

**“BETTER THAN BRIDGE:”  
OHIO WOMEN RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE,  
1872 -2016**

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## **“BETTER THAN BRIDGE:” OHIO WOMEN RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE, 1872 - 2016<sup>1</sup>**

In 1922, the first election cycle after the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified guaranteeing women the right to vote, Florence Allen successfully ran for Ohio’s state supreme court, making her the first woman to ever be elected to any state high court. Women were also elected to the Ohio state legislature for the first time. Fourteen women ran and six won. Maude Comstock Waitt was one of the first two women elected to the senate and served until 1930, representing Cuyahoga County. According to Waitt, “Politics is a great game, better than bridge” (“Ladies Gallery – What They Said”).

This paper will trace the history of women from Ohio running for president, US Congress, state legislature, state supreme court, and state-wide office, with data covering over 100 years, over 600 elected officials, and 50 election cycles. Ohio has a long history of women’s activism, including the temperance movement and women’s suffrage, beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to ever run for president in 1872, was born in Ohio, and is part of that tradition.

However, the history of women running for public office is quite uneven, with women making tremendous progress integrating the state judiciary, looking relatively average in their membership in the US Congress, but lagging behind national trends in the state legislature, particularly in the state senate. In addition, hardly any women have ever served in state-wide office; no women have ever run under a major-party label for governor in a general election.

### **AN OHIO WOMAN RUNS FOR PRESIDENT**

While Hillary Clinton was the first woman to become the presidential nominee for one of the two major parties in 2016, Ohio can claim Victoria Claflin Woodhull, the first woman to ever run for president almost 150 years earlier, as one of its own. Born in 1838 in Homer, Ohio, her father was a gambler, horse thief, and counterfeiter, and her mother, a maid, made extra money as a fortune teller (Goldsmith, 1998, pp. 14–15). One of ten children, Victoria claimed that she was conceived at a Methodist revival, where her parents became caught up in a religious frenzy, with the congregation “falling to the ground, groaning, crawling, barking like dogs,” a scene that was not unusual in rural Ohio in the 1830s (Goldsmith, 1998, p. 17). Growing up in squalor, sharing their small house with her siblings and nine cousins, and often begging for food from her neighbors, she had very little formal education; as she put it, she was “a child without a childhood,” responsible for cooking, cleaning, laundry, chopping wood, and caring for her siblings (Goldsmith, 1998, p. 25). Her father, an alcoholic, regularly beat his children, while her

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mother emotionally abused them. At the age of 15, she married, just to escape her family. Her marriage to Canning Woodhull, however, was not much of an improvement, and she eventually divorced him, a controversial move in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Goldsmith, 1998, p. 63).

By 1868, Victoria and one of her sisters had moved to New York City, where they met Cornelius Vanderbilt and became his clairvoyants, helping him communicate with his dead mother. With his financial backing, the sisters became the first female stockbrokers on Wall Street. With the profits, they started their own radical newspaper, *Woohull and Claflin's Weekly* (Felsenthal, 2015). As Victoria's celebrity was building, in 1871, she became the first woman to testify before a congressional committee. After being introduced by Representative John Bingham of Ohio, she spoke on women's suffrage, explaining, "We must...look at the Constitution *as it is*...the basis of equality is constructed *by all* and *for all* and from which all partake of *equal* rights...The Constitution makes no distinction of sex" (Goldsmith, 1998, p. 250).

In 1872, Woodhull ran for president of the United States. As the nominee of the Equal Rights Party, she ran against Republican incumbent President Ulysses S. Grant, who easily won reelection. In a campaign that was particularly nasty, the famous political cartoonist, Thomas Nast, portrayed Woodhull as "Mrs. Satan," because of her radical views on women's rights (Goldsmith, 1998, pp. 528-9). On election day, Susan B. Anthony famously demanded that she be allowed to vote (she voted for Grant) and would eventually be arrested. Woodhull was already in jail. Three days before the election, Victoria and her sister ran an article in their newspaper exposing the popular preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, as an adulterer. Sales of the newspaper soared, and in spite of the truthfulness of the story, the sisters were charged with sending obscene material through the mail, violating the Comstock Act. After a month in jail, the sisters were found not guilty (Felsenthal, 2015). Woodhull's name most likely did not appear on any state's ballot, and even if it had, Woodhull, of course, could not vote for herself. Technically, she was not even old enough to run; she was only 34 years old and would not have met the constitutional requirement that presidential candidates be 35 when sworn in. None of this, however, stopped her from running and fighting for women's rights.

## **OHIO WOMEN IN THE US CONGRESS**

While Ohio is one of 20 states that have never sent a woman to the US Senate, Ohio has a 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, 19.0%, 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.

The first woman from Ohio to serve in the House, Frances Payne Bolton, was a “congressional widow.” While she was one of the wealthiest women in the United States, Bolton’s family had a long history of public service. Her grandfather, Henry B. Payne, ran for president twice and served in the Ohio State Senate and the US Congress in the mid to late 1800s. Her husband, Chester Bolton, served in the Ohio State Senate and the US House. Frances was a popular spokes-person for her husband and loved being on the campaign trail, proclaiming, “Oh, it’s a grand life!” (Loth, 1957, p. 168). During World War I, Frances inherited a trust fund created by her uncle, one of the founders of Standard Oil. After working with nurses in the tenements of Cleveland, she gave over \$1 million to Western Reserve University to create a school of nursing, which is now the Case Western Reserve Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing.

In October of 1939, after winning his 6<sup>th</sup> non-consecutive term in the House, Chester died, and Frances ran for his seat in the special election held in February, 1940. She explained that party leaders thought that asking her to run “would be a graceful gesture which would do them no harm since they were sure I would get tired of politics in a few months, and flit on to something else” (Loth, 1957, p. 193). Bolton won the election by a 2 to 1 margin. In the regularly scheduled general election later that year, she won with 56.7% of the vote. She said, “The men so much wanted to get me out that I determined they would have to put up with me” (Loth, 1957, p. 203).

Bolton would serve for 15 terms and was never seriously challenged in any of her reelection campaigns until her final race in 1968. With her district substantially redrawn, Bolton had to run against 7-term Democratic incumbent Charles Vanik. In the now majority-Democratic district, Bolton lost by 10 points. She was 83 years old. Her son, Oliver Bolton, was a House Member from 1953-57 and 1963-65, making Frances the only woman in the history of Congress to serve with her son. During her first term in the House, she was one of only 6 women. During her last term, almost 30 years later, the number of women in the House, including herself, had only increased to 10.

*Table 1 about here*

***Their backgrounds.*** Politics is often a “family business.” One recent study showed that since 1789, over 10% of all members of Congress have had another family member serve in Congress, to say nothing of family members who served in other elected offices. Women are more likely than men to come from political families (Villarreal, 2013). Many of the early women who served in the US House ran for seats created after the death of their husbands (see for example Gerzog, 1995; Kincaid, 1978; Werner, 1966). Fitting national trends, two of the early women from Ohio who have served in the House were congressional widows, Francis Bolton and Jean Spencer Ashbrook. Ashbrook only served for seven months, to fill the remainder of her husband’s unexpired term. While the press called her a “politician by accident,” Ashbrook was actively involved in her husband’s congressional campaigns. John Ashbrook served in the U.S. House for 11 terms and stepped down to run for U.S. Senate in 1982. He died unexpectedly in April while campaigning. Jean explained, “The Governor called and asked if I would put my

name on the ballot” to complete the remainder of her husband’s House term. “Immediately I said, ‘Yes.’” (Roberts, 1982). “We were a team ... I campaigned for eight years in the 17th District ... I [thought] I could do a good job” (“Ashbrook”).

In many ways, the female Representatives from Ohio are quite typical compared to their male and female counterparts. While 19.0% of Ohio’s current congressional delegation is female, 19.6% of the House in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (2017-2019) is female. In terms of their partisanship, the women from Ohio have matched historical trends. As Table 1 shows, seven of the 11 women, or almost two-thirds, have been Democrats. Since 1992, only two have been Republicans. All three of the current women serving are Democrats. This mirrors the “party gap” that has developed in the US House beginning in the late 1980s, when we began to see significant differences in the partisanship of the women elected to Congress (Palmer and Simon, 2012). In the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (2017-2019), 74.3% of the female Members are Democrats.

Ohio’s congressional women are also similar to their colleagues with regards to race. Almost all of the women of color in the US House have been elected since 1992. Three of the female Members from Ohio have been African American, and two of them are currently serving. During her three decades of public service, Stephanie Tubbs Jones earned many “firsts.” In 1983, she was the first African-American woman on the Court of Common Pleas in Ohio. In 1991, she was the first African-American and the first woman to serve as a prosecutor in Cuyahoga County. In 1998, she became the first African American woman elected to Congress from Ohio. In the 108th Congress (2003 - 2005), she became the first African American woman to serve on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (2007 - 2009), she became Chair of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (the ethics committee), making her the first African American woman to chair a standing House committee. In August of 2008, Tubbs Jones died suddenly of a brain aneurism. She was succeeded by Marcia Fudge, one of her oldest friends and colleagues. Fudge and Tubbs Jones first met in their teens and worked together in the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office. Fudge went to Washington, DC when Tubbs Jones was first elected and served the Representative’s Chief of Staff. Later in her career, when Fudge was sworn in as the first female and first African American mayor of Warrensville Heights, Tubbs Jones administered the oath of office (Fenno, 2003). In the House, Representative Fudge created the Congressional Rock and Roll Caucus. She is also a member and former Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. Joyce Beatty, prior to her service in the US House, had been appointed to her husband’s seat in the Ohio House of Representatives after he resigned, and in 2006, became the first woman ever elected Minority Leader, the highest ranking Democrat in the State House. Beatty ran for US House in 2012 and since then, has consistently won by large margins.

Members of Congress in general are highly educated, with almost every member of Congress having at least a bachelor’s degree, and around 75% having some kind of post-baccalaureate degree (Manning, 2017, p. 4). The most common educational path to Congress is law school (Manning, 2017, pp. 4–5; see also Lawless & Fox, 2010). As Table 1 shows, five of the 11 women from Ohio have had law degrees. Three more women have had Master’s degrees. The only woman without a Bachelor’s degree was Frances Payne Bolton. Interestingly, Mary Rose Oakar, in addition to having a Master’s degree, attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London (“Oakar”).

In American politics, there is a hierarchy of political offices that functions as a career ladder for elected officials. Serving in a local office serves as a spring board into the state legislature, which in turn can lead to running for the US House, and then the US Senate (see for example Francis & Kenny, 2000; Manning, 2017; Rhode, 1979; Schlesinger, 1966). Only two of the 11 women from Ohio had never been elected to office before they ran for Congress, but even these two women, Frances Payne Bolton and Jean Spencer Ashbrook, had extensive experience working on their husband's campaigns and in their congressional offices. Three of the 11 women from Ohio served in the Ohio state legislature prior to running for Congress. Two more served on city councils, one was mayor, one was a county commissioner, and two had extensive experience as local judges. Women also tend to be older, waiting for their children to grow up before their first run for office (Lawless & Fox, 2010). Very few young women have ever run for Congress. The women from Ohio also seem to fit this pattern; while two women were 36, the average age when they were first elected is 49.

The women from Ohio who have served in the US House have had remarkable careers. However, in many ways, they are quite typical. Just as Ohio is a "bellwether" state, with "voting patterns [that] reflect those of the nation ... [and] moves the way the nation moves" (Kondik, 2016, p. 4), Ohio's female representatives reflect many of the national trends in the integration of women into Congress.

## **WOMEN IN 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, and, 22 women have served in both chambers. As mentioned earlier, in 1922, 14 women ran and six won. Two won election to the state senate, Maude Comstock Waitt from Cuyahoga County, and Nettie Bromley Loughhead 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).

*Figure 1 about here*

The integration of women into the Ohio legislature has been slow and uneven. In 1926, eight women were elected to the house, a record that would not be broken until 1962, and three women were elected to the senate, a record that would not be broken until 1992. In fact, as Figure 1 shows, the number of women winning a seat in the state house would remain relatively

flat until the late 1970s. In the 1980s, female house members would steadily increase, and in 1992, the much celebrated “Year of the Woman” (see for example Cook, Thomas & Wilcox, 1994; Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1995), we see a spike in their membership, the biggest increase on record, with seven new female representatives. Female state house members would reach a peak in 2000, with 23 winning election, but then the number dropped to 16 in 2006. The number would peak again in 2014 at 26, with women making up 26.3% of the house.

Since 1956, state senators have served four-year terms (prior to that they served two-year terms), and senate elections have been staggered, with half the senate running for reelection each two-year election cycle. Figure 1 shows that women have not made the same kind of progress that they have in the house. In 1992, female senate membership increased from four to five. The number of women in the state senate peaked in 1994 at eight, or 24.2%, a record that has yet to be broken. The number of female candidates running for senate also peaked in 1994 with 12 candidates.

The legislature passed term limits in 1992, with the first legislators “termed out” in 2000. In the house, legislators were limited to four two-year terms, and in the senate, two four-year terms. When the term-limits movement was at its height in the 1990s, many thought that term-limits would create more opportunities for female candidates. The idea was that the biggest barrier to the success of female candidates was incumbency, and most incumbents were men (see for example Palmer & Simon, 2012). 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 & 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). In Ohio, while the number of women in the state house peaked in 2000, it declined for the next three election cycles. The number of women in the Ohio senate reached a low point in 2002. While a more in-depth analysis is needed, the numbers shown in Figure 1 suggest that term limits have not contributed to a significant increase in female legislators.

The youngest woman to ever serve in the Ohio legislature is Christina Hagan, who, at the age of 22, was appointed by Governor John Kasich to fill an unexpired term in March of 2011. Her father had represented the district from 2001 – 2009. When she was appointed, she was still a senior at Malone University, studying business and political science, and was often mistaken for a staffer. About a month after her swearing in, she was riding in the elevator with one of her colleagues. As they talked politics, “he complimented her on her brains and told her to keep working, and said that she would replace her boss some day. He told her if she worked hard she could be a state representative. She responded, ‘Sir, I am a state representative’” (“22-Year-Old is Ohio’s Youngest Representative,” 2011). Hagan had her first child in December, 2015, and brought her infant daughter with her everywhere in the Capitol, including the house floor. She explained, “I would say this is an opportunity as a leader to start to change the culture to what we understand to be the most appropriate workplace or home life” (Wang, 2016).

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.

Regardless of term-limits, the general patterns regarding the progress of women into the Ohio legislature, particularly the state house, are relatively similar to those found in Congress and in many other states: extremely small numbers until the 1970s, when we begin to see gradual increases, with a spike in 1992. For the past decade, the proportion of women in state legislatures nationally has actually been flat, increasing from 24.3% in 2009 to only 25.0% in 2017 (“Women in State Legislatures,” 2017). Interestingly, this gave women in the Ohio House time to catch up with the national average of 25.9%. Women in the Ohio senate are still behind the national average of 25.0% (“Women in State Legislatures,” 2017).

### **WOMEN IN THE OHIO JUDICIARY**

Compared to the state legislature and state-wide offices, women have done better in Ohio’s judiciary, and the state can claim several “famous firsts.” As of the 2016 election, out of the 34 Court of Common Pleas judges in Cuyahoga County, 16 (47.1%) are women. Out of the 68 Ohio District Court of Appeals judges, 31 (45.6%) are women. Out of the seven Ohio Supreme Court justices, three are women.

Women’s success on the state’s highest court, however, has been relatively recent. Florence Allen was the first woman ever elected to any judicial office in the nation, when she successfully ran for the Cuyahoga Court of Common Pleas in 1920. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote, had been ratified in late August of that year. Shortly afterwards, encouraged by friends, Allen decided to run, but needed to get her name on the ballot. In two days, with the help of the Woman Suffrage Party, she got the 2000 signatures she needed (“Florence Ellinwood Allen”). Two years later, in 1922, she ran for the Ohio Supreme Court and won, making her the first woman in the nation to serve on a state high court. She easily won reelection in 1928. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her to the US Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, making her the first woman to serve on the federal bench. Allen served for 32 years, retiring in 1959 (“Florence Ellinwood Allen”).

After Allen’s election to the Ohio Supreme Court in 1922, it would be almost sixty years before another woman ran for the state’s high court. In 1980, Sarah Harper, an African American Republican woman, unsuccessfully ran for Chief Justice against incumbent Frank Celebrezze. In 1981, Blanche Krupansky would be appointed by Governor James Rhodes after Justice Paul Brown resigned. After being interviewed by the Governor, Krupansky learned that she was the nominee listening to the radio in her car as she was driving back to Cleveland from Columbus (“Blanche Ethel Krupansky”). A year later, when she had to run for the seat in 1982, she lost to James Celebrezze, brother of the sitting Chief Justice, Frank Celebrezze. It would not be until 1988 that another woman would win a seat on the bench, when Alice Robie Resnick defeated another woman, Joyce George, for an open seat on the bench.

Ohio’s judges serve for six-year terms and are elected through a method not used in any other state. Judicial candidates first run in a partisan primary, usually in the spring. The winners of



these primaries then run in a non-partisan general election in the fall, with no party label after their name. The terms of the seven state supreme court justices are staggered, with typically two or three seats up for election every two years. If state supreme court justices leave before their terms expire, the governor appoints replacements to fill the unexpired term. Since 1980, in each two year election cycle, on average there have been five candidates for the available seats, with two or three of these candidates being women. Only four election cycles out of the last 19 featured no female candidates.

As of 2017, out of the 158 Ohio Supreme Court justices elected since statehood, only ten (6.3%) have been women. However, in 2002, Ohio became the third state in the nation to have a female majority (4 of 7) on its state high court. This majority did not last long, as Justice Deborah Cook was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve on the US Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2003 (“Deborah Louise Cook”). However, women were in the majority again from 2011 to 2016. Maureen O’Connor was elected the first female Chief Justice in 2010. Yvette McGee Brown has been the only African American woman to serve on the state supreme court. She was appointed by Governor Ted Strickland in December, 2010 to fill the unexpired term created when O’Connor was elected Chief Justice. When McGee Brown had to run for the seat in 2012, she was defeated by another woman, Sharon Kennedy.

If a justice leaves the bench, the governor appoints someone to fill the unexpired term. Women have been significant beneficiaries of gubernatorial appointments. Four of the ten female justices were initially appointed by the governor to fill an unexpired term. Since Justice Krupansky’s appointment in 1981, 14 men have served on the state supreme court, but only two were appointed.

*Table 2 about here*

***Their backgrounds.*** As Table 2 shows, the ten women who have served on the state supreme court attended a variety of law schools, including Cleveland-Marshall, University of Akron, and University of Cincinnati. Three went to The Ohio State University Law School. Only two went to a law school out of Ohio. Alice Robie Resnick attended the University of Detroit Law School. Florence Allen had to leave Ohio, given the lack of schools that admitted women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1909, she attended the University of Chicago, the only woman in her class of 100 students. The following year, she moved to New York, and eventually finished her degree at New York University Law School in 1913. Despite graduating second in her class, she was refused employment by the major law firms in New York (“Florence Ellinwood Allen”).

Historically, Ohio’s female justices have come to the high court with substantially more judicial experience than their male counterparts. Prior to their service on the state supreme court, all ten of these women had served as a lower court judge: three had served on a municipal court, three of them had served on a court of common pleas, and five had served on the Ohio Court of Appeals. Two of these women, Blanche Krupansky and Judith Lanzinger, actually served on all three of these benches. Looking back on her 30 years as a judge, Lanzinger said, “It’s like being struck by lightning, to have the type of career I’ve had. You can’t plan it. I certainly wouldn’t have planned it as a kid. I never would have been a lawyer. But I’ve had many happy accidents in life that have taken me to this point” (Provance, 2016).

Out of the 148 men who have served on the state supreme court, only 91, or 61.5% -- less than two-thirds -- had prior experience on a lower court: five on a municipal court, 54 on a court of common pleas, and 32 on the state court of appeals. However, comparing the ten female justices to their male contemporaries suggests that the experience gap has shrunk. Since 1981, when Blanche Krupansky arrived on the bench, among the 14 male justices who have served since then, only two have had no judicial experience at all. However, none of the 14 men have served on all three levels of Ohio's court system. In fact, none of the 148 male justices have ever served on all three levels. While the differences have clearly been reduced, women are still coming to the bench with slightly more experience. This is even more impressive given that the average age that these women came to the high court, 48.8, is slightly younger than the men, 50.0.

Nationally, women make up 34.6% of all state high court justices. Even with three women on its bench, Ohio's state supreme court still surpasses this (42.9%). According to the National Association of Women Judges, in 2016, women made up 44.3% of the state courts of appeals judges, exceeding the national rate of 34.7%. In addition, women were 29.2% of all court of common pleas judges, nearly matching the national rate of 29.7% on states' lowest courts of general jurisdiction ("2016 US State Court Women Judges – Ohio," 2016). Compared to the US Congress, the state legislature, and state-wide office, women are doing far better in Ohio's judiciary.

### **WOMEN IN OHIO STATE-WIDE OFFICE**

Ohio has six state-wide elected offices: state treasurer, secretary of state, state auditor, attorney general, lieutenant governor, and governor. Very few women have ever run for or served in these offices: since statehood, only nine women have served in state-wide office, and seven of these women have been elected since 1994. It is not uncommon for Ohio politicians, male and female, to serve in multiple state-wide positions. Four of the nine women have served in two state-wide offices: Nancy Hollister was lieutenant governor before her brief career as governor, Betty Montgomery served as attorney general and state auditor, Jennette Bradley served half a term as lieutenant governor and was then appointed state treasurer, and Mary Taylor has been state auditor and lieutenant governor. Table 3 provides a list of all nine women and their state-wide offices.

*Table 3 about here*

**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. Winthrow would also win two more terms and was the last woman to be elected to the position, serving until 1994. Jennette Bradley, an African American Republican, was appointed state treasurer in 2005 by Governor Bob Taft when Joseph Deters resigned. Bradley served as treasurer until 2007; she was defeated in the 2006 Republican primary by Sandra O'Brien, who would lose the general election to Democrat Rob Cordray.

*Table 4 about here*

**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. As Table 4 shows, Democrat Charleta Tavares was the first woman to run for secretary of state in 1998, but was defeated by Republican J. Kenneth Blackwell in the open seat race. Democrat Jennifer Brunner successfully ran in 2006, defeating her opponent by 16 points, and served one term. In 2010, rather than seek reelection for secretary of state, Brunner decided to run for the open US Senate seat created when Senator George Voinovich announced he was resigning. She was defeated by Lee Fisher in the Democratic primary.

**Attorney General.** Two of the 46 people who have been elected attorney general since 1852 have been women. The first was Republican Betty Montgomery, who defeated incumbent Democrat Lee Fisher in a close race with 51% of the two-party vote in 1994. Montgomery held on to the seat in 1998, beating Democrat Richard Cordray by 24 points. After being termed out, Montgomery would successfully run for state auditor in 2002. In 2006, a year in which Republicans would be pummeled by Democrats for creating a “culture of corruption,” Montgomery initially ran for governor, but dropped out, and ran again for attorney general against Democrat Marc Dann. Montgomery’s defeat came as a surprise; even Dann admitted that he had not expected to win (Welsh-Huggins & Smyth, 2012). Montgomery had outspent him two-to-one (Curtin & Hallett, 2015, p. 233). Ironically, Dann would resign in May, 2008, after a variety of corruption scandals, including using state money to buy an SUV, misusing campaign funds, and having an affair with his scheduler (Welsh-Huggins & Smyth, 2012). Democrats in the Ohio House had drafted nine articles of impeachment against Dann the day before he resigned (Jindra, 2008). Governor Ted Strickland would appoint Nancy Rogers, the Dean of the Ohio State University Law School, to complete the unexpired term. When she was appointed, she explained that she would only be a “caretaker” in the office and would not seek election, but return to teaching at Ohio State (Jindra, 2008)

**State Auditor.** Out of the 30 people who have served as state auditor since 1803, only two have been women, both Republicans. In 2002, two women ran for auditor, the first time any women had ever run for the position. As noted above, after serving two terms as the first female attorney general, Betty Montgomery, defeated Helen Smith, the Democrat, with 64% of the two-party vote. In 2006, Montgomery left the state auditor’s office and unsuccessfully ran for attorney general again, and Republican Mary Taylor would defeat Democrat Barbara Sykes with 51% of the two-party vote. Taylor served only one term as auditor before successfully running as lieutenant governor in 2010.

**Lieutenant Governor.** Until 1974, the office of lieutenant governor was elected independently from governor. Beginning in 1978, lieutenant governors and governors ran together as running-mates. Out of the 57 people who have served, four have been women, and all were running-mates. In fact, four of the last six lieutenant governors have been women. The first woman to run for lieutenant governor was Republican Nancy Hollister, who successfully ran with George Voinovich in 1994. Prior to the election, she had served as Director of the Governor’s office of Appalachia (Curtin & Hallett, 2015, p. 71). Voinovich tapped Hollister to be his running mate in his reelection campaign when incumbent Lieutenant Governor Mike DeWine ran for US Senate.

During the last weeks of her four-year term, after Voinovich resigned to be sworn in as Ohio's newest US Senator, she served as governor for 11 days, and then served in the Ohio House.

Hollister was followed by Republican Maureen O'Connor in 1998, who ran with Bob Taft. O'Connor left the office after one term to successfully run for state supreme court. In 2002, both major parties had African American female candidates for lieutenant governor; Democrat Charleta Tavares, a former member of the Ohio House, who ran with Tim Hagan, was defeated by incumbent Governor Taft and his new running mate, Jennette Bradley, the first and only African American woman to hold the office. Bradley would only serve as lieutenant governor for two years and would move over to the state treasurer's office in 2005. The remainder of her term would be filled by Bruce Johnson. In 2006, neither gubernatorial candidate had a female running mate. However, as Table 4 shows, in 2010 and 2014, both parties would once again have women on their tickets. In 2010, Republican Mary Taylor, running with John Kasich, would narrowly defeat incumbent Governor Ted Strickland and his new pick for lieutenant governor, Yvette McGee Brown. Kasich and Taylor would run for reelection in 2014, defeating Democrats Ed Fitzgerald and Sharen Neuhardt by over 30 points.

## **WOMEN AND THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE**

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).

Ohio has, however, 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 – 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 is 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 and Whaley dropped out, leaving only one woman, Pillich, in the race on the Democratic side.

Prior to 2018, two women ran as third-party candidates. In 1982, Phyllis Goetz ran as a Libertarian candidate and received 1.2% of the vote. One of her campaign promises was that college tuition payments would receive 100% of their value in tax credits (Williamson, 1982). In 2014, Anita Rios ran under the Green Party label, and received 3.3% of the vote. Rios was the first third-party candidate to ever participate in a debate with a major party candidate in Ohio history. Incumbent Republican governor John Kasich, who at one point had a 22-point lead in the polls, walked out of debate negotiations, leaving Democratic candidate Ed Fitzgerald and Rios to face off against each other; 2014 would be the first gubernatorial election since the 1970s that the two major-party candidates would not debate (Pelzer, 2014).

***Their backgrounds.*** In addition to Nancy Hollister, 62 men have served as Ohio's governor. Prior to 1958, governor's terms were two years. Out of the 63 people who have been governor, well over half, 36 (57.1%), have had Bachelor's degrees; out of the 26 who have served in the Twentieth Century, only five did not have a Bachelor's degree. Thirty-four had law degrees. One, Ted Strickland, who served as governor from 2007 – 2011, had a PhD in counseling psychology. Hollister has a Bachelor's degree from Kent State University. The average age when they were first elected governor was 50. Hollister was 49.

The previous political experience of the 62 men provides some insight into the lack of women running. Forty-eight, over three-fourths (76.2%), had prior experience in the US Congress or in state-wide office. Prior to being governor, six had served in the US Senate and 18 (28.6%) had served in the US House of Representatives. While historically only 17 (27.0%) have served in another state-wide office, since 1956, out of the 11 people who have been governor, seven (63.3%) had previously been elected to state-wide office, with lieutenant governor as the most common position. Out of the four remaining who had not served in state-wide office, three had served in the US House. This suggests that, at least for the past 50 years, the path to the governor's office typically goes through another state-wide office or through Congress.

The office of lieutenant governor has not served as the springboard to the governor's office for women like it has for men. Three of the ten men who have most recently served as governor had previously served as lieutenant governor. Nancy Hollister had been lieutenant government when she became governor in 1998 after Governor Voinovich's resignation, but Mary Taylor in 2018 is the first woman to have served in that office to run for governor. The fact that only a handful of women have successfully run for any state-wide office at least partially explains the lack of women who have been serious contenders for governor.

## CONCLUSIONS

While the state can claim many “famous firsts,” like Victoria Woodhull and Florence Allen, this analysis suggests that the history of women running for public office in Ohio is erratic and uneven. The women from Ohio who have served in the US Congress reflect many of the national trends regarding their prior experience, partisanship and racial make-up. Ohio has sent 11 women to the US House since 1940 and none to the US Senate. In 2017, three of Ohio’s 16 US House Members were female, making it relatively typical compared to other states. The historical patterns of women entering the state house and senate also match national trends, with the first women elected in the 1920s, very low numbers of women until the 1970s, when women gradually and steadily begin increasing their presence in the legislature, particularly the house. In 2017, 23.5% of the Ohio legislature was female, just under the national level. Women have done better than national trends in the state’s judiciary, with Allen elected to the state high court in 1922. In 2017, three of the seven state supreme court justices were female, putting Ohio well ahead of most states, and the proportion of women on the state courts of appeal was also substantially higher than the national level.

Women are the most underrepresented in state-wide offices. The history of women running for these positions is quite short, with the first woman running and winning in 1970. Since statehood, only nine women have ever served in Ohio’s six state-wide offices. This, however, is important in understanding why Ohio has never had a major-party candidate for governor. The path to the governor’s mansion typically goes through state-wide office or through Congress. Moreover, while there have been four women who have held the office of lieutenant governor, it has not been the spring-board to the state’s highest office like it has been for men.

This manuscript is a first attempt at providing an electoral history of women running for public office in Ohio. Doing research at the state-level is extremely challenging. While there are a few significant resources, such as *The Ohio Politics Almanac* (Curtin & Hallett, 2015), finding reliable data, particularly on the state legislature, is difficult. While the Secretary of State’s Office does provide election data on their website going back to the 1940s, much of it is incomplete, and there are mistakes. The Official Tabulations for all offices are available in published versions, but are often difficult to read and code, and their format changes with each new Secretary of State. In the future, I hope to expand the data and find new sources, especially on state legislative elections.

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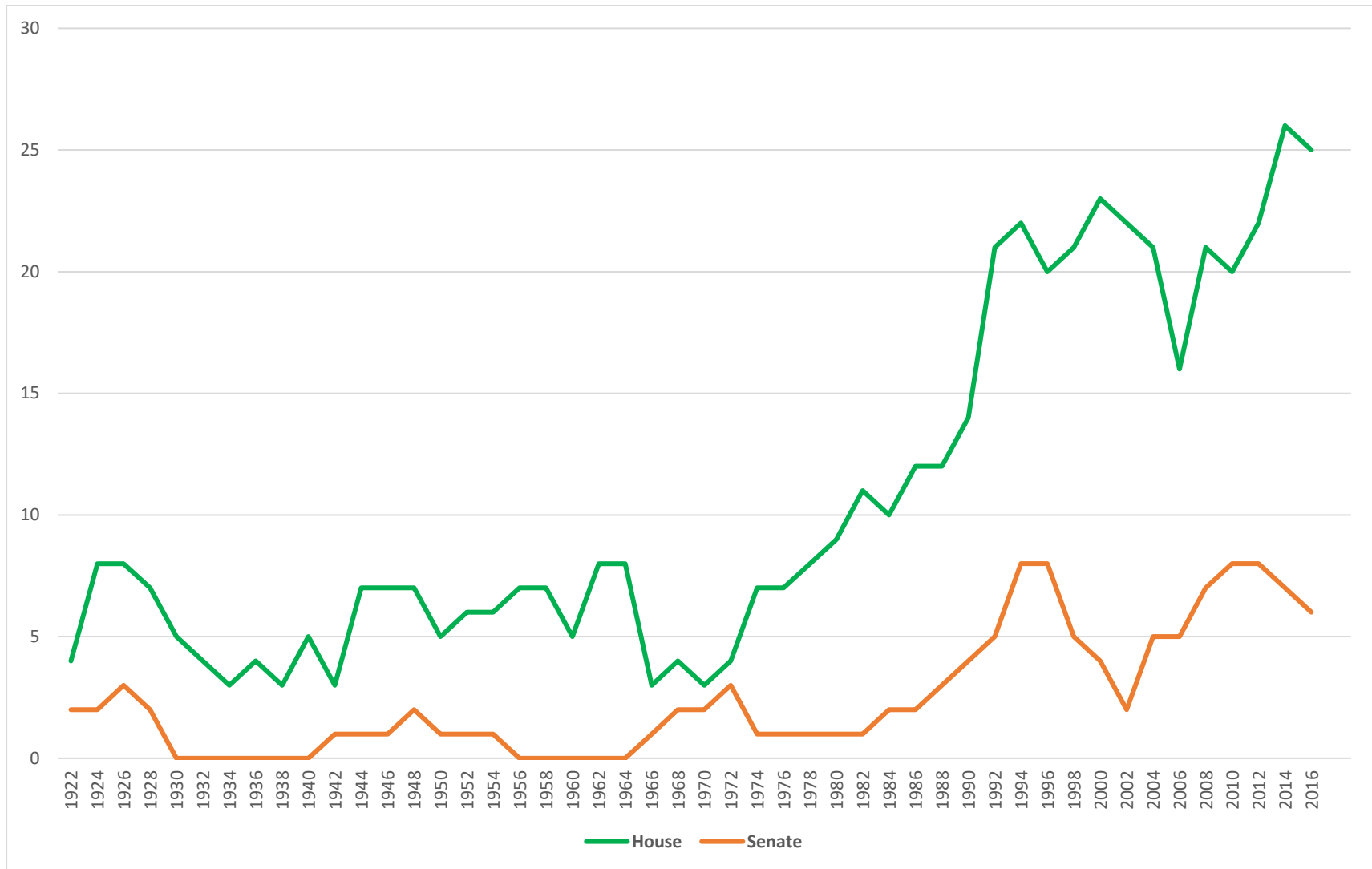
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**Figure 1**  
**The Number of Women in the Ohio Legislature**



**Table 1**  
**Ohio Women in the US House of Representatives**

	<b>Party</b>	<b>Terms</b>	<b>Dates of service</b>	<b>Age first elected</b>	<b>How she entered office</b>	<b>How she left office</b>	<b>Law degree</b>	<b>Prior elective office</b>
<b>Frances Payne Bolton</b>	R	15	1940-1969	54	Special election after death of husband	Defeated in general election after redistricting		
<b>Mary Rose Oakar</b>	D	8	1977-1993	36	Open seat	Defeated in general election after redistricting		City Council
<b>Jean Spencer Ashbrook</b>	R	0.5	1982-83	47	Special election after death of husband	Retired; District eliminated after redistricting		
<b>Marcy Kaptur</b>	D	18	1983-present	36	Defeated incumbent	(still serving)		
<b>Deborah Pryce</b>	R	8	1993-2009	41	Open seat	Retired	yes	Muni Judge
<b>Stephanie Tubbs Jones</b>	D	5	1999-2008	48	Open seat	Died in office	yes	Muni Judge, Court of Common Pleas
<b>Jean Schmidt</b>	R	4.5	2005-2013	54	Special election	Defeated in primary		Ohio State House
<b>Betty Sutton</b>	D	3	2007-2013	43	Open seat	Defeated in general election after redistricting	yes	City Council, Ohio State House
<b>Marcia Fudge</b>	D	5	2008-present	56	Special election after death of Tubbs Jones	(still serving)	yes	Mayor
<b>Mary Jo Kilroy</b>	D	1	2009-2011	59	Open seat	Defeated in general election	yes	County Commissioner
<b>Joyce Beatty</b>	D	3	2013-present	62	Open seat in newly created district	(still serving)		Ohio State House

**Table 2**  
**Women on the Ohio Supreme Court**

	Dates of service	Age when arrived on sup court	How she entered office	Law school	Previously served on muni court	Previously served on common pleas court	Previously served on state court of appeals
<b>Florence Allen</b>	1923-1934	38	elected	New York University		yes	
<b>Blanche Krupansky</b>	1981-1982	56	appointed	Case Western	yes	yes	yes
<b>Alice Robie Resnick</b>	1989-2007	49	elected	University of Detroit	yes		yes
<b>Deborah Cook</b>	1995-2003	42	elected	University of Akron			yes
<b>Evelyn Stratton</b>	1996-2012	43	appointed	Ohio State		yes	
<b>Maureen O'Connor</b>	2003-present	51	elected	Cleveland Marshall		yes	
<b>Judith Lanzinger</b>	2005-2016	58	elected	University of Toledo	yes	yes	yes
<b>Yvette McGee Brown</b>	2011-2012	51	appointed	Ohio State		yes	
<b>Sharon Kennedy</b>	2013-present	50	elected	University of Cincinatti		yes	
<b>Judith French</b>	2012-present	50	appointed	Ohio State			yes

**Table 3**  
**Women in State-Wide Office**

	Office held	Party	Terms	Dates of service	How she entered office	Second office held	Terms	Dates of service	How she entered office
<b>Gertrude Donahey</b>	State Treasurer	D	3	1971-1982	Elected				
<b>Mary Ellen Withrow</b>	State Treasurer	D	3	1983-1994	Elected				
<b>Nancy Hollister</b>	Lieutenant Governor	R	1	1995-1999	Elected as running-mate	Governor	11 days	1998-1999	Filled unexpired term
<b>Maureen O'Connor</b>	Lieutenant Governor	R	1	1999-2003	Elected as running-mate				
<b>Betty Montgomery</b>	Attorney General	R	2	1995-2003	Elected	State Auditor	1	2003-2007	Elected
<b>Jennette Bradley</b>	Lieutenant Governor	R	0.5	2003-2005	Elected as running-mate	State Treasurer	0.5	2005-2007	Appointed
<b>Nancy Rogers</b>	Attorney General	D	0.25	2008	Appointed				
<b>Mary Taylor</b>	State Auditor	R	1	2007-2011	Elected	Lieutenant Governor	2	2011-2019	Elected as running-mate
<b>Jennifer Brunner</b>	Secretary of State	D	1	2007-2011	Elected				

Table 4

## Female Candidates in Elections for State-Wide Office

	Treasurer of State	2-party vote	Secretary of State	2-party vote	Attorney General	2-party vote	Auditor of State	2-party vote	Lieutenant Governor	2-party vote
<b>1970</b>	<b>Gertrude W. Donahey, D</b>	56%								
	Robin T. Turner, R	44%								
<b>1974</b>	<b>Gertrude W. Donahey, D</b>	63%								
	Richard H. Harris, R	37%								
<b>1978</b>	<b>Gertrude W. Donahey, D</b>	64%								
	George C. Rogers, R	36%								
<b>1982</b>	<b>Mary Ellen Withrow, D</b>	51%								
	Dana G. Rinehart, R	49%								
<b>1986</b>	<b>Mary Ellen Withrow, D</b>	55%								
	Jeff Jacobs, R	45%								
<b>1990</b>	<b>Mary Ellen Withrow, D</b>	59%								
	<b>Judith Y. Brachman, R</b>	41%								
<b>1994</b>	<b>Barbara Sykes, D</b>	44%			Lee Fisher, D	51%			Peter L Jones, D	74%
	<b>J. Kenneth Blackwell, R</b>	56%			<b>Betty Montgomery, R</b>	49%			<b>Nancy Hollister, R</b>	26%
<b>1998</b>			<b>Charleta B. Tavares, D</b>	44%	Richard Cordray, D	62%			Michael Coleman, D	53%
			<b>J. Kenneth Blackwell, R</b>	56%	<b>Betty Montgomery, R</b>	38%			<b>Maureen O'Connor, R</b>	47%
<b>2002</b>	<b>Mary Boyle, D</b>	47%					<b>Helen Smith, D</b>	64%	<b>Charleta Tavares, D</b>	60%
	<b>Joseph Deters, R</b>	53%					<b>Betty Montgomery, R</b>	36%	<b>Jennette Bradley, R</b>	40%
<b>2006</b>	<b>Richard Cordray, D</b>	42%	<b>Jennifer Brunner, D</b>	58%	<b>Marc Dann, D</b>	47%	<b>Barbara Sykes, D</b>	49%		
	<b>Sandra O'Brien, R</b>	58%	Greg Hartmann, R	42%	<b>Betty Montgomery, R</b>	53%	<b>Mary Taylor, R</b>	51%		
<b>2010</b>			<b>Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, D</b>	44%					<b>Yvette McGee Brown, D</b>	51%
			<b>Jon Husted, R</b>	56%					<b>Mary Taylor, R</b>	49%
<b>2014</b>	<b>Connie Pillich, D</b>	43%	<b>Nina Turner, D</b>	37%					<b>Sharen Neuhardt D</b>	66%
	<b>Josh Mandel, R</b>	57%	<b>Jon Husted, R</b>	63%					<b>Mary Taylor, R</b>	34%

Democratic women are in blue. Republican women are in red.

Winners are in bold. Elections with no female candidates are indicated by blank cells.