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Parties, Money, and Sex

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PARTIES, MONEY AND SEX

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the fundraising abilities of women candidates for the U.S. Congress in the most recent elections and party activities on behalf of these candidates. It speculates about the likelihood of 2006 being another “Year of the Woman.” Women have become formidable fundraisers and party organizations are often very supportive of their campaigns and even engage in recruiting women in winnable races. At the same time, this paper reflects on the implications of the contemporary stress on fundraising prowess in the recruitment and support of candidates for women expanding their presence as candidates for public office up and down the ballot.

The following are several highlights from the ongoing 2006 congressional elections.

- On April 28th, 2006 U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) held her fifth Ultimate Women's Power Luncheon in a downtown Chicago hotel in which 1100 women attended and \$162,000 was raised.
- U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham (D-NY) reported having raised \$27,501,536 in the 2005-2006 election cycle for her campaign for re-election to the Senate and possible run for the White House, twice as much money as the number two senate candidate.
- EMILY' List, the pro-choice women's PAC that provides support for Democratic women candidates helped Betty Sutton raise \$500,000 in her successful primary bid in Ohio's open 13th congressional district this year. At the same time one of Sutton's opponents, Capri Cafaro pretty nearly self financed her losing effort contributing almost \$2million dollars of her own money. EMILY's List was ranked third among the top 50 PACs in the 2003-2004 election cycle.
- In the 2005-2006 election cycle, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Dole was elected by the Republicans in the Senate to head their Senate Campaign Committee in which they have raised over \$56 million.
- And Republican Katherine Harris has contributed \$3,250,000 to her campaign for U. S. Senate.

These anecdotes represent a distinctive face of contemporary gender politics. They illustrate that women have become prodigious fundraisers in their own right and on their own behalf, that they have organized as women to become formidable players in national politics, and that they have

become major actors in their party organizations formal efforts to acquire financial resources for their candidates.

In one sense this is a positive face of gender politics allowing women to compete equally with men as candidates for national office and in some cases even to be advantaged. It may also suggest a lessening of the gendered nature to campaigns for national office. At the same time, it means women have become adept at acting in the political world as men do, that they have adapted to traditional politics or that they have learned to operate within gendered institutions that are masculine in nature. This aspect of gender politics may have its downside as it may indicate that women elected to public office are not likely to be particular champions of meaningful campaign finance reform, and that they will be conflicted over how best to reform the system as they become invested in maintaining the status quo. Looking down ballot, the extent to which the growth in the numerical representation of women at the state level of politics has stagnated in part because of the increased pressure to raise enormous amounts of money to serve in a position that pays little and is highly contentious, the lack of campaign finance reform becomes a serious issue for those who would advance the numbers of women in electoral office. Changing the nature of financing of our campaigns for public office may be at least a necessary but probably not a sufficient condition to increase the number of women running and winning these positions. This paper explores the current state of affairs regarding gender and the financing of campaigns for national office and the role of party organizations in advancing women's campaigns for these positions. It then reflects back on the impact of current campaign practices at the national level on women's interest in running for lower level offices.

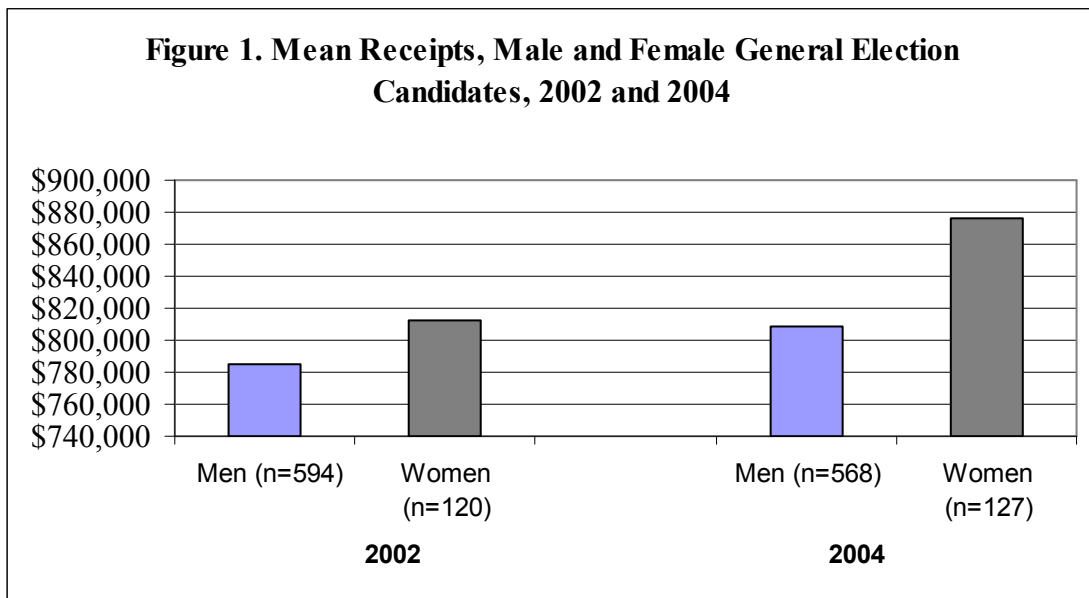
What is the contemporary nature of the financing of campaigns at the national level beyond the indicators suggested by the illustrations used to introduce this paper? There is no limit to how much a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate can raise and spend. The Supreme Court in the 1976 Buckley v. Valeo decision ruled that limits the Federal Election Campaign Act had placed on the amounts that candidates for federal office or their contributors might spend to promote their election was a violation of the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of expression. Money equaled speech the court ruled. More than ever even with some continued campaign finance reform efforts, election campaigns are all about the money, that is how good candidates are at raising money and how much they can obtain or donate themselves to their campaign is the number one criterion for the national party leadership in promoting candidacies whether they be men or women.

The Financing of Women Candidates in 2004

When I first tackled the conventional wisdom idea that women were not being elected to national office in major part because of their inability to compete with male candidates in fundraising, a comparison of the amounts of money male and female major party nominees for the U.S. House raised and spent in the elections from 1972 through 1992 showed that women had become as good at and some times better at raising money to finance their campaigns than male candidates. The anecdotes that introduced this paper do not represent outlier cases unrepresentative of contemporary campaigns of women for national office. Women candidates have continued to keep pace in accumulating financial resources to run competitive campaigns for Congress (Fiber and Fox, 2005, Burrell, 2005).

If we look at the most recent election, the 2004 campaigns, we find the same story. Women were 17 percent of the major party candidates in 2004 for the U.S. House of Representatives counting primary and general election candidacies. But they were 11 of the 50 top candidates in terms of receipts or 22 percent. (They were 50 percent of the top ten.) Allyson Schwartz (D-PA13) who raised \$4,597,032 and Arlene Wohlgemuth (R- TX17) who raised \$2,586,253 were the top fundraisers respectively in open seat and challenger campaigns.

As has been shown in the past, women general election candidates in 2004 facing a major party opponent as a group raised more money on average than their male counterparts not taking into account incumbency or party status. They raised an average \$876,000 compared with \$812,000 for male contenders. Figure 1 shows average receipts for both 2002 and 2004 and illustrates the increase in campaign financial resources, and the greater surge in the financing of women’s campaigns.

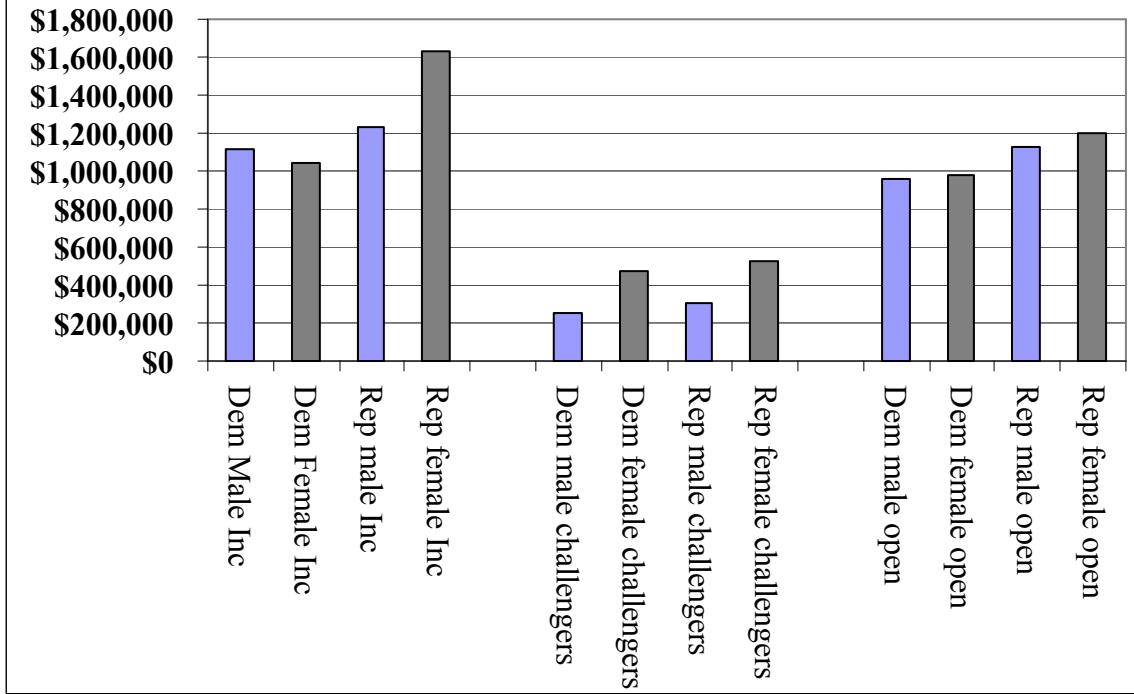


Candidates with major party opponents only.

Republican female incumbents outpaced all other groups in terms of their fundraising in 2004.

Only female Democratic incumbents lagged slightly behind their male counterparts in their total receipts according to Federal Election Commission reports (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Mean Receipts, General Election Candidates by Party, Status and Sex, 2004



Candidates with major party opponents only.

While the general picture in the contemporary period has been one of female general election candidates faring as well if not better than male candidates, some researchers have shown that this overall aggregate picture obscures some underlying gender differences, in particular what happens when women oppose men in open seat races. Here, male candidates have outpaced their female opponents (Fiber and Fox, 2005 Herrick, 1996). It is unclear why female candidates facing male opponents in open seat races have tended to be at a fundraising

disadvantage. It may be that partisan effects account for this difference if more of the women candidates have been Democrats, and Republicans raise more money. Figure 2 shows that Republican open seat male and female candidates raised more on average than their Democratic counterparts in 2004. In 2004 there were 11 female Democratic and nine female Republican open seat general election candidates. Democratic male candidates in open seat races facing male Republican opponents may have also tended to raise less money. It may also be that there have been more female “sacrificial lambs” in some of these open races than male “sacrificial lambs,” who raised little money, an interesting possible perspective on continuing gender factors in our national campaigns. The situation in 2004 suggests gender differences among this subgroup of candidates. In 2004, there were 12 general open seat races in which a female candidate opposed a male candidate. (An additional three races were women vs. women contests.) In six of the races, the female candidate was a Democrat and in six of the races, the female candidate was a Republican. Indeed, the male candidates averaged higher receipts, \$1,213,989 compared with \$997,112 for the female candidates, a difference of over \$200,000. (Since we are dealing with the total population of cases, statistical significance is not a factor.) However, in six of the 12 races, the women had greater receipts than the men, but two of the women were particularly token candidates who only raised a token amount of money holding down the average receipts of open seat women candidates in the general election opposing male candidates. Thus, we need to conduct more indepth research across a number of the recent elections to determine the extent to which gender continues to be a factor in this subgroup of races and to account for the reasons.

The Potential for Women Candidates in 2006

Once again pundits are speculating as to whether 2006 will be another “Year of the Woman” in American politics. “With sinking presidential polls, a new South Dakota law banning abortion on the books and Hillary Rodham Clinton eyeing the white House, women’s advocacy group leaders say they hope 2006 turns into a new ‘Year of the Woman’” writes Carla Marinucci in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Robin Toner in the *New York Times* has speculated that “If the Democrats have their way, the 2006 Congressional elections will be the revenge of the mommy party” (2006). And “It may be another Year of the Woman,” Josh Kurtz touted in a *Roll Call* piece one month ago. The second line of the headline was “Democrats Running Women in Top House Contests” (2006).

What are the actual prospects for women making gains at the national level and what do they have to do with the parties and money? Even though this election season has been buffeted by scandal, and chaos within the incumbent party, only 27 seats in the House are being voluntarily vacated during the primary season.¹ This number compares with 91 in 1992 the last “Year of the Woman.” (In 2004 there were 30 such seats.) Only four Senate seats are open. At the most, at this point in the season, women could increase their presence in the Senate from 14 to 17 given the women who are declared candidates for the Senate. All of the five women running for re-election would have to win which is quite probable at this point to maintain their current level of presence. The Democrats have a good chance of winning the open seat in Minnesota, and have a potential for victory against the Republican incumbent in Missouri. The

¹ Two other incumbents announced their retirement but after primaries had already taken place in their state: Rep Tom Delay (R- TX) and Lane Evans (D-IL).

third female nonincumbent, Republican Katherine Harris who has given up her House seat to challenge Senator Bill Nelson in Florida only has an outside chance of winning.

The 27 open House seats include 7 safe Democratic seats, 6 safe Republican seats and 14 competitive or somewhat competitive seats based on Cook's Political Report's assessment in late May. We need to look at the total number of women candidates and their distribution in various opportune situations. Substantial party differences existed in the presence of women in these contests. Women were contesting only one-third of the Republican races and were contenders in two of the six safe seats whereas women were contenders in six of the seven safe Democratic open seats. Women were contestants in 17 of the 27 Democratic open seat races or 63 percent. Table 1 shows the number of male and female candidates in different opportune situations. (Table 1 in the Appendix provides more detailed information on the presence of women in these 27 open seats.) A woman is sure to win one of these seats, Minnesota's 6th congressional district. Women have won the convention endorsement of their respective parties and should not face any primary competition. At the same time at this point in the campaign season, women have at least some shot at winning the seat in 14 of the 27 open districts. They must first succeed in contested primaries and then win the general election. So far, other than in Minnesota, two women have captured their party nomination in at least somewhat competitive races (Ohio 13th and Illinois 6th). No woman has yet won a safe seat primary. The Center for American Women and Politics lists 188 women who as of May 17th had entered primaries for a seat in the U. S. House. (199 ran in 2002.) All but one of the incumbent women are running for re-election. In addition to the incumbents and the open seat candidates described above are seven women running as challengers in at least somewhat competitive races based on the latest Congressional Quarterly

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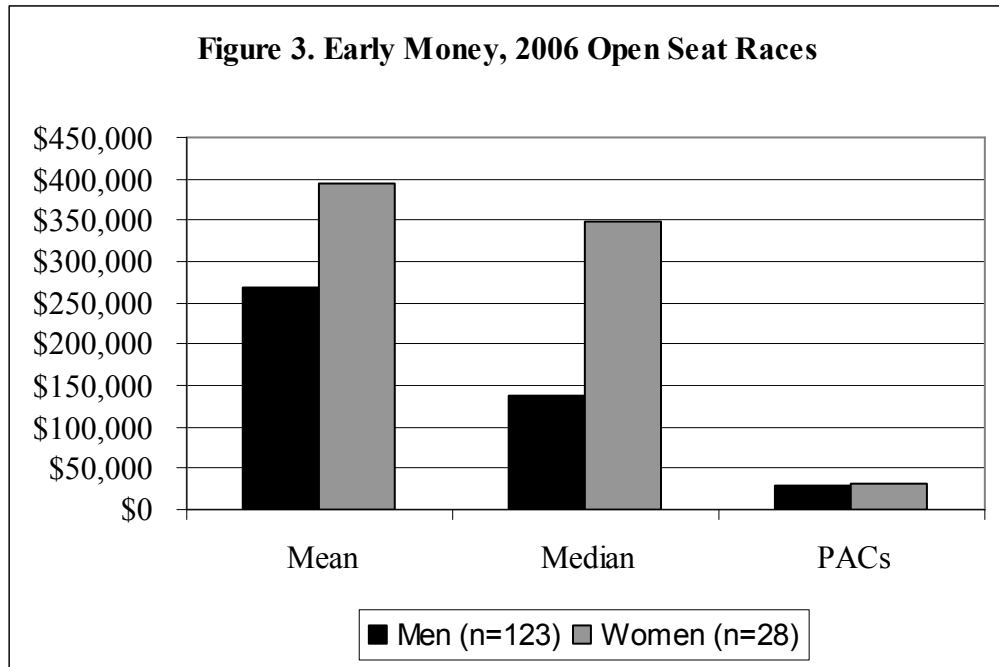
ratings. So there is some potential but the gains are most likely to be incremental rather than a substantial “year of the woman.”

Competitiveness*	Republicans		Democrats	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Safe Republican	37	3	10	2
Competitive	41	9	27	17
Safe Democrat	16	1	43	9
Total	94	13	80	25

*Competitiveness is based on the Cook Political Report assessment as of May 24, 2006. For ease of presentation “leaning” and “toss-up” races are grouped together as competitive.

Preliminary analysis also shows that the women who are running in open seats outpaced their male counterparts in early fundraising based on Federal Election Commission filing reports ending March 31st, 2006. These reports only include financial information for candidates who had meant filing requirements by that deadline having raised \$5000 or more. A complete analysis would require adding in declared candidates who had not yet filed or had not raised the requisite amount of money. Twenty-eight women and 123 men had filed with the FEC in these open seats.² The 28 women had raised an average of \$393,288 and a median of \$347,737 compared with an average of \$268,096 and a median of \$137,715 for the 123 men (Figure 3). The male and female candidates had raised nearly equivalent amounts of early money from PACS; the women candidates had an average of \$30,851 and the men candidates had \$29,491 in PAC contributions.

² Several candidates who had filed but then had dropped out of the elections were eliminated from this dataset.



Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon have developed a “women friendliness” index based on the characteristics of districts that have elected women to the U.S. House in recent decades. They note that seats that have come open “may not always be receptive to women candidates.” In the 1992-2000 period they report that the proportion of women-friendly districts was relatively low, 5.9 percent for the Democrats and 30.3 percent for the Republicans. Among the 27 open seats in 2006, none are friendly to women candidates based on the Palmer/Simon index for Democratic women candidates. Five are friendly for Republican women candidates. However, as of the end of May, none of these women-friendly Republican districts had any female candidates seeking their party nomination for the U.S. House seat. In the most friendly district, Illinois 6, a female state senator who had considered running dropped out and decided to run for State Comptroller instead. One of the most women-friendly Republican districts, Hawaii 2 is also an overwhelmingly Democratic district hardly conducive to a Republican effort. (Two

males are considering running for the seat.) However, given that fact that the other Hawaiian House district had a Republican woman U. S. Representative, Pat Saiki in the 1980s and the fact that in this Democratic state, a Republican woman is governor, the Republican Party might be smart to pay attention to Palmer and Simon's analysis and run a woman with strong credentials and strong party backing in the district.

To this point I have presented some anecdotes and some data. What happens from a gender lens when opportune situations present themselves for newcomers to become part of the political leadership deserves systematic analysis. To contribute to this study I am currently engaged in a research project that examines "Windows of Opportunity: Recruitment Pools, Gender Politics and Congressional Open Seats." This study focuses on the presence of women in the recruitment pool of potential candidates and the extent to which they emerge as viable candidates relative to viable male candidates when political opportunity is present. We look at actual opportune situations, in this case open seats for the U.S. House of Representatives, not just potential processes. The major questions asked in this project include:

- a. Are women who are in positions to become viable candidates for the open congressional seat more, less or equally likely as their male counterparts to be mentioned as potential candidates?
- b. What evidence is there of party recruitment efforts in these situations and are women more, less or equally likely to be recruited by the party organizations?
- c. Do women's groups appear to be actors in the process at this stage of the election process?
- d. Are the women identified as potential candidates more, less or equally likely to emerge as candidates?

Who out of the determined recruitment pool and the cast of “mentioned” actually runs in their party primary to become a U. S. representative and is sex is a significant variable at each stage of this process. In the second stage of this research effort we ask questions about the decision making process through a survey of those identified as being in the recruitment pool whether they emerge as candidates or not.

Party Organizations and Women’s Candidacies

Anecdotally one finds little evidence of national party organizations disproportionately playing a negative role in the candidacies of women in these most opportune situations for increasing the number of women U.S. representatives although one finds only limited evidence of the Republican National Congressional Committee taking assertive measures to increase the presence and nomination of women with one exception. Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard Martha Rainville running for Vermont’s at-large district has been considered a “prized recruit” for the Republicans and has received money and other fundraising support from the national party over her primary opponents. As reported in the *Burlington Free Press*, “Five months in advance of the state primary election, Vermont Republican leaders have asked the party's national committee to put its financial and organizational muscle behind Martha Rainville's bid for Vermont's open U.S. House seat” (Hemingway, 2006). In his endorsement of Rainville, former Vermont House Speaker Walter Freed stated, "Martha is a stronger candidate of the two. She has far better name recognition, especially around the state. ... Martha has a better track record and *she's shown she has the ability to raise money*" (as quoted in the *National Journal's* Hotline, February 20, 2006). (Italics are the author’s.). General Rainville has also been endorsed by the Wish List.

The parties' literature that has stressed the decline of parties has suggested that party organizations are little involved in primaries. Scanning across the 2006 primaries, we find some very assertive activity on the part of the national party organizations. One finds many indicators of aggressive moves on the part of the national party organizations to field what they believe to be strong candidates in competitive situations and to muscle potential candidates aside. This action has affected both male and female candidates positively and negatively. The Rainville story cited above illustrates a positive move on behalf of a woman candidate. A more systematic analysis of the success of the parties in these endeavors could provide evidence in support of a party resurgence theme and a revision of parties as negative gatekeepers as far as women candidates are concerned.

Beyond recruitment and primary involvement, party organizations have been playing a particularly important role in the closing days of the elections when they can throw substantial amounts of independent expenditures into campaigns especially buying media time for embattled candidates. Anecdotally 2004 was a year in which the parties provided substantial amounts of money to their female candidates in competitive races at the end of the campaign season. The situation is one of first proving yourself and then you will get help as far as candidates are concerned. In a 2006 essay I chronicled such activity on behalf of women candidates in 2004 (Burrell 2006.) For example, Melissa Bean one of the few successful incumbent challengers in U.S. House races in that election was the recipient of an infusion of a \$500,000 broadcast offensive in the final days of the campaign from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). The DCCC reportedly also purchased \$1 million dollars in ads for Lois Murphy's challenge in Pennsylvania's 6th district. (She is back stronger than ever in 2006.) In

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the appendix I list the amounts of money above and beyond their limited direct financial contributions that the parties poured into the competitive campaigns of their women House candidates in 2004. It was substantial.

Conclusion

House and Senate candidates spent over \$1 billion seeking office during 2003-2004, that is for 435 House seats and 34 Senate seats.³ Senate candidates spent nearly \$500 million. In the 2003-2004 election PACs raised nearly \$1 billion and spent over \$800 million (FEC News Release, April 13, 2005). Federal committees of the two major parties raised nearly \$1.5 billion and spent \$1.41 billion in the 2003-2004. We have seen that women candidates were “bigtime” players. They appear to be on their way to even surpass this picture in 2006.

If party organizations do not seem to be obstacles for women candidates and women candidates have proven to be astute fundraisers then as stated at the beginning of this paper why should scholars and activists concerned with women gaining political equality be concerned with campaign finance reform? Women seem to be able to operate quite well in the current system although vestiges of gender politics remain. But as I have shown, women continue to lag in

³ Campaigns for the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa are also included in these FEC data.

taking advantage of opportune situations to increase their numerical representation in national office as represented by their numbers in the open seat contests for the U.S. House of Representatives especially within the Republican Party. And as others have shown, gains in women's presence as lawmakers in state legislatures have leveled off. And while women have been shown to be less politically ambitious than men (Lawless and Fox 2005), this factor cannot alone account for a **drop in** women seeking and gaining state level lawmaking positions which would suggest that women are becoming less ambitious. It may be more a matter of the nature of campaigns for these offices that have not stimulated women to continue to seek them in ever increasing numbers and why term limits have not advantaged women. The number of candidates running for local office has dropped and elections have been canceled because of a lack of candidates (Macedo, et al. 2005, 66).

We can speculate that one negative factor is the amount of money a candidate needs to raise and the growing emphasis among political organizational leaders on an individual's fundraising ability in their recruitment of candidates. The emphasis on money may also discourage potential male candidates, but given the underrepresentation of women in political office it is a more important factor for women. As I have shown the amount of money a candidate needs to raise to run a viable campaign has grown with each election season. And among other things, the more money one has the more one can run ads criticizing opponents thereby increasing the negativity of campaigns. Women's campaigns have become as negative as men's campaigns (Bystrom and Kaid, 2002). Other factors such as the increasing polarization of our national legislature growing out of the redistricting process also contribute to making campaigns for these offices less attractive. Thus, ambitious women may have little incentive to

seek public office. They can use their ambition in other ways. It is important to consider whether “clean campaigns” enhance women’s entrance into the political fray. It should be incumbent upon research scholars to examine this other side of the “coin” in studying the reason why more women are not seeking public office.

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Appendix

Table 1. Where the Girls Are?										
District	Filing Deadline	#Rep males	#Rep females	#Dem males	#Dem females	Comp*	Friendly** Dem	Friendly Rep	Winner Rep	Winner Dem
AZ08	14-Jun	5	0	4	3	Toss Up	4	8		
CA22	10-Mar	3	0	0	1	Safe GOP	2	4		
CO05	25-May	7	0	2	0	Safe GOP	1	6		
CO07	25-May	1	0	2	1	Toss Up	3	8		
FL09	12-May	2	0	0	1	Likely GOP	1	6		
FL11	12-May	1	0	4	1	Safe Dem	3	6		
FL13	12-May	3	2	0	2	Likely GOP	0	6		
HI02	25-Jul	2	0	8	2	Safe Dem	2	8		
ID01	17-Mar	5	1	2	0	Likely GOP	1	3	Male	Male
IL06	19-Dec	1	0	1	2	Leans GOP	5	10	Male	Female
IA01	17-Mar	3	0	4	0	Toss Up	1	3		
MD03	3-Jul	4	0	7	2	Safe Dem	6	8		
MN05	18-Jul	2	0	6	2	Safe Dem	7	7		
MN06	18-Jul	3	1	1	1	Leans GOP	2	4	Female	Female
NE03	1-Mar	5	0	1	0	Safe GOP	1	2	Male	Male
NV02	12-May	2	3	0	1	Leans GOP	4	5		
NJ13	10-Apr	2	0	1	0	Safe Dem	7	6		
NY11	13-Jul	0	0	3	1	Safe Dem	7	7		
NY24	13-Jul	3	0	1	0	Leans GOP	1	3		
OH04	16-Feb	6	0	1	0	Safe GOP	1	1	Male	Male
OH06	16-Feb	4	0	2	0	Toss Up	1	3	Male	Male
OH13	16-Feb	5	0	6	2	Likely Dem	2	4	Male	Female
OK05*	7-Jun	4	2	2	1	Safe GOP	1	3		
TN01	6-Mar	12	1	4	0	Safe GOP	0	1		
TN09	6-Mar	5	1	14	1	Safe Dem	3	3		
VT	17-Jul	2	1	1	0	Leans Dem	1	4		
WI08	11-Jul	2	1	3	1	Leans GOP	1	3		
Total		94	13	80	25					

*Comp = Cook Political Report competitive measure, May 25, 2006; **Palmer and Simon women friendliness index.

Table 2. The Contributions of the Congressional Campaign Committees to Women Candidates Running for the House in 2004

Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee	Amount Contributed^a
Stephanie Herseth (SD –open seat, incumbent)	\$3,622,580
Lois Murphy (PA-challenger)	\$1,462,791
Virginia Schrader (PA-open seat)	\$1,469,648
Melissa Bean (IL-challenger)	\$925,328
Allyson Schwartz (PA-open seat)	\$844,379
Patty Wetterling (MN-challenger)	\$538,757
Willie Landry Mount (LA-open seat)	\$382,439
Patricia Keever (NC-challenger)	\$350,408
Jan Schneider (FL-challenger)	\$139,026
Diane Farrell (CT-challenger)	\$103,588
Darlene Hooley (OR-incumbent)	\$42,736
National Republican Congressional Committee	
Arlene Wohlgemuth (TX-challenger)	\$1,769,985
Nancy Naples (NY-open seat)	\$940,244
Melissa Brown (PA-open seat)	\$838,778
Cathy McMorris (WA-open seat)	\$790,648
Thelma Drake (VA-open seat)	\$419,895
Ann Northrup (KY-incumbent)	\$143,545
Heather Wilson (NM-incumbent)	\$123,606
Beverly Kilmer (FL-challenger)	\$92,343
Jeanne Patterson (MO-open seat)	\$72,591