

The Lack of Congresswomen from Vermont

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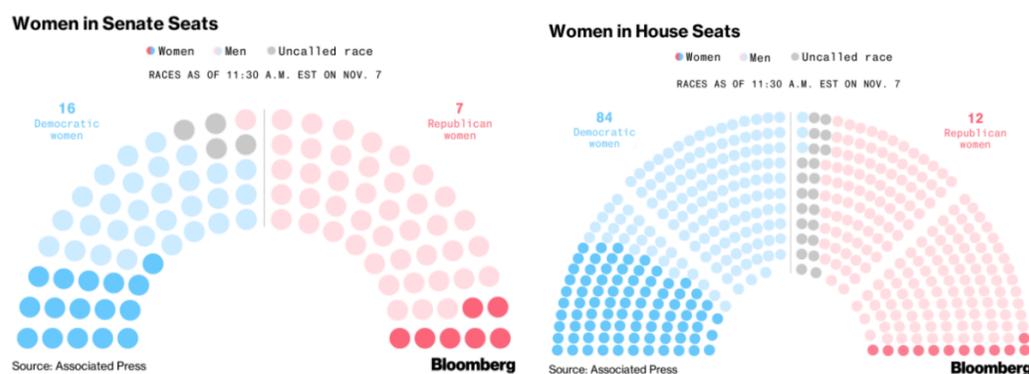
Research Question:

Given the political and demographic similarities of New Hampshire and Vermont, why has Vermont failed to elect any women to the Senate, while New Hampshire has elected multiple women?

Thesis:

While structural factors certainly hold women back from running for Congress, this case study between Vermont and New Hampshire reveals that Vermont's long history of incumbency and comparatively smaller state legislature may be to blame for the state's lack of Congresswomen.

Why Should More Women Be Elected to Congress?



Literature Review

1. The Decision to Run For Office

- Impact of social stigma on:
 - Societal notions of "leadership"
 - Women's developmental opportunities
 - Sense of self efficacy
- Impact of gendered recruitment

2. Support For Female Congressional Candidates

- Perceptions of competency
- Impact of critical mass, or lack thereof

3. The Deterrent Effect of Incumbency

- "to a very real extent, the battle for incumbent reelection is largely won well before the campaign even begins." - Thomas A. Kazee

4. Getting More Women Elected to Congress

- "Women Friendly Districts"
- Opportunities Presented by an Open Seat
- State legislature experience

Research Strategy

Case Study: Vermont and New Hampshire

Areas of Analysis:

- Do women run at similar rates?
- Representation in the state legislature
- Historical incumbency

Conclusions

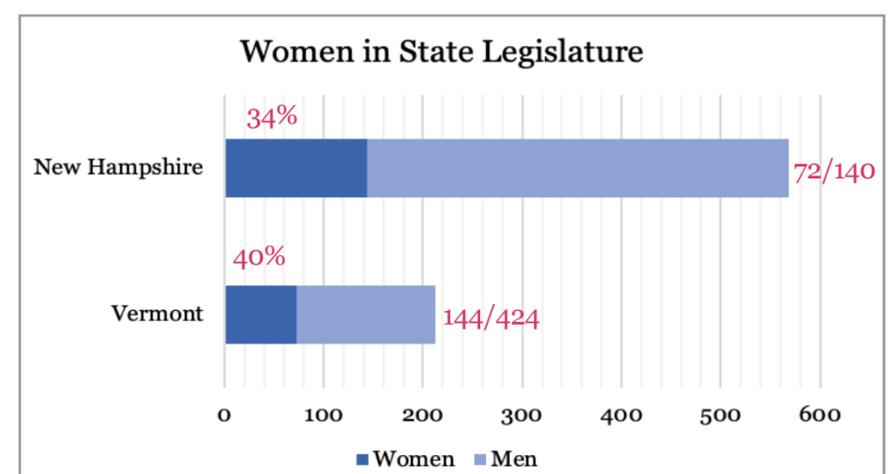
1. In the last 5 elections (10 years), women did run at similar rates in the Democratic primary elections. However, in female candidates in NH may be higher quality - VT, the female candidates received a mere 1% of vote.

Vermont			New Hampshire		
Year	# of Candidates	# of Women	Year	# of Candidates	# of Women
2006	5	1*	2008	5	1
2010	7	1*	2010	4	1
2012	7	2*	2014	10	1
2016	5	0	2016	6	2
2018	9	1	2020	6	1^

*Same female candidate ran in these years

^Female incumbent

2. While Vermont has a higher percentage of women in state legislature, the greater overall size of the NH legislature offers women more opportunities to connect with constituents and gain leadership experience.



3. Vermont has a long history of incumbency, while Senators from NH often serve for only one term
 VT: Leahy (1975-present), Jeffords (1989-2007), Sanders (2007-present)

In sum, compared to New Hampshire, political structures in Vermont, namely the smaller size of the state legislature and significantly greater role of incumbency, may be to blame for the lack of Congresswomen elected from Vermont.