

Women's Representation in Kansas

Parity Ranking: 14th of 50

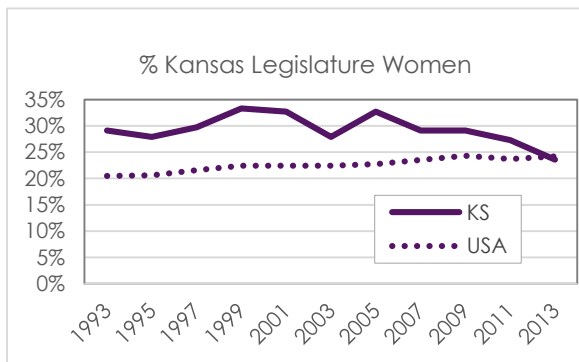
Score of 22: Ten points for the two terms of Governor Kathleen Sebelius, 1 point for insurance commissioner, 3 points for the state's one woman U.S. Rep., 7 points for the percentage of state legislators who are women, and 1 for senate president.

Quick Fact

The first American woman to be elected mayor was Susanna M. Salter of Argonia, Kansas. Salter was elected in 1887, 33 years before the passage of the 19th Amendment, and served for one year.

Trending

The percentage of women in the state legislature has declined over the last twenty years, falling from a high of nearly 35% to below the national average in 2013.



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

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: Joan Finney (1991-1995), who was the first woman to defeat an incumbent governor, and Kathleen Sebelius (2003-2009)

Current female statewide elected executives: 1 of 6 (commissioner of insurance)

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: 10, one of whom was appointed and subsequently elected.

Congress

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

U.S. House: 1 of 4 seats is held by a woman

In its history, Kansas has elected 5 women to the U.S. House, and 1 to the U.S. Senate. Another woman was appointed to the Senate for five months in 1996.

State Legislature

Percentage women: 23.6%

Rankings: 25th of 50

Senate: 12 of 40 (30%) are women

House: 27 of 125 (21.6%) are women

Method of election: single-member districts

Local

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

Words of Wisdom

"Women bring a different background that is important to the different discussions that take place." – Nancy Kassebaum Baker, former U.S. senator from Kansas

Training, Recruiting, and Funding Women Candidates in Kansas

Kansans Advancing Women (KAW) is a PAC formed in November 2012 with the goal of electing progressive women at all levels of Kansas politics. In the 2014 election cycle, KAW hopes to raise \$50,000 to support four female candidates for the Kansas House of Representatives and a female gubernatorial candidate if one should emerge.



In outlining their mission, KAW co-founder Laurel Maslowski points to a lack of young women pursuing elected office and the decline in recent years of women's participation in politics. She is passionate about the possibilities for KAW and the need to identify and fund potential female candidates through grassroots networks across the state. "Interest signifies people are ready for gender equity," she said of a recent rise of the organization's profile.

Helping potential candidates financially is one of the most important steps the organization takes, as many women view campaigning and especially fundraising with some trepidation. The presence of PACs and other organizations dedicated to electing women helps women identify a network of support while running for office.

Notable Recent Election

The only woman in Kansas' congressional delegation, Rep. Lynn Jenkins, first won her seat in 2008 after six years as State Treasurer. She narrowly defeated former Congressman Jim Ryun in the Republican primary, and then edged Democratic incumbent Nancy Boyda in the general election that year. She was re-elected in 2010 and in 2012 won by 19 percentage points against Democrat Tobias Schlingensiepen.

Elections to Watch

Kansas has become one of the nation's most solidly Republican states. Its four safely Republican U.S. House seats are all held by recently elected Republicans, one of whom is a woman (Rep. Lynn Jenkins). Kansas' congressional delegation is unlikely to change in 2014.

Sen. Pat Roberts (R) is widely expected to win re-election, as is Gov. Sam Brownback (R). Jill Docketing (D) may run for lieutenant governor as running mate to Democratic gubernatorial candidate Paul Davis.