

Women's Representation in Virginia

Parity Ranking: 50th of 50

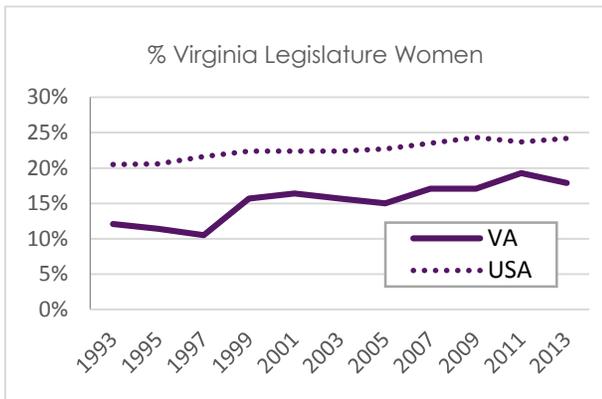
Score of 4: Four points for the percentage of state legislative seats held by women.

Quick Fact

Virginia has only ever elected one woman to a statewide executive office. Mary Sue Terry was elected attorney general of Virginia in 1985 and 1989. She resigned her post in 1993 to run for governor, but lost her bid.

Trending

The percentage of Virginia state legislative seats held by a woman has consistently trailed the national average, although it has been trending upward over the past two decades.



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

Levels of Government

Statewide Executive

Female governors: None

Current female statewide elected executives: 0 of 3 positions.

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: Two, one of whom was appointed to fill a vacancy.

Congress

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

U.S. House: 0 of 11 seats are held by a woman

In its history, Virginia has elected 3 women to the U.S. House.

State Legislature

Percentage women: 16.4%

Rankings: 44th of 50

Senate: 6 of 40 (15%) are women

House: 17 of 100 (17%) are women

Method of election: Single-member districts

Local

None of Virginia's five largest cities with elected mayors has a woman mayor.

Words of Wisdom

"The barriers are not so much you have to overcome people not wanting you there, but now women have so many more options of what they can do. The problem now is balancing all the balls that we can have in the air." –Jennifer McClellan, state delegate for the 71st district of Virginia

Recruiting, Training, and Funding Women Candidates in Virginia

The state of women's representation in Virginia is poor – indeed, it ranks last in the nation in our Parity Ranking.

There are no women representing Virginia in Congress, none in statewide elected executive positions, and relatively few in the state legislature. As the state prepares for elections in November 2013, there are no women in the running for statewide offices. This imbalance between the sexes is even worse in the Republican Party: only eight of Virginia's 140 state legislators are Republican women even though Republicans hold a strong majority of legislative seats.



The Jennifer Byler Institute is dedicated to narrowing this deficit. The Institute was founded in 2004 by several high-profile women in Virginia politics, including Kate Obenshain, who was the first woman to head the Republican Party of Virginia. The institute is committed to educating Republican women on the ins and outs of electoral politics, and encouraging them to run for office.

“We want to give women the tools they need to get involved and make their voices heard,” the institute's Tina McArthur told us. “Women have almost always been underrepresented in politics, especially conservative women. The Republican Party of Virginia naturally wants to bring as many new people into elected office as possible who share our views and values. Expanding that pool to include women more than doubles our pool of potential candidates, and gives us more avenues to share what we stand for with the public.”

Elections to Watch

No women have declared their candidacy in any of Virginia's 2014 congressional races. Even if women do run for the U.S. House in 2014, it is unlikely they would be elected without defeating an incumbent in a primary, as none of Virginia's congressional districts are projected to be competitive in the general election.

Notable Recent Elections

No women were nominated by the major parties for any of Virginia's statewide elected positions, including governor, in 2013.

In the 2012 congressional elections in Virginia, only two of the twelve races featured a female candidate from one of the major parties. Democrats Ella Ward and Kristin Cabral both lost by more than 10% of the vote in their bids in Republican-leaning districts.