

**ANOTHER “YEAR OF THE WOMAN?”  
WOMEN RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE IN OHIO IN THE 2018  
MIDTERM ELECTIONS**

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## **ANOTHER “YEAR OF THE WOMAN?” WOMEN RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE IN OHIO IN THE 2018 MIDTERM ELECTIONS<sup>1</sup>**

The 2018 midterm election has been commonly referred to as another “Year of the Woman.” There is already a great deal of evidence that this election cycle will be a record year for female candidates. For example, in Georgia, Stacey Abrams defeated another woman, Stacey Evans, to win the Democratic primary for governor; Abrams is the first African American woman to ever be a major-party nominee for governor in US history. In addition, a record number of women have filed to run for US House (“2018 Summary”). Women are opening their pocket books in record numbers: in 2014, the last midterm election, 198,000 women contributed \$200 or more to a federal campaign or political action committee. By July of 2018, three months before the midterm election, 329,000 women had contributed, and they were contributing to female candidates (Bump, 2018). As one political commentator explained, “As the midterms near, there are signs that an energized base of women will play a significant — and probably defining — role in the outcome” (Bump, 2018).

This paper will explore the trends in women running for public office in Ohio; more specifically, are we seeing an increase in the number of women running for US Congress, state legislature, governor and other state-wide offices? In 1992, the original “Year of the Woman,” we saw a spike in the number of female candidates across the nation at the state and national level. In 2018, we see a similar political climate, with women inspired by the #MeToo Movement and an unusually high number of open seats for US House. Will 2018 be a “Year of the Woman” in Ohio?

This is the second paper in a series that will tell the story of female candidates running in Ohio’s primary and general elections. The first provided an historic overview of the women who have served in elective office in Ohio from 1922 to 2016 (Palmer, 2017). The intent with this paper is to begin collecting reliable primary and general election data every two years, and provide undergraduate students the opportunity to conduct original research and contribute to a growing database on gender-dynamics in Ohio elections, which will be featured on the website of the Baldwin Wallace Center for Women and Politics of Ohio.<sup>2</sup> The preliminary analysis presented here of the 2018 election suggests a mixed picture for female candidates in Ohio. While there are more women running for US House, state senate, and state house, women are largely absent from state-wide office campaigns.

### **THE YEAR OF THE WOMAN ... AGAIN?**

***The Original “Year of the Woman.”*** In 1992, we saw a surge in the number of women running for public office at the national and state level. This election cycle was dubbed the “Year of the Woman” (see for example, Cook, Thomas, and Wilcox, eds., 1994). On the House side, a

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Charley Nuesse, an undergraduate research assistant at Baldwin Wallace University, for collecting the original data used to analyze the Ohio state house primaries.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bw.edu/centers/women-and-politics-of-ohio/>

record 209 women ran in primaries, almost double the number from 1990. Forty-seven women were elected, 35 Democrats and 12 Republicans. In a typical election cycle, the net increase in women is two or three. In 1992, the net increase was 19. Along with 23 female incumbents, 24 new women, including five blacks and two Latinas, were sworn in on January 5, 1993. The Year of the Woman also had a notable impact on the number of women in the Senate. Twenty-eight women ran in Senate primaries, a peak that would not be reached again until 2010. The number of female senators increased from two to six (Palmer and Simon, 2012). Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL) remarked that with all the women now in Congress, the House floor was beginning to look “like a mall” (Foerstel and Foerstel, 1996: 112).

Initially, there were few who thought that 1992 would become the tremendous victory for women that it did. The ousting of Saddam Hussein’s army from Kuwait in the Gulf War of 1990 and early 1991 dominated news coverage. It was assumed that because of the success of President George H. W. Bush, foreign affairs and military issues would be the top concerns on the political agenda during the election. This changed in the fall of 1991, when President Bush nominated Clarence Thomas, former chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court created by the death of Justice Thurgood Marshall. During the confirmation hearings, Thomas was accused of sexually harassing Anita Hill, an attorney working for the commission when Thomas served as chair. Many women were outraged as they watched the live broadcast of the hearings and saw the all-white male Senate Judiciary Committee badger Hill. Hill became “a symbol of women’s status in American life and, in particular, their exclusion from the halls of power” (Witt, Paget, and Matthews, 1995: 1). For the first time, the hearings brought national attention to the issue of sexual harassment.

The Thomas-Hill hearings inspired many women to run. For example, Patty Murray began her political career as a suburban mom in Seattle with two children and was very active in her children’s preschool. In 1980, the Washington state legislature proposed cutting funds for parent-child preschool programs. Murray took her children with her as she lobbied legislators to fight the cuts. One male state senator told her, “You can’t do anything. You’re just a mom in tennis shoes” (Bingham, 1997: 33). A friend of Murray’s said that this remark, instead of discouraging her, was like “wav[ing] a red flag in front of a bull” (Bingham, 1997: 33). She organized 12,000 families and successfully blocked the funding cuts. Eventually, she successfully ran for school board and state senate. In 1991, Murray was so angered by the way the 14 white men on the Judiciary Committee treated Hill that she decided to run for the U.S. Senate, using the “mom in tennis shoes” message as an integral part of her campaign (Bingham, 1997: 28–29). Murray challenged first-term Democratic Senator Brock Adams in the primary. The *Seattle Times* called her “the longest of long shots” (Bingham, 1997: 35). But then it was revealed that Adams sexually harassed and molested several women. One of his former congressional aides accused him of drugging her drink and taking advantage of her. Adams announced that he would not seek reelection (Bingham, 1997: 37). After she won the Democratic primary, her Republican opponent in the general election, Rod Chandler, mocked her by carrying around a pair of sneakers (Bingham, 1997: 43). By all appearances, Chandler should have cruised to victory: he outspent Murray two to one, had a great deal of campaign experience after five terms in the House, and was a former television anchorman. During their second televised debate, he hammered away at a shaky Murray. But instead of a closing statement, he sang a song made famous by Roger Miller: “Dang me, dang me. They ought to

take a rope and hang me—hang me from the highest tree. Woman would you weep for me?” He continued singing the song, telling the tale of a philanderer who leaves his wife and child. The audience sat in stunned silence. Murray replied, “That’s just the kind of attitude that got me into this race, Rod” (Bingham, 1997: 46). She won with 54 percent of the vote.

In that same election cycle, Lynn Yeakel, who had never held public office, decided to take on incumbent Republican Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania. She explained that Specter’s particularly aggressive questioning of Hill “pushed people like me over the line” (Witt, Paget, and Matthews, 1995: 4). The ads she ran during the Democratic primary used footage of Specter from the hearings, with Yeakel asking, “Did this make you as angry as me?” (Witt, Paget, and Matthews, 1995: 5). When she began her campaign, she was so unknown that she had less than 1 percent name recognition (Witt, Paget, and Matthews, 1995: 213). One Democratic Party official flippantly remarked to the press that all she had going for her was that she “had breasts.” Claire Sargent, who was running for the U.S. Senate in Arizona, quipped, “It’s about time we voted for senators with breasts. After all, we’ve been voting for boobs long enough” (Witt, Paget, and Matthews, 1995: 20). After defeating four men in the primary, Yeakel lost to Specter by less than 3 points.

In addition to the Thomas-Hill hearings motivating women to run, as the economy slumped, the political agenda fundamentally changed; issues such as education and health care, issues generally associated with women, were now the major problems on the minds of voters (Witt, Paget and Matthews, 1995). Female candidates also did particularly well among voters. Surveys taken in the spring and summer of 1992 showed that male and female voters believed that increasing the number of women in office would benefit the country (Chaney and Sinclair, 1994: 127). Many women ran as “outsiders,” which gave them a substantial advantage with the anti-incumbency mood of the electorate that particular year (Dolan, 1998). An exit poll indicated that voters actually preferred female candidates to male candidates (Cook, 1998: 159). As one journalist explained, “The farther away a woman was from power, the better her position to attain it” (Bingham, 1997: 28).

There was also an unusually high number of open seats. The process of redrawing congressional district lines typically induces some incumbents to retire rather than face reelection in a district with a substantial proportion of new constituents. As a result, since 1962, the average number of open House seats in elections immediately after redistricting has been 63, while the average number of open House seats in the following four election cycles, when the lines were fixed, was 40.

There were, however, additional factors at work in 1992 that brought the number of open seats to 95. It was the last year that members could take advantage of a loophole in campaign finance regulations allowing them to convert leftover campaign funds to personal use; twenty representatives were eligible to take over \$500,000 with them if they retired that year (Hook, 1992: 72). The House check-writing scandal also contributed to creating the unusually high number of open seats. In 1991, the General Accounting Office discovered that the House Bank reported 8,331 bounced checks. The bank covered the checks of 269 representatives with no penalties or interest (Kuntz, 1991: 2841). Many of the worst offenders, such as

Representative Dennis Hertel (D-MI), who had 547 overdrafts, decided to retire (Kuntz, 1991: 2841; Kuntz, 1992: 3575).

In many ways, 1992 was the “perfect storm” for female candidates, with the Thomas-Hill hearings galvanizing women to run, a political climate that favored “women’s issues,” and an unusually high number of open seats creating far more opportunities for new-comers. These events crystallized into the most spectacular success female candidates had ever seen.

***The New Year of the Woman?*** The 2018 midterm elections are remarkable in that we see many of the same dynamics. In 2016, prominent women in journalism and the entertainment industries began coming forward with their stories of being sexually harassed. For example, in July, after she was fired, Gretchen Carlson, host of her own afternoon show on Fox News, filed a lawsuit against Roger Ailes, the chair and CEO of the network. In the lawsuit, Carlson stated that Ailes sabotaged her career because she refused to sleep with him: “When Carlson met with Ailes to discuss the discriminatory treatment to which she was being subjected, Ailes stated: ‘I think you and I should have had a sexual relationship a long time ago and then you’d be good and better and I’d be good and better,’ adding that ‘sometimes problems are easier to solve’ that way” (Yu, 2016). Several more women came forward, including Megyn Kelly, another prominent Fox News host. Two weeks after Carlson filed her lawsuit, Ailes resigned (Huddleston, 2016).

In October of 2016, one month before the presidential election, a tape of then-Republican-nominee Donald Trump was released, revealing vulgar and sexist comments he made about women. Wearing a “hot mike” prior to a 2005 interview on the set of *Days of Our Lives* with Billy Bush for *Access Hollywood*, Trump talked about trying to sleep with a married woman he had met, including how he took her furniture shopping. After noticing an actress walking by, Trump said, “I’ve got to use some Tic Tacs, just in case I start kissing her. You know I’m automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait ... And when you’re a star, they let you do it ... You can do anything ... Grab them by the p---y ... You can do anything” (Farenthold, 2016). Bush, who at the time of the tape’s release was a co-host of NBC’s *Today Show*, resigned. Trump tweeted, “The media and establishment want me out of the race so badly - I WILL NEVER DROP OUT OF THE RACE, WILL NEVER LET MY SUPPORTERS DOWN! #MAGA” (Trump, 2016). Trump’s comments unleashed a torrent of responses, but one was the creation of the pink knitted “pussy hat,” worn by thousands of protesters at the Women’s March the day after Trump’s inauguration. Over one million people protested in Washington, DC and cities across the United States (Stein, Hendrix, Hauslohner, 2017).

The phrase “Me Too” was created in 2006 by Tarana Burke to help women of color who were survivors of sexual assault. The phrase went viral in October of 2017 after a tweet from actress Alyssa Melano stating, ““If all the women and men who have been sexually harassed, assaulted or abused wrote ‘me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem. #metoo.” Within 24 hours, over 50,000 people responded (Chen, 2017). Between April 2017 and May 2018, 219 celebrities, politicians and prominent business people have been accused of sexual misconduct (North, 2018).

These events inspired many women to run for public office, just as the Thomas-Hill hearings inspired women almost three decades ago. Jean Sinzdek, Associate Director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, explained, "From the point of view of an organization who has observed and measured women's political progress for decades, we've never seen anything like the surge of activism that occurred after November 2016 ... It spurred large numbers of women to engage politically in all kinds of ways, including running for office" (Kilpatrick, 2018). The 2017 state-level elections in Virginia provided a potential preview of the 2018 midterms. In the Virginia House of Delegates, Republicans have held the majority since 1999. Going into the 2017 election, the Republicans held 66 of 100 seats. After the election was over, the Republican majority had shrunk to 51, after a tied election was decided by a random draw (Prokop, 2018).<sup>3</sup> Danica Roem became the first openly transgender candidate to win a state house seat in the nation. She soundly defeated Republican incumbent Robert Marshall, who referred to himself as Virginia's "chief homophobe." Kathy Tran, a Vietnamese refugee, became the first Asian-American woman, and Elizabeth Guzman and Hala Ayala, became the first Hispanic women in the House of Delegates (Naylor, 2017). In Ohio, Connie Pillich, an early 2018 candidate for governor, was motivated to run because of Trump's behavior: "We saw that it's time for us to stand up, because no one is going to do it for us. That inspired thousands of women, tens of thousands of women across the country - to say, 'OK, I'm in'" (Kilpatrick, 2018).

A record number of women are running at all levels of the political arena. Fifty-three women declared their candidacies for US Senate, beating the record of 40 set in 2016. On the US House side, 476 women ran in primaries, smashing the record of 298 set in 2012. There has also been a surge of women running at the state level. For governor, the 1994 record number of 34 primary candidates has nearly doubled, with 61 women running in 2018. In 2016, 2,648 female candidates ran for state legislature. In 2018, this number increased to 3,379 ("2018 Summary").

As in 1992, an unusually high number of open seats is also creating more opportunities for female candidates. As mentioned earlier, in a typical midterm election, we would expect to see about 40 open seats. However, in the 2018 midterms, there are 60 open seats, 40 left vacant by Republicans, and 20 by Democrats. Some of these seats became vacant due to allegations of sexual harassment, including the resignations of Patrick Meehan (R-PA), Joe Barton (R-TX), Ruben Kihuen (D-NV), and Blake Farenthold (R-TX) (Berman, 2018). The House's longest serving member (54 years), Representative John Conyers (D-MI) was the first to step down. Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA), well known for his pro-life position and support from the Family Research Council, resigned after it was revealed that he recommended a woman, who he had an extra-marital affair with, have an abortion (Ward, 2017). Representative Trent Franks (R-AZ) abruptly resigned after it became public that he had asked two female staff members to serve as surrogates (Berman, 2018).

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<sup>3</sup> Several races for the House of Delegates were decided by the narrowest of margins and were subjected to recounts. In the 94<sup>th</sup> District, Republican David Yancey and Democrat Shelly Simonds found themselves in a tie with 11,608 votes each. Slips of paper with their names were put into film canisters and placed in a bowl. The canister with Yancey's name was drawn, giving Republicans a 51 to 49 seat edge in the Virginia House. If Simonds name had been drawn, the evenly divided legislature would have had to reach a power-sharing agreement (Prokop, 2018).

The MeToo# movement has had an impact on the Ohio legislature as well. During the 2016 election, State Representative Wes Goodman campaigned on a conservative, traditional family-values platform, advocating “natural marriage.” He won. However, Republican party officials discovered that Goodman was having extra-marital affairs with men in his state house office and posting sexually inappropriate comments and photos on social media. Goodman claimed the postings were fake. He resigned in November of 2017 (Balmert, 2017a). Additional news reports revealed that formal complaints had been filed against several other legislators and staff. State Senator Cliff Hite resigned after he badgered a female legislative staff member for two months to have sex with him. “I am a grown man with needs,” he told her (Balmert, 2017). All of this led up to a sexual harassment training for state legislators held by the Ohio Attorney General’s Office. Less than a week later, in speeches at a farewell party for a staff member, Representative Bill Seitz made light of the sexual harassment claims against Hite, and Senator Matt Huffman told jokes using derogatory language about women. Neither legislator faced any sanctions (Borchardt, 2018).

Women are clearly mobilized in 2018 at levels we have not seen in a very long time. Aggregate data on the midterm elections shows that more women than ever are entering the political arena at the state and national level. What is the outlook for female candidates in Ohio?

## **OHIO WOMEN RUNNING FOR THE US CONGRESS**

Ohio is one of 20 states that have never sent a woman to the US Senate. In 2018, one woman, Melissa Ackison, ran in the Republican primary against five men. Ackison, a business-owner with no prior political experience, and her husband were tapped by the Trump White House to put pressure on Senator Rob Portman to vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act in July of 2017 (Koff, 2017). This experience inspired her to run for US Senate, with “Make American Great Again” as the central theme of her campaign (Koff, 2018). She came in a distant third, with former US House member Jim Renacci defeating her by almost 35 points. Renacci will face off against Democratic incumbent Sharrod Brown in the general election.

However, Ohio has a relatively long history of electing women to the US House. Since 1940, Ohio has elected 11 women to the House. Currently, in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (2017 – 2019), three of Ohio’s 16 House members, 18.8%, are women: Joyce Beatty, a Democrat from the 3<sup>rd</sup> district; Marcia Fudge, a Democrat from the 11<sup>th</sup> district; and Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat from the 9<sup>th</sup> district. Representative Kaptur has been the “dean” of the women in the House, serving longer than any other woman currently serving. In 1982, when she was working on her PhD at MIT, local party leaders approached her to run for House. The race was a long-shot for the Democrats, as she would be taking on incumbent Republican Ed Weber. After agreeing to run, she desperately needed money for her fledgling campaign. Her idea: a bake sale. “We all laughed,” said Jim Ruvolo, the chair of the Lucas County Democratic Party. But Kaptur and her supporters raised \$10,000 selling cookies, pies and pastries. “We all shut up after that,” said Ruvolo (Gomez, 2012). In a race that gained national attention, Kaptur won with 60% of the vote. At age 36, should would be one of the youngest women ever elected to the

House. Bake sales would remain an integral part of her campaign for years to come (Gomez, 2012). In 2016, she was elected to her 18<sup>th</sup> term with 68.7% of the vote.

To explore the trends in female candidates running for US House in OHio, data on all male and female House primary and general election candidates from 1992 to 2018 has been collected from a variety of sources, beginning with the series *America Votes*, and updated annually using election results from CNN, the Office of the Clerk of the US House, and other sources.

\*\*\*Table 1 About Here\*\*\*

As Table 1 shows that 2018 has been a banner year for women running for US House in Ohio, even compared to the original Year of the Woman. In 1992, 13 women ran in congressional primaries, making up 15.5% of all primary candidates. However only four won their primaries, and two won the general election. The 2018 election cycle has seen a record number of women run and win: 17 women ran in primaries, making up 20.5% of all primary candidates. And they had much higher success rates: 11 of them won. Women will be about a third of the congressional candidates on the general election ballot. These numbers are particularly astonishing when they are compared to the last two election cycles, when women were barely 10% of all Ohio primary candidates,

There are, however, dramatic differences between the parties. Out of the 17 women who ran in the 2018 primaries, only 4 were Republicans; women were 30.2% (nearly a third) of Democratic primary candidates, while they were only 10.0% of Republican primary candidates. Only one of these Republican women, Beverly Goldstein in the 11<sup>th</sup> District, won her primary. She will face incumbent Democrat Marcia Fudge in the general election, making this the only US House race in Ohio featuring two female candidates in the general election. Remarkably, female Democrats ran in 11 out of Ohio's 16 House districts, and women won in 10 of these districts. In 1992, Democratic women were also more successful than Republican women, but not nearly to the same degree; 17.0% of Democratic primary candidates were female, and 13.5% of Republican primary candidates were female. In fact, during the 1990s, Ohio saw virtually identical numbers of women running in both party's primaries. However, beginning in 2002, more and more women are running as Democrats, while the number of Republican women declined. In 2014, out of the 23 Republicans who ran for their party's nomination to the US House, none were women. While 2018 is clearly a "Year of the Woman" with regards to US House candidates, it would be far more accurate to call it a "Year of the Democratic Woman."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of the writing of this manuscript, it was difficult to compare these numbers to what was happening nationally in the rest of the states, because several had not yet held their primaries. For an overview of Ohio's congressional candidates, see "Ohio Congressional Candidates Include Felon, Football Star, and Medieval Reenactor, [https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/02/2018\\_congressional\\_primary\\_fil.html](https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/02/2018_congressional_primary_fil.html).



## WOMEN RUNNING FOR THE OHIO STATE LEGISLATURE

Ohio also has a long history of women serving in the state legislature. As of the 2016 election, Ohio has elected 182 women to the Ohio legislature since statehood; 35 women have served in the state senate, 169 have served in the state house. Twenty-two of these women have served in both chambers. In 1922, 14 women ran and six won. Two won election to the state senate, Maude Comstock Waitt from Cuyahoga County, and Nettie Bromley Loughead from Hamilton County. Four women won election to the state house, Nettie MacKenzie Clapp from Cuyahoga County, Lulu Thomas Gleason from Lucas County, Adelaide Sterling Ott from Mahoning County, and May Martin Van Wye from Hamilton County. All six of these women were Republicans, the party that supported women's suffrage.

Prior to 1966, the size of the Ohio House and Senate varied. Apportionment and the number of legislators was based on a complex formula that combined counties and population; this avoided the problem of partisan gerrymandering, but did cause substantial malapportionment. After the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions regarding apportionment in the 1960s, Ohio adopted the current single-member district system it currently uses (Gold, 2009).

As of the 2016 election, Ohio ranked 29th out of the 50 states based on the proportion of women in the state legislature ("State Fact Sheet – Ohio," 2016). Out of the 99 members of the state house of representatives, 25 (25.3%) were women. Out of the 33 members of the state senate, six (18.2%) were women.

The data for the first part of this analysis includes information on all female candidates who ran for Ohio state senate and house in general elections from 1922 to 2016 obtained from the Ohio Secretary of State, in both published public records and electronic files available on the Secretary of State's website. The analysis of the 2018 election is much more in-depth, and includes data on all 328 male and female candidates in Ohio who ran in primaries and won. This data set will be completed in November after the general election.

**Ohio State Senate.** Very few women have served in the state senate. State senators currently serve four-year terms, limited to two terms since 1992. Elections are staggered, with only half the chamber up for reelection every two years. Prior to 1956, senate terms were only two years.

\*\*\**Figure 1 About Here*\*\*\*

As Figure 1 suggests, the integration of women into the state senate has been erratic and achingly slow. In 1922, six women ran in the general election, a record that would not be broken for seventy years, when in 1992, nine women ran. While 1992 did set a new record for female candidates, it was not the high point: in 1994, women did even better, with a record high number of 12 women running, and five women winning the general election joining three female colleagues elected the cycle before. A record eight out of the 33 members were women, or 24.2% of the chamber, suggesting that at least in the Ohio state senate, the original Year of the Woman was 1994. The high of eight women in the chamber has been repeated three more times, in 1996, 2010, and 2012.

Women in Ohio seem to do better in midterm election cycles when running for state senate, which is when Ohio holds elections for state-wide office. In 10 out of the last 12 midterm elections since 1968, more women ran in the midterms compared to the previous presidential election cycle.

\*\*\**Table 2 About Here*\*\*\*

Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the candidates in the 2018 Ohio primaries. In 2018, 17 of the 33 senate seats were up for election (odd-numbered districts). As Table 2 shows, 13 women ran in primaries, making up 27.1% of all candidates, about a third. Unfortunately, data on past primaries has not yet been collected, so we cannot determine if this is a record number. With 11 of these 13 women winning their primaries, this is substantially more than 2016 when only five women won, and 2014 when nine women won, but 1994 is still the record high with 12 women winning primaries. The 2018 cycle will feature one race with two female candidates in the general election in District 3. In fact, this district had the most female candidates, three, compared to all Republican and Democratic primaries this cycle. Two women competed for the Democratic nomination: Tina Maharath defeated Katherine Chipps with 72.1% of the vote. Anne Gonzales ran unopposed in the Republican primary, setting up an all female general election contest in November.

However, although the overall numbers are small, the differences between the parties are striking. While each party ran roughly the same number of candidates overall, among the Democrats, 11 out of 26 candidates were women, or 42.3%. Nine of these 11 women won their primaries, which means that over half (52.9%) of the candidates on the Democratic ticket in the general election will be women. This also means that Democratic women were more substantially more successful than their male counterparts: 81.8% (9 of 11) of the women who ran won their primary, while 53.3% (8 of 15) of the men who ran won their primary. However, out of the 22 Republican candidates who initially ran, only two were women, Anne Gonzales in District 3 and Kristina Daley Roegner in District 27. Women were less than 10% of all Republican primary candidates. On the up-side, both women won their primaries.

One of the biggest barriers to women's access to the legislative arena is incumbency; incumbents almost always win, and most incumbents are men. As a result, most legislative elections, especially when combined with gerrymandering, are not particularly competitive (see for example, Palmer and Simon, 2012). Many expected that if the power of incumbency were removed through term-limits, the system would be open to more candidates, allowing for the more rapid integration of women (Burrell, 1994; Darcy, Welch & Clark, 1994; Rule and Norris, 1992). Research on the impact of term limits, however, suggests that the impact has not been straightforward (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001). In fact, there is evidence that when the first legislators were termed out in 1998 and 2000 in the 11 states with term limits, the number of women in these seats declined, but success rates were uneven across states (Carroll & Jenkins, 2005). Ohio implemented term-limits in 1992, with the first state senators termed-out in 2000. The number of women in the Ohio senate actually reached a low point in 2002.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that there are so few incumbents, only seven, running in 2018. However, as Figure 1 suggests, term-limits have not seemed to create much more space for

female candidates. In 2018, only one of the seven incumbents was a women, Sandra Williams, a Democrat running for reelection in District 21. She won her primary with 59.9% of the vote, but she was challenged by three men, making her district the most crowded primary in the entire election senate cycle. On the Republican side, Thomas Pekarek, a write-in candidate, secured his nomination with 50 votes.

Other indicators of competitiveness include how often candidates are running unopposed in their own primaries. On the Democratic side, in 10 out of the 17 districts up for grabs, Democratic candidates ran unopposed, and half of these candidates were women. In 13 districts, Republicans ran unopposed, including the two female Republican candidates, Gonzales and Daley. This suggests that, while two-thirds of state senate primaries in Ohio are not competitive with only one candidate on the ballot, at least Democratic women are facing similar levels of competition (or the lack thereof). Open seats are also often thought of as creating opportunities for women (see for example Burrell, 1994; Palmer and Simon, 2012). With seven incumbents seeking reelection, there are 10 open state senate seats, and it does appear that women are taking advantage of them. Among the 11 Democratic women who ran in primaries, eight of them ran in open seats, and six of them won. Both of the Republican female candidates also are running in open seats.

All this suggests that 2018 primaries have seen an increase in the presence of women candidates, especially Democrats, compared to the last several election cycles, and that women have been more successful in winning their primaries. So far, in state senate elections, it has appeared to be a pretty good year for women.

***Ohio State House.*** State house members serve two-year terms, limited to four terms since 1992. Until 1966, the number of house members was based on counties and a complex formula based on population, and ranged from 129 to 139. Beginning in 1966, the number of state house members was set at 99. Figure 2 shows that while there has been noticeable change, the integration of women into the Ohio legislature has been slow and uneven.

\*\*\**Figure 2 About Here*\*\*\*

In 1924, 14 women won state house primaries, six Democrats and eight Republicans. In the general election that year, all eight Republicans won, and all six of the Democrats lost. These numbers would not be surpassed for several decades. In 1962, 15 women won their party's primaries, but the number of women serving in the state house would not exceed eight until 1980, when nine women won seats. In fact, as Figure 2 shows, the number of women winning primaries and winning a seat in the state house would remain relatively flat until the late 1970s. In the 1980s, female house members would steadily increase. Surprisingly, we do not see a major spike in 1992 – or 1994, as there was in state senate elections. Instead, these election cycles are part of relatively steady upward trends that continue until 2000, when 47 women won primaries and 23 women won seats. The original “Year of the Woman” was not much of one in the Ohio state house.

Similar to the state senate, the presence of female candidates is typically higher in midterm years. In eight of the last 12 midterm elections since 1968, more women ran in the midterms compared to the previous presidential election cycle.

*\*\*\*Table 3 About Here\*\*\**

Table 3 shows that in 2018, out of 280 primary candidates, 83, or 29.6%, were women. Again, because data on past primaries has not yet been collected, we cannot determine if this is a record number of women running. However, 10 more women won their primaries than won in 2016. This is the second largest increase in female nominees ever; in 1988, 21 women won their primaries, and in 1990, 34 women won, an increase of 13. In 2018, 57 women became their party's nominee, a new record. There will be six races with two female candidates in the general election. In 50 of the 99 districts, slightly more than half, there will be at least one female candidate running for state house.

But as we saw in state senate elections, there are substantial differences between the parties. While both parties ran virtually the same number of total candidates, women were 41.1% of Democratic candidates, almost half. Female Democratic candidates were 43.4% of their party's nominees. And Democratic women were more successful than their male counterparts. Forty-three out of 58 female Democrats won their primaries, a success rate of 74%; almost three-fourths of the women who ran as Democrats won their primaries, compared to only 67% of male Democrats. In 2016, only 26 women won Democratic primaries. In 2018, this number more than doubled. Among Republicans, women were only 18.0% of all primary candidates, and 14.1% of their party's nominees. Fourteen of 25 Republican women won, a success rate of 56%, while 68% of Republican men won their primaries. The number of women winning their primaries substantially dropped compared to 2016, from 21 to 14.

Proportionally, there are more incumbents running for reelection to the state house than there are running for reelection to the state senate (67.7% and 41.2% respectively). Thirteen out of 67 incumbents, about one-fifth, are women, with nine Democrats and four Republicans. Almost half of Democratic incumbents, 40.9%, are female. One male Republican incumbent, Wes Retherford, lost his primary in the 51<sup>st</sup> District, to Sara Carruthers. In March of 2017, Retherford had been arrested for driving under the influence. Police had responded to a call about a man passed out in his vehicle in a McDonald's parking lot. They found Retherford behind the wheel and a loaded handgun on the seat (Associated Press, 2017). Carruthers, a political novice, defeated him by 15 points.

Much like state senate primaries, state house primaries are not particularly competitive either. In fact, no Republicans ran in primaries in eight districts, not even as Write-In candidates. In one of these districts, District 10, there were 8 candidates, including one woman, running on the Democratic side. But in 135 out of 190 primary elections, almost three-fourths, there was only a single candidate on the ballot. Women seem to be benefitting from this, at least in proportion to their rates as candidates. Women were about 40% of all Democratic primary candidates, and about 40% of them ran unopposed. Women were 18% of all Republican primary candidates, and about 15% of them ran unopposed. There are 32 open seats, about one-third of all seats. Again, women are running in these seats in proportion to their overall numbers, with around 40% of

female Democratic candidates running in open seats, and about 15% of female Republican candidates running in open seats. However, most of these Republican women lost, leaving only two to run in the general election, while 14 Democratic women will be running in open seats in the general election.

While 1992 was a modest “Year of the Woman” in the Ohio state house, the 2018 election cycle, so far, has seen remarkable success for the women who have run in primaries. This success, however, is overwhelmingly one-sided, due to a surge in Democratic women. At any rate, women have reached one important milestone: female candidates are running in half of all general election contests. A female candidate for Ohio state house is no longer a novelty.

### **WOMEN RUNNING FOR GOVERNOR & LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

Since statehood was granted in 1803 and over the course of 93 general elections, no woman has ever run under a major party label for governor in Ohio in a general election. In fact, across the country, female governors have been rare. In 2017, only six states had a woman as their governor. In the history of the United States, only 39 women have ever served as governor, 22 Democrats and 17 Republicans. Twenty-two states have never had a female governor (*Center for American Women & Politics*, 2016). However, 2018 has seen a surge in female gubernatorial candidates across the country.

Ohio has actually had a female governor – for 11 days. In the 1970s, Republican Nancy Hollister served on the Marietta City Council and became the city’s first female mayor in 1983. In 1994, she became the state’s first female lieutenant governor, as the running-mate of Republican gubernatorial candidate George Voinovich. In 1998, Voinovich ran for US Senate, won, and resigned as governor on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Hollister, who had unsuccessfully run for US House against Democrat Ted Strickland, then became governor, until Republican Bob Taft, who had run for Voinovich’s empty seat, was sworn in on January 11<sup>th</sup>. In February, 1999, Governor Taft appointed Hollister to fill a vacant seat in the Ohio House, which she held until 2004 (Curtin & Hallett, 2015, pp. 71-72).

A remarkable number of women were candidates early on in the 2018 Ohio governor’s race. Among the Republicans, there was one woman, Mary Taylor, who had served as Lieutenant Governor for two terms since 2011. At one point, three female Democrats had officially declared in 2017. Connie Pillich served three terms in the Ohio State House from 2009 to 2014. She gained some state-wide name recognition when she unsuccessfully ran against incumbent Republican Josh Mandel for State Treasurer in 2014. Betty Sutton had a long career in public service. At the age of 27, she ran for her first political office, the Barberton City Council. In 1992, at the age of 29, she became the youngest woman ever elected to the Ohio House of Representatives. In 2006, when Representative Sherrod Brown left the US House to run for the US Senate, Sutton successfully ran for the open seat and served for three terms. With her district substantially redrawn in 2012, Sutton had to run against fellow incumbent Republican Jim Renacci and lost 48 to 52%. The third woman, Nan Whaley, was elected mayor of Dayton in 2013. She said she was glad to see other women in the governor’s race: “We get to talk more about the issues and what we can do for our state, rather than being a siloed woman candidate” (Smyth, 2017).

However, in early 2018 Sutton agreed to be Lieutenant Governor and running-mate to Richard Cordray, former head of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and Ohio Attorney General. Whaley and Pillich dropped out. Ultimately, there were six men on the Democratic primary ballot, four of whom had selected women as their Lieutenant Governors. The Cordray-Sutton ticket won with 62.3% of the vote. On the Republican side, Mary Taylor chose Nathan Estruth, a business executive with no prior political experience, to be her running-mate. She was defeated by State Attorney General Mike DeWine, who had selected John Husted, the Ohio Secretary of State, to be Lieutenant Governor. While the 2018 election cycle started out looking like a remarkable “Year of the Woman” for governor in Ohio, women could not break through the primary, and once again, there are no women on the general election ballot, except for one as a running-mate.

### **WOMEN RUNNING FOR OTHER STATE-WIDE OFFICES**

Ohio has four other elected state-wide offices, State Treasurer, Secretary of State, Attorney General, and State Auditor. In general, female candidates for these positions have been rare in Ohio history. Since statehood, only nine women have served in state-wide office, and seven of these women have been elected since 1994.

***State Treasurer.*** Since statehood in 1803, out of the 45 people who have served as state treasurer, three have been women. Among Ohio’s six state-wide elected offices, women found the earliest success running for state treasurer; the first state-wide office to ever be held by a woman was state treasurer, when Democrat Gertrude Donahey successfully ran in 1970. Donahey would win two more terms and be followed by Democrat Mary Ellen Winthrow in 1982 (Palmer, 2017).

In 2018, Sandra O’Brien, ran in the Republican primary, which turned out to be the only contested primary for state-wide office in either party. O’Brien had run for state-wide office in the past. She was the Republican nominee for state treasurer in 2006, but lost the general election to Democrat Richard Cordray. She also ran in the Republican primary for secretary of state in 2010, but lost to Jon Husted. In 2018, O’Brien was critical of the state GOP for endorsing an all-male slate of candidates for state-wide office (Provance, 2018). She said she was running “to shore up the representation of women after ... a recent decline of elected Republican women in Ohio amid #MeToo issues raised by recent crude comments at a Statehouse roast from some male legislators about their female colleagues” (Editorial Board, 2018). She lost the primary to Robert Sprague, an Ohio state house member, by 15 points, which meant that all of the Republican – and Democratic -- candidates for these state-wide offices were men.

***Secretary of State.*** Ohioans began electing the secretary of state in 1852. Since then, 41 people have served in this position, with only one being a woman. Democrat Jennifer Brunner successfully ran in 2006 and served one term (Palmer, 2017). In 2018, Kathleen Clyde, a termed-out state house member, ran unopposed in the Democratic primary and will face Republican Frank LaRose, a termed-out state senator.

## CONCLUSIONS

This manuscript is part of a larger project that will continue to explore the presence of women in Ohio elections. In addition to updating the 2018 data after the November general election, future research will explore the phenomenon of elected officials evading term-limits by “bouncing back and forth” between the state house and senate. Primary data going back in time as far as possible will also be collected, in order to provide a fuller picture of the participation of women as candidates for state legislature.

Collecting any kind of election data at the state level is always a challenge. *The Ohio Politics Almanac* (Curtin & Hallett, 2015), a particularly valuable resource, provides general election results and lists of those who have held state-wide office. The Ohio Secretary of State’s Office provides general election data on their website going back to the 1940s, but much of it is incomplete. The Official Tabulations by the Secretary of State for all Ohio general elections are available in bi-annual published versions going back to 1918, but these are often difficult to read and code, and their format changes with each new Secretary of State. Downloadable excel files are available beginning with the 1998 election cycle. Until recently, consistent data in any form from primary elections was difficult to find.

The analysis here is a first look at the 2018 primaries in Ohio, but several interesting trends are apparent. While she was unsuccessful, one woman ran in the Republican primary for US Senate. In races for the US House, there has been a substantial increase in the number of women running, especially compared to the two previous election cycles. However, this trend is overwhelmingly blue: out of the 11 women running in the general election, 10 are Democrats. Three of these women are incumbents. One female incumbent, Marcia Fudge, is facing a female challenger. Among the remaining female candidates, six of the seven are running against male incumbents, which suggests that, in the end, we may not see much of an increase in the number of women in Ohio’s House delegation.

The picture in the Ohio legislature is actually a bit brighter. While there has not been a substantial increase in the number of women running and winning primaries for state senate, the women who did run had spectacularly high success rates, especially among the Democratic women, and eight of the 11 women running in the general election are running in open seats. This suggests we could see a noticeable increase in the number of women in the state senate. On the state house side, there are a record number of women running in the general election, a major increase from 2016. This is however, also a blue trend. The number of Republican women running actually declined by a third. But in 50 of the state’s 99 house districts, voters will see a woman’s name on the ballot, suggesting that women will be a larger proportion of at least the Democratic caucus in the state house.

However, women have been mostly absent from Ohio’s state-wide races, in contrast to the surge of women candidates in other states and in Ohio’s state legislative races. While Betty Sutton agreed to be Richard Cordray’s running-mate in the race for governor, only two women ran for state-wide office in their own right, with one of them making it on to the general election ballot.

All of this suggests a somewhat murky picture for the prospects of increasing the presence of women in public office in Ohio. Moreover, if only one party is attracting female candidates, this

is a substantial barrier for women who aspire to public office. Only the blue half the political arena appears to be open to women. It remains to be seen if 2018 will be another “Year of the Woman’ in Ohio.



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**Table 1**  
**Women Running for US House in Ohio, 1992 - 2018**

	<b>Number of women who ran in primaries</b>	<b>Women as % of all primary candidates</b>	<b>Number of women who ran in general</b>	<b>Women as % of all general election candidates</b>	<b>Number of women who won the general election</b>	<b>Women as % of Ohio House delegation</b>
1992	13	15.5%	4	11.1%	2	10.5%
1994	8	12.1%	4	11.4%	2	10.5%
1996	4	10.8%	5	13.5%	2	10.5%
1998	9	14.3%	8	21.1%	3	15.8%
2000	5	9.1%	4	10.8%	3	15.8%
2002	7	12.5%	5	14.3%	3	11.1%
2004	8	15.4%	7	20.6%	3	11.1%
2006	16	18.4%	9	25.0%	5	11.1%
2008	12	16.7%	8	22.2%	5	16.7%
2010	10	12.0%	6	16.7%	4	16.7%
2012	9	16.4%	8	26.7%	3	18.8%
2014	5	10.6%	5	16.1%	3	18.8%
2016	6	10.2%	6	18.8%	3	18.8%
2018	17	20.5%	11	34.4%		

**Table 2**  
**Women Running in Ohio State Senate Primaries, 2018**

	<b>Total Primary Candidates</b>	<b>Male Primary Candidates</b>	<b>Female Primary Candidates</b>	<b>Total Primary Winners</b>	<b>Male Primary Winners</b>	<b>Female Primary Winners</b>
Democrats	26	15	11 (42.3%)	17	8	9 (52.9%)
Republicans	22	20	2 (9.1%)	17	15	2 (11.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>13 (27.1%)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11 (32.4%)</b>
<b>Incumbents</b>						
Democrats	3	2	1 (33.3%)	3	2	1 (33.3%)
Republicans	4	4	0	4	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1 (14.3%)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1 (14.3%)</b>
<b>Unopposed*</b>						
Democrats				10	5	5 (50.0%)
Republicans				13	11	2 (15.4%)
<b>Total</b>				<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7 (30.4%)</b>
<b>Open Seats (10)</b>						
Democrats	14	6	8 (57.1%)	10	4	6 (60.0%)
Republicans	12	10	2 (16.7%)	10	8	2 (20%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>

\*By default, the number of primary candidates equals the number of primary winners.

**Table 3**  
**Women Running in Ohio State House Primaries, 2018**

	<b>Total Primary Candidate s</b>	<b>Male Primary Candidate s</b>	<b>Female Primary Candidate s</b>	<b>Total Primary Winner s</b>	<b>Male Primary Winner s</b>	<b>Female Primary Winners</b>
Democrats	141	83	58 (41.1%)	99	56	43 (43.4%)
Republicans	139	114	25 (18.0%)	91*	77	14 (14.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>83 (29.6%)</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>57 (30.0%)</b>
<b>Incumbents</b>						
Democrats	22	13	9 (40.9%)	22	13	9 (40.9%)
Republicans	45	41	4 (8.9%)	44	40	4 (9.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>13 (19.4%)</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>13 (19.7%)</b>
<b>Unopposed**</b>						
Democrats				74	45	29 (39.2%)
Republicans				61	52	9 (14.8%)
<b>Total</b>				<b>135</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>38 (28.1%)</b>
<b>Open Seats (32)</b>						
Democrats	63	37	26 (41.3%)	32	18	14 (43.8%)
Republicans	41	35	6 (14.6)	32	30	2 (6.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>32 (30.8%)</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>16 (25.0%)</b>

\*In 8 districts, there were no Republican candidates.

\*\*By default, the number of primary candidates equals the number of primary winners.