

Election 2008 Wrap-Up: Record Number of Women to Serve in House, Senate

The 2008 election brought a record number of women to Congress, with a total of at least 94* women elected to the House and Senate.

On the Senate side, two women were elected to the Senate, bringing the total number of women serving in the Senate to a record high of 17. Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) was defeated in her bid for reelection.

In the House, at least 10* new women were elected, bringing the total number of women to a record high of at least 77*, including three Delegates. Of that number, 17 are Republicans and 60* are Democrats. Rep. Heather Wilson vacated her seat to make an unsuccessful bid for the Senate. Reps. Barbara Cubin (R-WY), Darlene Hooley (D-OR), and Deborah Pryce (R-OH) retired. Reps. Nancy Boyda (D-KS), Thelma Drake (R-VA), and Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO) were defeated in their reelection bids.

Seventy-four women, including three Delegates, held a seat at the close of the 110th Congress. Reps. Julia Carson (D-IN), Jo Ann Davis (R-VA), Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA), and Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH) passed away during the 110th Congress. Reps. Donna Edwards (D-MD), Jackie Speier (D-CA), and Niki Tsongas (D-MA) were elected in special elections during the 110th Congress.

*At press time (November 5, 11 a.m.), two House races were still too close to call. In Ohio, Mary Jo Kilroy (D-OH) and Steve Stivers (R-OH) are vying for the seat vacated by Rep. Deborah Pryce. In Washington, Darcy Burner (D-WA) is in a race against incumbent Rep. Dave Reichert (R-WA).

Women Newly Elected to the Senate

Sen.-elect Kay Hagan (D-NC) defeated incumbent Sen. Elizabeth Dole in a hard-fought race. She has served as a state senator since 1999. Prior to that, she was a bank executive. She is expected to focus on access to children's health care, early childhood education, and rural economic development.

Sen.-elect Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) defeated incumbent Sen. John Sununu (R-NH). She currently directs Harvard University's Institute of Politics. She served as the first woman governor of New Hampshire from 1997-2003. Health care, economic development, and job creation have been her top priorities.

Women Newly Elected to the House

Rep.-elect Kathy Dahlkemper (D-PA) defeated incumbent Rep. Phil English (R-PA). A small business owner and park director, she is expected to focus on business development and health care.

Rep.-elect Marcia Fudge (D-OH)** defeated Thomas Pekarek in a contest for the seat held by the late Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones. The first woman and first African American elected mayor of Warrensville, she is expected to focus on affordable housing, health care, and urban renewal.

Rep.-elect Lynn Jenkins (R-KS) defeated Rep. Nancy Boyda in a hard-fought race. Currently serving as state treasurer, she previously held positions in the state house and senate. Tax policy, immigration, and education have been her top priorities.

Rep.-elect Deborah "Debbie" Halvorson (D-IL) defeated Martin Ozinga in a contest for the seat vacated by Rep. Jerry Weller (R-IL). As the first woman to serve as majority leader in the Illinois State Senate, her priorities have included women's issues, health care, and agriculture.

Rep.-elect Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) defeated Sydney Hay in a contest for the seat vacated by Rep. Rick Renzi (R-AZ). A former member of the state legislature, she was the first woman to serve as Coconino County's Deputy Attorney. She is expected to focus on rural economic development, tribal and native issues, and early childhood education.

Rep.-elect Suzanne Kosmas (D-FL) defeated incumbent Rep. Tom Feeney (R-FL). A former member of the state legislature, she is also a small business owner. Children's issues, health care, and science and technology education have been her top priorities.

Rep.-elect Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) defeated Gary Trauner in a contest for the seat vacated by Rep. Barbara Cubin. In 1979, she became the youngest woman ever elected to the state legislature. Prior to winning election, she helped operate her family's ranch. The environment, tax policy, and agriculture have been her top priorities.

Rep.-elect Elizabeth "Betsy" Markey (D-CO) defeated incumbent Rep. Marilyn Musgrave. A former member of Sen. Ken Salazar's (D-CO) staff, she also served as a presidential management fellow at the Treasury Department. She is expected to focus on science and technology education, immigration, and energy policy.

Rep.-elect Chellie Pingree (D-ME) defeated Charlie Summers in a contest for the seat vacated by Rep. Tom Allen (D-ME). The former president of Common Cause, she has been an advocate for ethics and campaign reform. She is expected to focus on poverty reduction, women's issues, and health care.

Rep.-elect Dina Titus (D-NV) defeated incumbent Rep. Jon Porter (R-NV). Currently serving as a state senator, she also teaches political science at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Health care, energy policy, and housing have been her top priorities.

Women in Governorships

Eight women governors served in 2008; the number will remain unchanged in 2009. With the exception of Governor Ruth Ann Minner (D-DE), who is term-limited, all incumbent women governors successfully defended their seats. Governor-elect Beverly Perdue (D-NC) defeated Pat McCrory (R-NC) in a contest for the seat vacated by Gov. Mike Easley (D-NC), who is term-limited.

******The November 4, 2008 contest between Marcia Fudge and Thomas Pekarek determined who will hold the seat in the 111th Congress, beginning January 3, 2009. On November 18, Marcia Fudge will face James Germalic in a contest to determine who will hold the seat for the remainder of the 110th Congress.