

Women's Representation in Iowa

Parity Ranking: 40th of 50

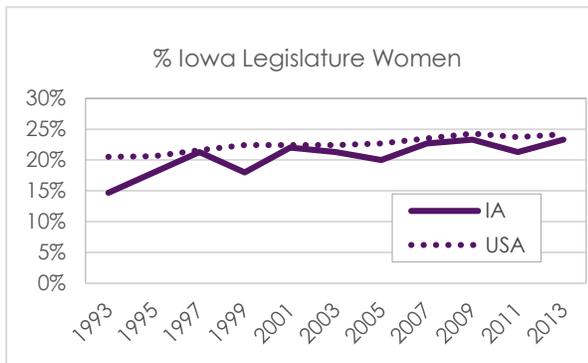
Score of 11: Four points for lieutenant governor and auditor, 6 for the percentage of state legislators who are women, and 1 for senate president.

Quick Fact

In accordance with a gender balance law that passed in 2009 and took effect in 2012, local governments are being pressured to increase gender parity on local boards and commissions. A recent study completed by the Carrie Chapman Catt Center on Women and Politics at Iowa State University and the Friends of Iowa Commission on the Status of Women shows that nearly half of the selected boards and commissions have achieved gender balance.

Trending

The percentage of women in Iowa's state legislature peaked at 23.3% in 2009, and has generally tracked the national average over the last two decades.



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

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: None

Female statewide elected executives: 2 of 7 (lieutenant governor and state auditor, who was appointed in 2013)

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: 13, two of whom was appointed to fill vacancies.

Congress

Iowa is one of four states that have never elected a woman to the U.S. Senate or U.S. House.

State Legislature

Percentage women: 23.3%

Rankings: 27th of 50

Senate: 10 of 50 (20%) are women

House: 25 of 100 (25%) are women

Method of election: single-member districts

Local

None of the five largest cities with elected mayors has a woman mayor.

Notable Recent Elections

In 2012, Christie Vilsack, wife of former governor Tom Vilsack, took on incumbent Rep. Steve King in the 4th congressional district. She lost her bid to become Iowa's first female member of Congress by eight percentage points.

Anesa Kajtazovic, who is now running for Congress, was reelected to Iowa's state House. When she was initially elected, she was the youngest woman representative to be elected to the Iowa state legislature.

Words of Wisdom

"The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America, the guarantee of your liberty."
– Carrie Chapman Catt (1859-1947), Iowan, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and founder of the League of Women Voters

Training, Recruiting, and Funding of Women Candidates in Iowa

50-50 in 2020 has a simple goal. By the year 2020, the organization seeks to elect a woman governor and have gender parity at all levels of government in Iowa, one of two states to have never elected a woman to either Congress or the governor's mansion. "Most people are shocked and amazed at this fact," said Jean Lloyd-Jones, one of the founders of 50-50 in 2020, who served in the Iowa State Legislature for 15 years.



The bipartisan organization seeks to recruit, train, and mentor Iowa women to seek political office by inviting them to a two-day campaign school that gets into the nuts and bolts of campaigning, covering everything from immediate feedback on stump speeches to practicing requests for donations. Lloyd-Jones highlights the bipartisan nature of the Blueprint for Winning Academy and hopes that while the candidates acquire the skills necessary to run for office, they also get to know and work with each other, an essential skill in an increasingly polarized legislature.

50-50 in 2020 also actively encourages women to run for open seats and looks to create a pipeline of qualified women who will be able to run at the state level. The encouragement is often necessary for women who believe that they cannot or should not run for office, citing family or other obligations. While acknowledging the immense task ahead of them, Lloyd-Jones points to successes such as electing 35 women to the Iowa State Legislature in 2012 and having women in leadership positions in both the House and Senate.

Elections to Watch

Republican state Senator Joni Ernst is a leading candidate for Iowa's open U.S. Senate seat. Rep. Bruce Braley is the expected Democratic nominee. Three Democratic women - Monica Vernon, Anesa Kajtazovic and Swati Dandekar - are running for Braley's Democratic-leaning open seat.

Another Democrat, Staci Appel, has declared her intention to run in the 3rd congressional district against incumbent Tom Latham (R). Gov. Terry Branstad (R) will be favored if he runs for re-election, as will Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds if she is kept as his running mate; Democrats will likely nominate a man to run for governor. Mary Mosiman (R), who was appointed state auditor in 2013, will run for the same position in 2014.