

Women's Representation in Kentucky

Parity Ranking: 47th of 50

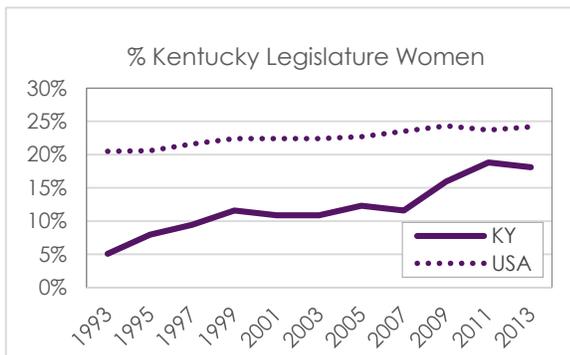
Score of 7.5: Five points for the percentage of state legislative seats held by woman and 2.5 points for the secretary of state.

Quick Fact

In 2013 Gov. Steve Beshear (D) increased the number of women on the Kentucky Supreme Court to three for the first time in the state's history as part of his broader effort to appoint more women to government offices.

Trending

In 1993, only 5% of Kentucky's state legislative seats were held by women, but the state has trended upward for the last 20 years. There are now almost four times as many women in the legislature today, but the state still lags behind the national average.



Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University.

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: Martha Layne Collins (1984-1987)

Current female statewide elected executives: 1 of 7 (secretary of state)

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: 14

Congress

U.S. Senate: 0 of 2 seats are held by women

U.S. House: 0 of 6 seats are held by women

In its history, Kentucky has elected 2 women to the U.S. House: Katherine Gudger Langley (1927-1931) and Anne Northup (1997-2007)

State Legislature

Percentage women: 18.1%

Rankings: 37th of 50

Senate: 7 of 38 (18.4%) are women

House: 18 of 100 (18.0%) are women

Method of election: single-member districts

Local

None of the five largest cities with elected executives has a woman mayor or county judge (executive).

Words of Wisdom

"As women especially we have to be ready. When that window of opportunity opens, that door of opportunity opens, you have to be ready to go through it, and so do everything you can to prepare yourself...and one thing about women: we're not afraid of a little hard work." – Martha Layne Collins, former governor of Kentucky

Training, Recruiting, and Funding Women Candidates in Kentucky

Women officeholders are more likely than their male counterparts to say that encouragement played a large role in their decision to run. One program that gives women an extra push to pursue elected office is Emerge America, a national organization active in thirteen states that trains and recruits women to run for office.



Emerge Kentucky is a seven-month training program that helps Democratic women become “ready to run.” It offers preparatory sessions on a range of campaign activities, including public speaking and communication, fundraising, media and messaging, networking, campaign strategy, field operations, technology and new media, diversity and cultural competency, and ethical leadership.

The Emerge Kentucky program has some 100 graduates. Of the program’s alumnae, 43% have run for office, and 60% of those candidates have won their races. “I think it’s a huge boost to have that many trained candidates,” said Elizabeth Sawyer, the executive director of Emerge Kentucky. “Women are being sought after as candidates for both parties as they look to increase their numbers in the legislative bodies.”

Elections to Watch

The most high profile race in Kentucky in 2014 will be the expected matchup between Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes. Grimes would be the state’s first female U.S. Senator. While Kentucky tends to be heavily Republican, the Cook Political Report has called this race a “toss up.”



Kentucky’s 6th congressional district is likely to hold the competitive House race in Kentucky. First-term Republican Andy Barr narrowly won this Bluegrass district in 2012. Among potential Democratic challengers is Elisabeth Jensen, an Emerge Kentucky graduate.