

Gender and Racial Diversity in Kentucky's Public Offices?

Running for Office: How About You?" Workshop, November 22, 2008

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1. "The United States ranks 84th in the world in the percentage of women in the national legislature, limping pitifully behind Rwanda, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany and Iceland. The picture is hardly any "pinker" on a state or local level, where females generally hold less than a quarter of offices."
2. Women don't win elections because they don't run. Women are 65 percent less likely than men to describe themselves as qualified for elective office. And when they do run, they run more timidly. Men were twice as likely to shoot for federal offices and 50 percent more likely to aspire to a state office. Women set their sites on school boards and city council spots.
3. Currently serving in the Kentucky House of Representatives there are **13 female members** and **six black members**. The Senate has **five female members** and **one black member**. There are currently no black women currently serving. Of the top 7 leaders in the state of Kentucky, all are white and only one is a woman.
4. How does KY compare to other states in these numbers?
 - Kentucky accounts for 0.01-< % of African American elected officials in the country. The offices they are in range from the Kentucky legislature to municipal officials and school board officials. The majority of these individuals are male.
 - We only rank higher than North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana (these states don't have any African American elected officials)
 - Mississippi ranks highest in the country, with 10-19%.
 - Kentucky is ranked one of the lowest in the country for female elected officials, along with states like Alabama and Louisiana.
5. What have people said in the past and recent past about why this is?
 - In a 1996 article entitled, "Kentucky and the State of Human Rights", the author, Sandra C. Ardrey, realizes the lack of diversity and the problems associated with that but she is also optimistic. She states, "...state is fortunate to have a plethora of organizations and citizens who are seeking honest solutions to inequities and racial differences. Black and white Kentuckians agree that individuals and families are primarily responsible

for improving race relations—more responsible than the media, schools, police or the government.”

- In 2005, Trey Grayson, Kentucky’s Secretary of State, released a report showing that Kentucky ranked 48th in the country for female elected officials. *“While improvement has been made, no Kentuckian should be satisfied with these gains. There are more quality women in our state who would be excellent public servants. Hopefully, this report will inspire them to action and will encourage citizens to actively support qualified women for public office.”*

Sources

www.gmlc.org

www.kltprc.net

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