slipped into a coma from which she never regained consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

Caucus membership stagnated as the four Congresswomen elected in 1980—Lynn Martin of Illinois, Marge Roukema of New Jersey, Paula Hawkins of Florida,

and Bobbi Fiedler of California—initially refused to join. Senator Hawkins asserted, “I don’t believe in a women’s caucus, black caucus, or any special interest caucus.”<sup>11</sup> The conservative Hawkins also objected to key items on the caucus agenda. She called the Equal Rights Amendment “irrelevant” and “oversold, vaguely worded and ambiguous.”<sup>12</sup> Hawkins added, “As women we’re all for equality—or superiority. But there are better ways to attack the problems which have come to be known as women’s issues. Elect more women to the United States Senate. It’s women’s fault for not running for office.”<sup>13</sup> Other potential caucus members were disturbed by the fact that Schroeder, an outspoken liberal, had informally assumed the role of the group’s spokesperson. “The dues were too high, and I don’t need to pay that for a Pat Schroeder show,” Lynn Martin said.<sup>14</sup> The four Republican women initially distanced themselves from the caucus to avoid the political costs of alienating the new Ronald Reagan administration and its large constituency. Eventually, four other conservative women—Beverly Byron of Maryland, Marilyn Lloyd, Marjorie Holt, and Virginia Smith, all among the least active caucus members—resigned for the same reason. By late 1981, only 10 of the 20 Congresswomen belonged to the Women’s Caucus.

Declining enrollment and changes in the House rules forced the group to adopt new membership procedures, further altering its composition.<sup>15</sup> In October 1981, the House Administration Committee wrote new regulations that affected all 26 Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs), including the Women’s Caucus, that operated in the institution. The new procedures stipulated that an LSO using House office space, supplies, and equipment could no longer receive funding from outside sources such as corporations or nonprofit foundations. With subscriptions to *Update* now defined as a source of outside revenue, the Women’s Caucus was forced to either adopt new rules for dues and membership to retain its status as an LSO associated with the House or to cut its ties with the House and fund the WREI as a separate, off-site entity.

Thus, in March 1982, the Women’s Caucus changed its name to the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues and opened its ranks to male Members of Congress. “The Congresswomen’s Caucus has gone co-ed,” reported the *New York Times* when the policy was first approved.<sup>16</sup> Women paid \$2,500 per year in dues, and men paid \$500 per year in dues, for which they received a subscription to *Update* and a circumscribed role in the caucus meetings. Within months, more than 100 men had joined. The decision to allow men to join the caucus was not only financially advantageous, but also politically expedient. “We’ve known for some time that we had to broaden our base of support,” Schroeder explained. “We knew that separatism was not the way to go. We need partnership with men in the women’s movement.” She added, “The money helps, of course, but it’s much more than money we’re interested in. We need allies on changing the multitude of discriminatory and inequitable laws.”<sup>17</sup> The caucus kept its office in the Rayburn House Office Building and dropped outside funding.<sup>18</sup> By 1985, 110 men and 15 women were members of the caucus.<sup>19</sup>

By the 103rd Congress (1993–1995) the caucus had an annual budget of \$250,000 and six full-time staff members who drafted and tracked a variety of bills related to women’s issues. The 1992 elections doubled the caucus membership as 24 new women won election to the House. However, when the Republicans gained control of the House in 1995, the GOP leadership eliminated LSOs, forcing all



*Reproductive rights continued to be a political flashpoint in the late 20th century—and a major item on the legislative agenda of many women in Congress. In this 1993 photo, protestors from both sides of the debate gather outside the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., as the Justices hear arguments in a case pertaining to pro-life supporters who picketed abortion clinics.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

caucuses—regardless of party affiliation—to operate without resources from the House. The Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues created Women’s Policy, Inc., a nonprofit group that was moved out of House facilities. Like its predecessor, WREI, Women’s Policy, Inc. was tasked with providing resources for outreach and education. Men were no longer allowed to be caucus members.<sup>20</sup> By the late 1990s, the caucus included virtually every woman House Member and had weathered its early divisions over issues like abortion. As Congress generally became more partisan, the caucus retained its bipartisanship, partly by keeping the co-chair structure, moving further from the divisive abortion issue, setting a working agenda at the start of each Congress, and pairing women from both parties to work jointly on introducing relevant legislation.

### *Women’s Organizations and PACs*

Historically, a lack of money had discouraged many women from seeking political office. Jeannette Rankin’s 1916 campaign depended significantly on the largesse of her wealthy brother. Many of the early women in Congress—including Ruth Pratt of New York, Ruth Hanna McCormick of Illinois, Caroline O’Day of New York, Frances Bolton of Ohio, Clare Boothe Luce of Connecticut, and Katharine St. George of New York—won their first elections because they were independently wealthy. Campaign funding was a source of concern even for incumbent women in Congress. In 1962, Catherine D. Norrell of Arkansas, who had succeeded her late husband a year earlier, faced reapportionment and a campaign against a powerful incumbent. She seriously considered seeking a second term but, at the filing deadline, announced she would not seek re-election due to the exorbitant cost of campaigning. The expense of running campaign commercials on television, Norrell lamented, was transforming politics into “a rich person’s game.”<sup>21</sup> Senator Maurine Neuberger of Oregon left office after one term, citing health concerns. “But the real, actual, hard core reason I didn’t run was raising the money I knew it was going to take,” she recalled years later. “Each year it got more and more expensive, and I just didn’t have the heart to go out and buttonhole people in various organizations from New York to California to Florida and Seattle to build a campaign chest.”<sup>22</sup> Neuberger calculated that a 1966 Senate race would have cost at least \$250,000. During the next four decades, campaign costs soared because of the expense of advertising on television, radio, and the Internet and because of the expense of hiring large, professional campaign staffs.

Norrell’s and Neuberger’s contemporaries outside government soon began to organize political groups to raise public awareness about women’s issues and to generate the resources to field more women candidates. On June 30, 1966, the National Organization for Women was created at the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women. With Betty Friedan as its first president, NOW committed itself “to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.”<sup>23</sup> The group organized mass rallies and protests, lobbied government officials, and initiated class-action lawsuits and other forms of litigation. Among its major aims were to champion women’s reproductive freedom and economic equality, as well as to combat racial injustice and violence against women. NOW figured prominently in debates during the 1970s about the ERA and about a woman’s right to seek an abortion. It became a powerful political and educational force, enrolling more than 500,000 members in more than 500 chapters nationwide by the first part of the 21st century.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s women’s political action committees (PACs) played a critical role in raising money for candidates.<sup>24</sup> No single PAC surpassed the achievements of EMILY’s List (an acronym for “Early Money Is Like Yeast” [it makes the dough rise]). Frustrated with Democratic women’s lack of progress in gaining and retaining congressional seats, 25 women founded the group in 1985, culling their first donors from their personal contacts. EMILY’s List raised money for pro-choice women candidates, whose numbers in the House had declined since the 1970s. Under the leadership of founder and president Ellen Malcolm, the group provided its membership with information on selected candidates and encouraged donors to contribute money directly to their campaigns. “Money is the first rule, the second rule, and the third rule” of campaign success, Malcolm observed.<sup>25</sup> In 1986, EMILY’s List raised \$350,000 from its 1,155 members to help Representative Barbara Mikulski of Maryland become the first Democratic woman to win election to the Senate without having her husband precede her. By the 2004 elections, more than 100,000 members had raised \$10.1 million and EMILY’s List had become America’s largest PAC.<sup>26</sup> During the 1990s, the group went international, with EMILY’s List UK established in 1993, followed in 1996 by EMILY’s List Australia.

## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

American politics in the late 20th century were shaped largely by the Vietnam War and the Watergate Scandal. Public approval of government plummeted as many Americans accused officials of secretly enlarging and then mismanaging the war in Southeast Asia and of abusing the constitutional powers of the presidency. Poll after poll revealed that Americans felt dissatisfied with and disconnected from their elected leaders.

In Congress, major changes resulted from the turbulent era of the 1960s and 1970s. Post-Watergate reforms opened congressional proceedings to the public, and committee hearings were largely opened to the public and to broadcasters. In 1979, the House began televising live broadcasts of House Floor proceedings with the Senate following suit several years later. This publicity not only made government more transparent, but it also exposed the partisanship of debates once settled behind closed doors.<sup>27</sup>

In 1994, during the “Republican Revolution,” the GOP gained control of the House for the first time in 40 years—running on a national platform that featured a conservative document called the “Contract with America.” Led by Speaker Newt Gingrich, the Republicans passed through the House large parts of their Contract, which promised to cut back welfare and entitlement programs, shrink federal bureaucracy, and reform House procedures. These efforts resulted in sharp ideological debates that were exacerbated by a shutdown of the federal government in 1995. In 1998, the partisanship in the closely divided Congress reached a new level of rancor, as the House impeached President Clinton based on his testimony about his extramarital relationship with a White House intern. However, the Senate failed to gain the two-thirds majority necessary to remove the President from office.

It was against this backdrop that the fourth generation of women entered Congress. An unprecedented ability to bring national attention to women’s issues helped these Congresswomen pass laws that affected women’s health, education, and concerns in the workplace as well as family life. Moreover, women emerged from the struggle for women’s rights in the 1960s and 1970s with a greater voice about a larger range of national issues. Over time, women Members authored legislation affecting every facet of American life—transportation and infrastructure, military affairs, international relations, economics, and social policy.

### *Committee Assignments*

Unlike the Congresswomen of previous eras, the Congresswomen of this period had access to virtually all the

committees in both Chambers, including the elite panels. A dozen of the women who entered the House from 1977 to 2005 served on the Appropriations Committee, 17 served on the Armed Services Committee, six women won seats on the Ways and Means Committee and also were assigned to on the Rules Committee. The most common committee assignments in the House reflected women’s changing role in American society in the latter part of the 20th century—particularly the trend of more women entering the workforce. More than two dozen women served on committees with jurisdiction over finance and business—the Budget Committee, the Financial Services Committee (formerly Banking and Financial Services), and the Small Business Committee. Barbara Mikulski became the first woman to gain a seat on the influential Commerce Committee in 1977; more than a dozen women followed her. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee—long a vehicle for Representatives seeking federal funding for local projects—was the most popular committee assignment for women in this era; more than 30 women served on the panel. More than two dozen women also served on the Science Committee and on the Government Reform Committee, which has oversight of the federal workforce.

Although women in the House continued to serve on committees that were traditionally part of their province such as Veterans’ Affairs and Education and the Workforce (formerly Education and Labor), the number of women on these panels no longer outnumbered the number on the aforementioned panels. Moreover, while women still accounted for only a small number of the total membership of any given committee, their representation on key committees roughly equaled and, in some instances, exceeded their percentages in the chamber.<sup>28</sup>

Women’s ability to secure better committee posts was most dramatic in the Senate, where the number of women in the chamber increased from one to 14 between 1977 and 2005. There were a number of “firsts.” Most notably, Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas served on four committees to which women had not been assigned—Budget (1979), Foreign Relations (1977), Environment and Public Works (1977), and Select Intelligence (1979). In 1977, Maryon Allen of Alabama, a widow who served a brief portion of her late husband’s term, was the first woman assigned to the influential Senate Judiciary Committee. The first women to serve a full term on that panel were Dianne Feinstein of California and Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois. Moseley-Braun was also the first woman to serve on the powerful Senate Finance Committee (1993). As recently as 1997, Patty Murray of Washington became the first woman to serve on the Veterans’ Affairs

Committee. As in the House, the most common committee assignments for women in the Senate—Armed Services; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Commerce; Budget; Appropriations; Energy and Natural Resources; Foreign Relations; and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions—reflected American women’s expanded participation in the workplace and the military and in the formulation of foreign policy.

### *Legislative Interests*

The Soviet bloc unraveled in the late 1980s as Moscow faced significant economic problems and resistance from its traditional Eastern European allies, particularly Poland. In the fall of 1989, the Berlin Wall—an internationally recognized symbol of the division of Europe—was opened, and the flow of people and commerce between West Germany and East Germany was renewed. By the early 1990s, the Soviet Union had disintegrated under the weight of a global struggle against the Western Alliance. For the first time in at least two generations, international affairs became less important to the ordinary American. (However, this temporary shift was radically altered by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.)

With the end of the Cold War, the national focus turned to domestic matters, particularly the direction of the economy and the viability of large federally funded social programs. Welfare reform, nationalized health care, campaign finance reform, and the reduction of the federal deficit were hotly debated in the 1990s. Many of the federal programs initiated under the Great Society of the 1960s were sharply curtailed or eliminated. The issue of health care reform was debated but left largely unresolved, as the cost of medical insurance and prescription drugs skyrocketed. A technology boom, driven by the commercialization of Cold War military technologies such as computers and wireless communications, led to relative economic prosperity and lower federal deficits in the late 1990s.

*Representative Patricia Schroeder of Colorado (center) leads a delegation of Congresswomen on October 8, 1991, from the House side of the Capitol to the Senate to voice their concerns on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Accompanying Schroeder (beginning second from left) are Congresswomen Louise Slaughter of New York, Barbara Boxer of California, Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia, Nita Lowey of New York, Patsy Mink of Hawaii, and Jolene Unsoeld of Washington.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



With positions on key committees that allocated federal money, a caucus to educate and inform Members and the public, and public focus shifting to domestic policy, women in Congress spearheaded a number of successful efforts to pass legislation affecting women, both in the home and in the workplace. In 1978, the Women's Caucus rallied support for passage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Prohibition Act. The measure outlawed employers from discriminating against women on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions and required employers to provide health insurance for pregnant employees. Two measures—the Family Support Act of 1988 and the Child Support Recovery Act of 1992—implemented stricter procedures for enforcing child support and stiffened the penalties for delinquent parents. The Family Support Act of 1988 also extended childcare and medical benefits for families that had recently stopped receiving government assistance. In 1988, Congress passed the Women's Business Ownership Act, which created a program targeting service-related businesses owned by women and helped guarantee commercial bank loans of up to \$50,000. This legislation also established the National Women's Business Council to monitor federal, state, and local programs aimed at helping women-owned businesses.

One of the most heralded pieces of legislation initiated by women in Congress—notably Patricia Schroeder and Marge Roukema—was the Family and Medical Leave Act. Passed by Congress in February 1993, this measure required employers to grant employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year for a chronic health problem, for the birth or adoption of a child, or for the care of a family member with a serious illness. Some Congresswomen observed afterward that men were quick to take credit for an issue that women had pushed initially and consistently. At the presidential bill signing ceremony, only male Senators and Representatives shared the stage with President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. Schroeder, who was seated in the second row of the audience, complained that Congresswomen often received no acknowledgment for their contributions to legislation. “Often you see women start the issue, educate on the issue, fight for the issue, and then when it becomes fashionable, men push us aside,” Schroeder observed, “and they get away with it.”<sup>29</sup>

More major successes followed, however. In 1994, with the help of California Senator Barbara Boxer (who had spearheaded the effort as a House Member in the early 1990s), the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) passed as part of a major omnibus crime bill. VAWA allocated \$1.6 billion to prevent domestic abuse and other violent crimes

against women—creating an Office on Violence Against Women in the U.S. Justice Department, disbursing funds for victims of abuse, and educating the public about a scourge that had been missing from the national dialogue.

Through the efforts of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues and the bipartisan work of leading Democratic and Republican women, major legislation was passed that altered research into diseases affecting women. In 1993, Congress passed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Revitalization Act, which created the Office of Women's Health Research at NIH. This legislation appropriated funding for research on breast cancer, ovarian cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, and other disorders affecting women. Funding increased over the course of the 1990s, and informational campaigns raised public awareness. For example, in 1997 Congress passed the Stamp Out Breast Cancer Act, introduced by Representative Susan Molinari. The measure authorized the creation of a first-class postage stamp that raised millions of dollars for additional NIH programs.

## THE DECADE OF WOMEN, 1992–2002

On election Tuesday 1992, American voters sent as many new women to Congress as were elected in any previous *decade*, beginning a decade of unparalleled gains for women in Congress. In November 2002, women attained another historic milestone when the House Democratic Caucus elected 15-year veteran Nancy Pelosi of California as Democratic Leader—making her the highest ranking woman in congressional history.

Expectations for a “breakthrough” year for women had been high since the late 1970s; in fact, 1984 had been hopefully, but prematurely, advertised as the “Year of the Woman.” Political observers discussed the rise of a “gender gap,” predicting that 6 million more women than men would vote in the 1984 elections.<sup>30</sup> When Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro of New York was chosen as the Democratic candidate for Vice President that year—the first woman to appear on a major party ticket—expectations soared for a strong turnout by women at the polls. Jan Meyers of Kansas, one of a group of women running for national office in 1984, credited Ferraro's high profile with having “a very positive impact” on her campaign in suburban Kansas City for a House seat. Ferraro put women in the headlines, increased their credibility, and forced the Republican Party to focus on women voters, Meyers said shortly after winning a seat in Congress.<sup>31</sup> Some expected women to vote as a bloc on the hot-button issues that were important to them—reproductive



rights, economic equality, and health care; the emergence of a women's voting bloc had been predicted since the passage of the 19th Amendment. But this bloc failed to materialize in 1984, and Ferraro and Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale of Minnesota lost in a landslide to the incumbent President Reagan.

In 1992, women went to the polls, energized by a record-breaking number of women on the federal ticket. The results were unprecedented; the 24 women who won election to the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time that November comprised the largest number elected to the House in any single election, and the women elected to the Senate tripled the number of women in that chamber.<sup>32</sup> Dubbed the "Year of the Woman," 1992 also marked the beginning of a decade of remarkable gains for minority women. Twenty-three of the 34 African-American, Hispanic-American, and Asian-Pacific-American women who have served in Congress were elected between 1992 and 2005.

California's 1992 congressional races were a microcosm of the changes beginning to take place nationally. During the 102nd Congress, from 1991 to 1993, women held three seats on the California congressional delegation—roughly 6 percent. In 1992, a record 71 California women were nominated to run in the fall elections for federal and state offices; nationally 11 women won major party nominations for Senate races, while 106 women contended for House seats in the general election.<sup>33</sup> "The days of cold lonely fights of the '60s and '70s, when women were often laughed at as we tried to push for new opportunities, are over," said Lynn Schenk, a congressional candidate from San Diego. "No one's laughing now. If people truly want someone to be an agent of change, I'm that person. And being a woman is part of that."<sup>34</sup> Six new women Members from California, including Schenk, were elected to the House in the fall of 1992 alone. Two others, Representative Barbara Boxer and former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein, won election as U.S. Senators, making California the first state with two women in the Senate. By the 109th Congress in 2005, 21 members of the California congressional delegation were women—38 percent of the state's total representation in Congress.

Women's impressive gains in 1992 were not the product of any one galvanizing event, but rather the confluence of several long-term trends and short-term election year issues. Demographics, global politics, scandal, and the ripple effect of the women's liberation movement all played a part in the results of that historic election.

In 1992, the incumbent candidates faced a tougher-than-usual contest for re-election. An economic downturn that had begun in 1991 was predicted to be the leading edge of a long-term recession. American business mired as the country transitioned to a peace-time economy after the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The national focus shifted from the Soviet–American conflict and national security to areas where women's influence was more established—education, health care, welfare reform, and the economy. While Americans worried about their jobs, they watched apprehensively the resurgent Japanese economy and the reunification of Germany. The check-writing scandal in the House "bank" (operated by the Sergeant at Arms), where a large number of Representatives had overdrawn their accounts—in some cases on hundreds of occasions—also contributed to the anti-incumbent sentiment within the electorate that disdained business-as-usual politics in Washington. Moreover, the debate over the abortion issue had reached a divisive point, with a pro-life President in the White House and the Supreme Court considering a ruling that could have reversed *Roe v. Wade*.

The issue of whom President George H. W. Bush's administration would appoint to replace retiring Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall became a galvanizing one for women candidates. Bush nominated Clarence Thomas, a conservative he had earlier appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals. Thomas's antiabortion stance, as well as his opposition to affirmative action, made him a lightning rod for liberal groups and Democratic Senators. But his confirmation hearings became a public forum on sexual harassment in the workplace when Thomas's former aide Anita Hill accused him in televised hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee of making unwanted advances. Beamed into millions of homes, the spectacle of the all-male Judiciary Committee offering Hill little sympathy and at moments treating her with outright hostility reinforced the perception that women's perspectives received short shrift on Capitol Hill. Seven Democratic women from the House marched in protest to address the caucus of their Democratic Senate colleagues, but they were rebuffed.

While controversy stirred by the Thomas–Hill episode provided good campaign rhetoric and a convenient media explanation for the "Year of the Woman," other contributing factors included the availability of funding, the growing pool of women candidates with elective experience, and the presence of a Democratic presidential candidate, who shared their beliefs on many of the issues (24 of the 27 women elected that fall were Democrats). Also significant

were the effects of redistricting after the 1990 Census, the large number of retiring Members, and the casualties of the House banking scandal; the combination of these effects created 93 open seats in the U.S. House during the 1992 elections.<sup>35</sup> Candidates of both genders embraced the popular theme of change in government by stressing their credentials as Washington outsiders, but women benefited more from this perception, because they had long been marginalized in the Washington political process. As Elizabeth Furse, a successful candidate for an Oregon House seat, pointed out during her campaign: “People see women as agents of change. Women are seen as outsiders, outside the good old boy network which people are perceiving has caused so many of the economic problems we see today.”<sup>36</sup>

For all the media attention paid to the “Year of the Woman,” it was but a part of the larger trend of women’s movement into elective office. A number of women expressed exasperation with the media focus that hyped the sensational news story but largely ignored more enduring trends and influences. “The year of the woman in retrospect was a small gain, but it was the start of what was a big gain,” Senator Barbara Boxer observed a decade later. “I don’t even think it was the year of the woman then, but it started the trend of electing more women.”<sup>37</sup> Others felt the label diminished women’s achievement and reinforced perceptions that their impact on Congress was temporary. As Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland said: “Calling 1992 the Year of the Woman makes it sound like the Year of the Caribou or the Year of the Asparagus. We’re not a fad, a fancy, or a year.”<sup>38</sup>

The trend that culminated in the 1990s had begun decades earlier in the state legislatures, where women began to accumulate political experience that prepared them to be legislators. The first Congresswoman with elective experience in a state legislature was Kathryn O’Loughlin McCarthy of Kansas. For decades McCarthy proved the exception to the rule; between her election to Congress in 1932 and 1970, when great numbers of women began to serve in state capitols, hardly more than a dozen Congresswomen had held a seat in the state legislature or a statewide elective office. It was only in the last 30 years of the 20th century that women made significant gains in state legislatures and, subsequently, the U.S. Congress. For example, in 1970 women held about four percent (301 seats) of all the seats in state legislatures nationwide. In 1997 that figure plateaued at around 1,600, and for the next five years women made up about 22 percent of state legislators nationally. In 2003, 1,648 (22.3 percent) of the 7,382 state legislators in the United

States were women.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, however, the “Year of the Woman” spawned expectations that women candidates in subsequent elections could not realistically meet. Contrary to widely held beliefs, women were not about to change the political culture overnight—especially not on seniority-based Capitol Hill. Later political battles over issues such as reproductive rights, welfare reform, and the federal deficit dashed hopes that women would unite across party lines, subordinate ideology to pragmatism, and increase their power.

Moreover, the belief that sexism would be eradicated proved overly optimistic, as old stereotypes persisted. Along with Representatives Barbara Boxer and Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, Mary Rose Oakar of Ohio led a 1985 protest of House women demanding equal access to the House gym and fitness facilities. Unhappy that the women’s gym lacked the modern exercise equipment, swimming pool, and basketball court accessible to the male Members, the three lawmakers made their pitch in a song belted out to the tune of “Has Anyone Seen My Gal?” before a meeting of the House Democratic Whips.<sup>40</sup> However, women still contended with unequal access to gym facilities and other indications of sexism.<sup>41</sup> Once when fellow freshman Leslie Byrne of Virginia entered an elevator full of Members, a Congressman remarked, “It sure is nice to have you ladies here. It spiffs up the place.” Exasperated, Byrne quipped, “Yup, chicks in Congress.”<sup>42</sup> Another Member of the class of ’92 observed that Congress had failed to keep pace with changes in American society. “Out in the real world, we took care of a lot of these basic issues between men and women years ago,” said Lynn Schenk. “But this place has been so insulated, the shock waves of the ’70s and ’80s haven’t quite made it through the walls.”<sup>43</sup>

After the 1992 elections, women Members were still in a distinct minority, although for the first time in congressional history they accounted for more than 10 percent of the total membership. Subsequent growth was slower, though steady. On average since 1992, 10 new women have been elected to Congress each election cycle, while incumbency rates have remained well above 90 percent. In August 2005, women made up 15.5 percent of Congress—an all-time high. Some women noted that although they had failed to achieve numerical parity in Congress, they had dramatically altered the political culture within the electorate. “In previous years, when I have run for office, I always had to overcome being a woman,” said Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. “All I’ve ever wanted was an equal chance to make my case, and I think we’re getting to that point—and that’s the victory.”<sup>44</sup>

## COMMITTEE AND PARTY LEADERSHIP

The women who entered office in record numbers in the 1990s soon accrued seniority in committees and catapulted into top leadership posts. This trend ran counter to historical precedent, although arguably the most powerful and influential woman to head a committee was one of the first: Mary T. Norton chaired four House committees during the 1930s and 1940s—Labor, House Administration, District of Columbia, and Memorials. However, Norton's experience was unusual and, tellingly, she never held a top leadership job in the Democratic Party during her 25 years in the House. As late as the spring of 1992, the iconic feminist Congresswoman Pat Schroeder observed that the wheels of sexual equality on Capitol Hill turned slowly. "It's not revolutionary, it's evolutionary," Schroeder said. "We get some appointments, we get some this, we get some that. But to think that women get any power positions, that we've become the bull elephants, that we're the kahunas or whatever, well, we're not."<sup>45</sup>

Unlike the third generation of women in Congress, the fourth generation often chose to confront the institution less directly. Whereas Bella Abzug's generation worked against the congressional establishment to breach gender barriers, many women in the fourth generation worked for change from within the power structure. Women in the 1980s and early 1990s who moved into leadership posts did so largely by working within traditional boundaries—a time-honored approach that extended back to Mary Norton and Edith Nourse Rogers in the first generation of Congresswomen. The careers of Lynn Martin and Barbara Kennelly of Connecticut illustrate this tendency: Martin served as Vice Chair of the GOP Conference; Kennelly served as the Democratic Party's Chief Deputy Whip (a position created for her) and eventually became Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus. Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro also possessed an ability to work with the House leadership, particularly Speaker Tip O'Neill of Massachusetts, in a way her male colleagues perceived as "nonthreatening." As Ferraro's colleague Marge Roukema observed, Ferraro "takes a feminist stand but works only within the art of the possible."<sup>46</sup> The Congresswoman's pragmatism struck a balance that was pleasing to both Capitol Hill insiders and feminists. Betty Friedan, founder of NOW, judged that Ferraro was "no cream puff; she's a tough dame."<sup>47</sup> Other women who were influential in their parties followed a similarly pragmatic approach. "I worry about marginalizing women in the institution," said freshman Rosa DeLauro of

Connecticut in 1992. "It's a very competitive place, and what you need to do is build coalitions, and since there are 29 women who don't think alike, you build coalitions among women, and you build coalitions among men. If you sit there and say, 'I'm a woman, we're in the minority here,' then you're never going to get anywhere in this body."<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, until 1992, women had been on the margins of institutional leadership. Fewer than 10 women had chaired full congressional committees, and just eight House and Senate women had held positions in the party leadership. The two highest-ranking women in House were still at considerable remove from the levers of power: Mary Rose Oaker was Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus and Lynn Martin was Vice Chair of the Republican Conference in the 99th and the 100th Congresses (1985–1989). The highest-ranking woman in Senate history was Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, whom GOP peers elected Chair of the Republican Conference in the 90th through the 92nd Congresses (1967–1973).

Three women led committees in the 104th Congress (1995–1997): Jan Meyers chaired the House Small Business Committee, Nancy Johnson chaired the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and Nancy Landon Kassebaum chaired the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Kassebaum's post was particularly noteworthy, as she was the first woman in Senate history to head a major standing committee. However, by the end of the 104th Congress, Meyers, Johnson, and Kassebaum had either left their posts or retired from Congress. The only other women to chair congressional committees during this period were Senators Olympia Snowe (Small Business) and Susan Collins (Governmental Affairs) in the 108th and 109th Congresses (2003–2007).

But gradual changes in the 1990s had begun to alter the leadership makeup in ways that portended greater involvement for women. From the 103rd through the 108th Congresses (1993–2005), 12 more women moved into the leadership ranks. Representatives Susan Molinari, Jennifer Dunn of Washington, Tillie Fowler of Florida, and Deborah Pryce of Ohio served as the Vice Chair of the House Republican Conference from the 104th through the 107th Congresses, respectively. In the 108th Congress, Pryce, who first won election to Congress in the "Year of the Woman," became the highest-ranking woman in House GOP history when she was elected Chair of the Republican Conference. Her accomplishment was exceeded only by that of Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi of California, who had succeeded Representative Sala Burton of California in



*Part of the success of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues is that from its origins in 1977, it has been structured as a bipartisan group chaired by women of both major political parties. Front row, left to right, Representative Sue Kelly of New York, outgoing Republican co-chair for the Women's Caucus; Representative Judy Biggert of Illinois, incoming Republican co-chair; Representative Juanita Millender-McDonald of California, incoming Democratic co-chair; and Representative Carolyn Maloney of New York, outgoing Democratic co-chair, are joined by other women Members of the 107th Congress as they sit for an official portrait on January 31, 2001.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

the House after her death in 1987. In 2001, Pelosi won the Democratic Caucus contest for Whip. Little more than a year later, when Representative Dick Gephardt of Missouri left the Democratic Party's top post, Pelosi overwhelmingly won her colleagues' support in her bid to become House Democratic Leader. This event garnered national and international attention.

Meanwhile, many of the women elected in the 1990s accrued seniority and, as a result, more important committee assignments. Though not yet apparent in the chairmanships of full committees, this power shift was evident in the chairmanships of subcommittees—a key prerequisite for chairing a full committee. Since the 80th Congress (1947–1949)—the first Congress for which such records are readily accessible—54 women have chaired House or Senate subcommittees. Three women—Margaret Chase Smith, Barbara Mikulski and Barbara Boxer—chaired subcommittees in both the House and the Senate. While just two women—Representatives Smith and Bolton—

chaired House subcommittees in the 80th Congress (there were no women chairing Senate subcommittees at the time), by the 109th Congress in 2005, 10 women chaired subcommittees in the House and the Senate. More telling, roughly half the women in congressional history who chaired subcommittees attained these posts after 1992.

Representatives Pelosi and Pryce were on the leading edge of the spike in women elected to Congress. Pryce was elected to Congress at age 41 and attained her leadership post at 51. Pelosi arrived in the House at age 47 and was elected House Democratic Leader at 62. Behind these two leaders are a host of women who were elected in the latter 1990s. When elected, some of these women were 10 years younger than Pelosi and Pryce upon their arrival in Congress, giving them additional tenure to accrue seniority and power. If present trends continue and more and younger women are elected to Congress, women will likely become better represented in high committee posts and the leadership.

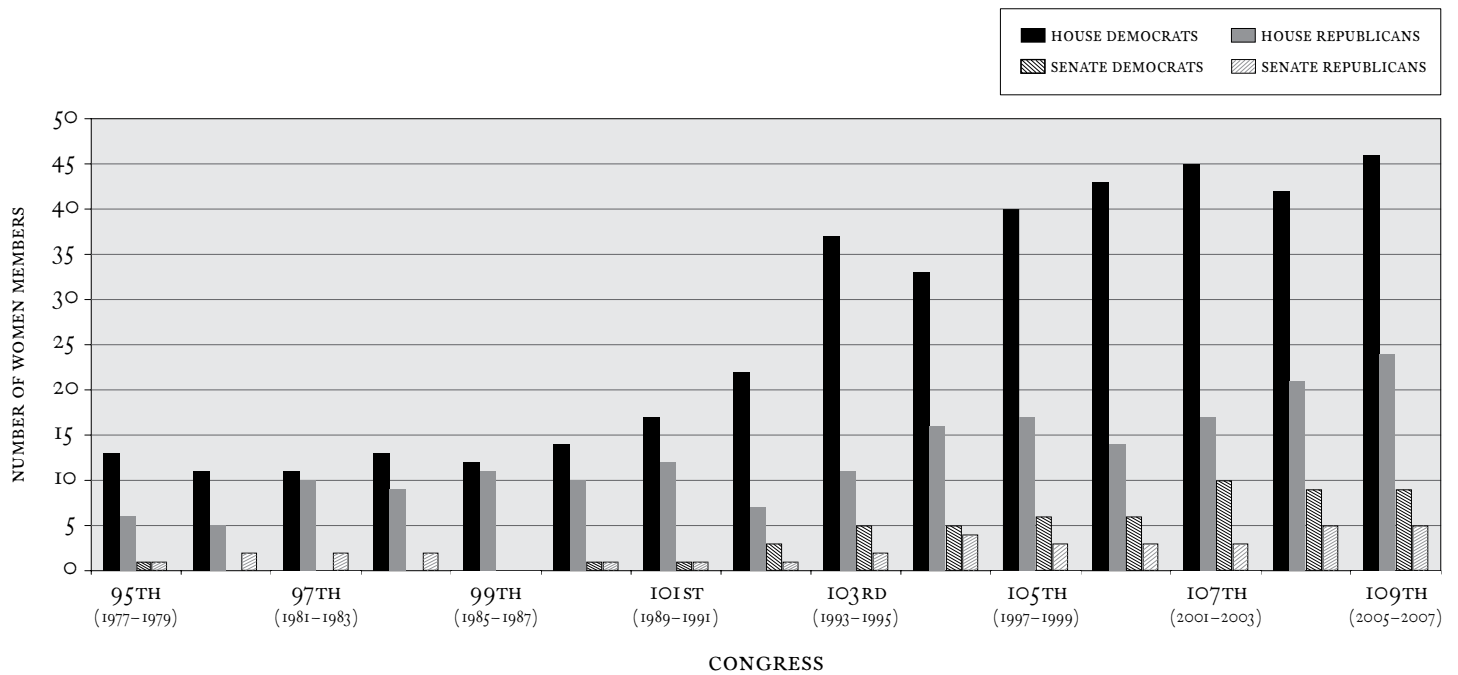
#### NOTES

- 1 Barry M. Horstman, "Women Poised to Make Big Political Gains," 24 August 1992. *Los Angeles Times*,
- 2 At least two husbands have attempted to directly succeed their wives in the House. In 1980, Gladys Noon Spellman of Maryland suffered a heart attack and lapsed into a coma from which she never recovered. When the House declared her seat vacant in early 1981, her husband, Reuben Spellman, entered the April 1981 Democratic primary but lost. After Patsy Mink of Hawaii died in September 2002, her husband, John Francis Mink, was one of more than 30 candidates in a special election to fill her seat for the remainder of the 107th Congress. He, too, was unsuccessful.
- 3 Five of the aforementioned group had a combination of state legislative and state executive or federal office experience.
- 4 Statistics based on the 2000 U.S. Census. Figures are from chart QT-P20: "Educational Attainment by Sex: 2000." Available online at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
- 5 For information on the average age of congressional Membership, see the *CQ Guide to Congress*, 4th ed, p. 700 and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) Profiles of the 103rd to 109th Congresses.
- 6 David Finkel, "Women on the Verge of a Power Breakthrough," 10 May 1992, *Washington Post Magazine*: W15.

- 7 Finkel, "Women on the Verge of a Power Breakthrough."
- 8 Irwin Gertzog, *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Behavior, and Integration* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995): 186. For a detailed analysis of the Women's Caucus that extends into the late 1990s, see Gertzog's *Women and Power on Capitol Hill: Reconstructing the Congressional Women's Caucus* (Boulder, CO: Rienner Publishers, 2004).
- 9 Lynn Rosellini, "Dues Plan Divides Women's Caucus," 16 July 1981, *New York Times*: C13.
- 10 Gertzog, *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Behavior, and Integration*: 200–202.
- 11 Rosellini, "Dues Plan Divides Women's Caucus."
- 12 "Paula Hawkins," *Current Biography 1985* (New York: H.W. Wilson and Company, 1985): 176.
- 13 Elizabeth Bumiller, "The Lady Is the Tigress: Paula Hawkins, Florida's Pugnacious New Senator," 2 December 1980, *Washington Post*: B1; Jo Thomas, "Mrs. Hawkins, the Battling Housewife, Goes to Washington," 7 November 1980, *New York Times*: 18.
- 14 Gertzog, *Congressional Women*: 204–205.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 209–212.
- 16 Majorie Hunter, "Congresswomen Admit 46 Men to Their Caucus," *New York Times*, 14 December 1981, *New York Times*: D10.
- 17 Hunter, "Congresswomen Admit 46 Men to Their Caucus."
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Barbara Gamarekian, "Women's Caucus: Eight Years of Progress," 27 May 1985, *New York Times*: A20.
- 20 Kevin Merida, "Role of House Women's Caucus Changes," 15 February 1995, *Washington Post*: A4; see also "The Women's Caucus: Caucus History," <http://www.womenspolicy.org/caucus/history.html> (accessed 28 April 2005).
- 21 Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 289.
- 22 Maurine Neuberger, Oral History Interview, April 5 and 17, 1979; May 1, 10, 15, 1979, conducted by the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress, Inc., Manuscript Room, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 23 National Organization for Women Web site: <http://www.now.org/organization/faq.html> (accessed 17 May 2005).
- 24 Other influential PACs included the nonpartisan Women's Campaign Fund, created in 1974 to fund pro-choice political candidates; WISH ("Women in the Senate and House") List, which supports pro-choice Republican women; and the National Women's Political Caucus, founded in the early 1970s, to promote women's participation in the political process by supporting pro-choice women at all levels of government and providing political training for its members. In the 1990s and 2000s, a number of pro-life PACs were founded to support candidates who opposed abortion procedures. These groups included the Republican National Coalition for Life, founded by Phyllis Schlafly in 1990; the National Pro-Life Alliance; and the Pro-Life Campaign Committee.
- 25 Charles Trueheart, "Politics' New Wave of Women; With Voters Ready for a Change, Candidates Make Their Move," 7 April 1992, *Washington Post*: E1.
- 26 <http://www.emilyslist.org/about/history.phtml> (accessed 13 June 2003; 28 April 2005).
- 27 Julian E. Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill: The Struggle to Reform Congress and Its Consequences, 1948–2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004): see especially, 206–232.
- 28 For instance, by the 109th Congress (2005–2007), eight women served on the Appropriations Committee (12 percent of its membership), and 11 women held seats on the Energy and Commerce Committee (19 percent).
- The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, also changed the way Congress did business. A Select Committee on Homeland Security was created in the 108th Congress and was later made permanent in the 109th Congress. The new panel included eight women Members (23.5 percent).
- 29 Joan A. Lowy, *Pat Schroeder: A Woman in the House* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2003): 100.
- 30 See, for example, Jane Perlez, "Women, Power, and Politics," 24 June 1984, *New York Times*: SM22.
- 31 Bill Peterson, "Reagan Did Understand Women: While Democrats Slept, the GOP Skillfully Captured Their Votes," 3 March 1985, *Washington Post*: C5.
- 32 Twenty-four women had been elected to the House in the decade running from 1980 to 1989; 23 were elected between 1970 and 1979.
- 33 Susan Yoachim and Robert B. Gunnison, "Women Candidates Win Record 71 Nominations," 4 June 1992, *San Francisco Chronicle*: A1; Jackie Koszczuk, "Year of the Woman? Political Myth Fades," 18 October 1992, *Wisconsin State Journal*: 1E. Heading into the primaries in 1992 an unprecedented 37 California women were candidates for U.S. House and Senate seats (as well as an equally exceptional number of 127 for the California Assembly); these numbers reflected the larger national trend, where 157 women were running in the Democratic and Republican primaries for the U.S. House (140) and the Senate (17). Previously, the largest number of women contenders was 10 for Senate seats (1984) and 70 for House seats (1990).
- 34 Barry M. Horstman, "San Diego County Elections; Women Flex Muscles in County Races," 4 June 1992, *Los Angeles Times*: B1.
- 35 Adam Clymer, "In 2002, Woman's Place May Be in the Statehouse," 15 April 2002, *New York Times*: A1.
- 36 Trueheart, "Politics' New Wave of Women; With Voters Ready for a Change, Candidates Make Their Move."
- 37 Lauren Whittington, "Women See Gains Slowing; Number of Female Lawmakers Not Expected to Rise Dramatically," 19 September 2002, *Roll Call*: 13, 20.
- 38 Barbara Mikulski et al. *Nine and Counting: The Women of the Senate* (New York: Morrow, 2000): 46–50.
- 39 See "Women in State Legislatures 2001," (December 2001) and "Women in Elective Office 2002," (June 2002), *Center for American Women and Politics*, Rutgers University, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu>. Of the top 10 states with the highest percentages of women legislators in 2003, seven were western states: Washington (36.7 percent), Colorado (34 percent), Oregon (31.1 percent), California (30 percent), New Mexico (29.5 percent), and Nevada (28.6 percent). Four eastern states round out the list: Maryland (33 percent), Vermont (30.6 percent), Connecticut (29.4 percent), and Delaware (29 percent).
- 40 Marjorie Hunter, "A Woman's Place, They Say, Is in the Gym," 16 June 1985, *New York Times*: 40.
- 41 Finkel, "Women on the Verge of a Power Breakthrough."
- 42 Rich Heidorn, "Capitol Offense: No Longer Darlings, Congress' Women Look Ahead," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 October 1994: woman news, 5.
- 43 Karen Ball, "Congressional Women: Wave of Change Never Made It Through Capitol Walls," 7 September 1993, Associated Press.
- 44 Whittington, "Women See Gains Slowing."
- 45 Finkel, "Women on the Verge of a Power Breakthrough."
- 46 "Woman in the News: Liberal Democrat from Queens," 13 July 1984, *New York Times*: A1.
- 47 "A Team Player, Can a Liberal from Archie Bunker Country Make a Contender of Walter Mondale?," 23 July 1984, *Newsweek*.
- 48 Finkel, "Women on the Verge of a Power Breakthrough."

## Party Affiliation: Women in Congress, 95th–109th Congresses (1977–2006)\*

This chart shows the party breakdown only for women Members for this time period.

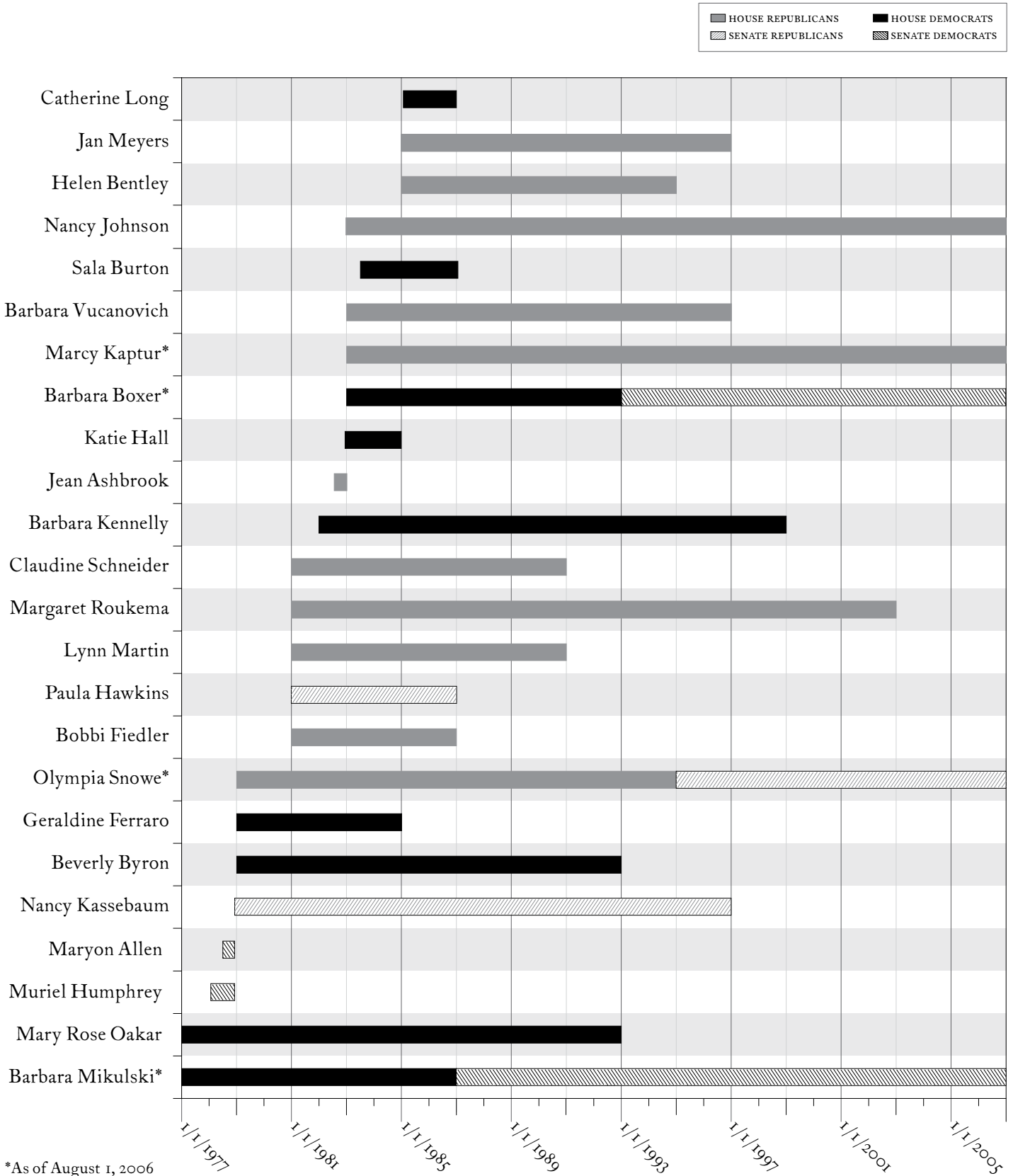


\*As of August 1, 2006

Source: Appendix B, "Women Representatives and Senators by Congress: 1917–2007," *Women in Congress, 1917–2006*.

## Congressional Service

This chart depicts the span of congressional service for women first sworn-in between 1977 and 1986.\*

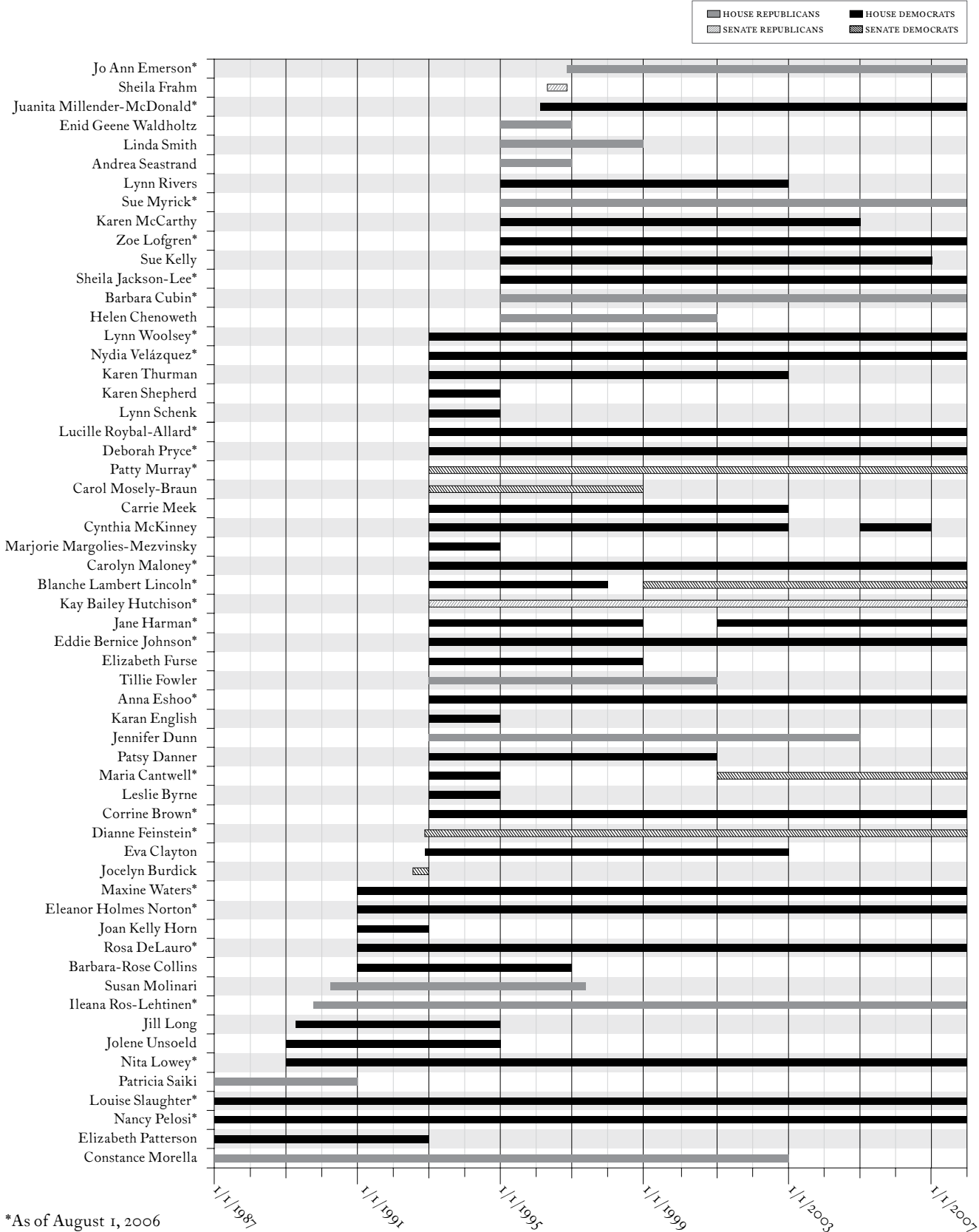


\*As of August 1, 2006

Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–2005* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005); also available at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

# Congressional Service

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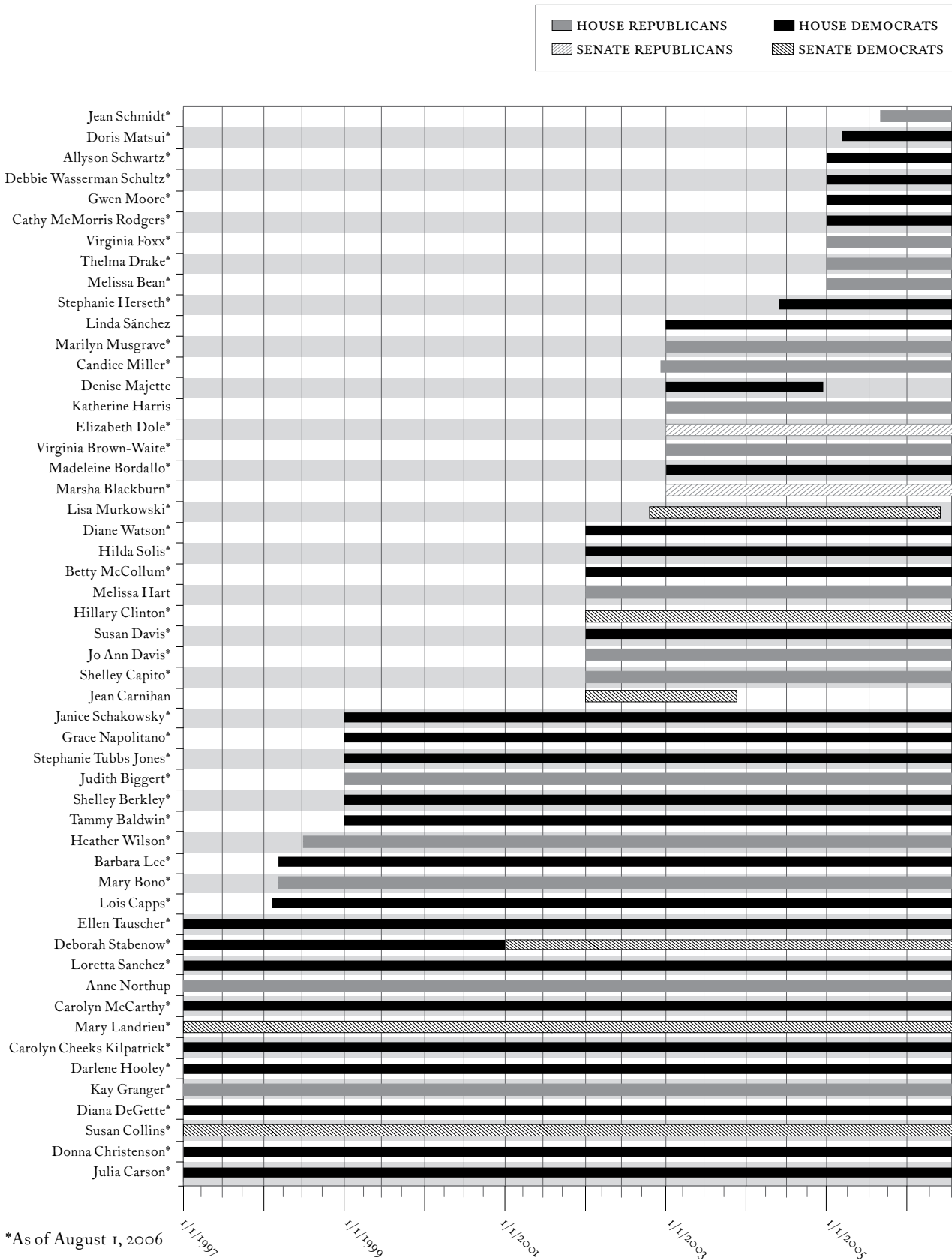
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