



Political Parity

A Program of Hunt Alternatives Fund



Twin States: A Multiplier Effect

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Political Parity, a nonpartisan program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, is committed to research that tests innovative ideas and strengthens our understanding of the strategies to elect women to high-level political office. This study addresses an important, unanswered question in the field of women in politics: are high-level women randomly elected, or are there measurable factors driving their success in particular states?

DEFINITIONS (FEMALE "ELECTEDS" SINCE 1992)

- Triplet States** Three women elected as senator(s) and governor, serving concurrently or within two election cycles.
- Twin States** Two women elected as senators in the same state, or as governor and senator, or two governors within two election cycles.
- Single States** One woman elected as senator or governor.
- Zero States** No women elected as senator or governor.

KEY FINDINGS

Data collected for this project conclusively shows that the **current distribution of high-level elected women is not random**. Certain states are more likely than others to elect women as governor or senator(s).

States more likely to elect multiple high-level women ("twin states") differ from other states based on the following factors:

1. **Demographic/geographic:** These states tend to be larger, comprised of younger, more educated, and more racially-diverse populations;
2. **Political:** They tend to be more Democratic and have more women in their state legislative and Congressional delegations (especially in legislative leadership), same-day voter registration, public financing; and
3. **Electoral history:** They often have already elected a woman to a top office.

As to the last, time-series modeling — which looks at this relationship over years — strongly suggests that having **one woman in a top office leads to the election of other high-level women** within that same state. (This relationship appears to hold even when controlling for incumbency; the finding is not due to the same top-level woman holding office in her state for a long period of time.)

The mechanisms driving the relationship between a first female high-level office-holder and the election of a second (or more) are not entirely clear. Prior research and experience suggest several potential mechanisms to be driving the linkage between multiple high-level women officeholders in the same state:

- **"Broken Barrier"** – The first woman in a high-level position — senator or governor — may break a barrier in the minds of decision makers (male and female) such as *party leaders, recruiters, funders, and/or voters*. After the sight of a successful woman in one of these top positions, decision makers may in turn no longer view a woman running for (and winning) top office as an exception;
- **"Beacon"** – Potential female candidates could see the first successful woman in high-level office, and it could increase their own political ambition to run; or
- **"Helping Hand"** – The first woman in a top position might directly help other women along, by encouraging them, mentoring them, helping them raise money, or introducing them to donors and party leaders.

Current data is unable to confirm the causal relationship these mechanisms may play. Any or all of these potential forces could be operating, individually or jointly, to produce the relationship we see between the election of one high-level woman and the subsequent election of others. This is an area ripe for future qualitative research. Case studies and interviews of women senators and governors may uncover the causes underlying these relationships.

What is clear from the data thus far is that there are **strong correlations** between certain **political and demographic** factors and whether a state has zero, one, or two-plus women in top positions. By better understanding and then replicating the factors that drove, attracted, or created access for women in these roles, **we can achieve greater success** in doubling the number of women in state and national leadership.

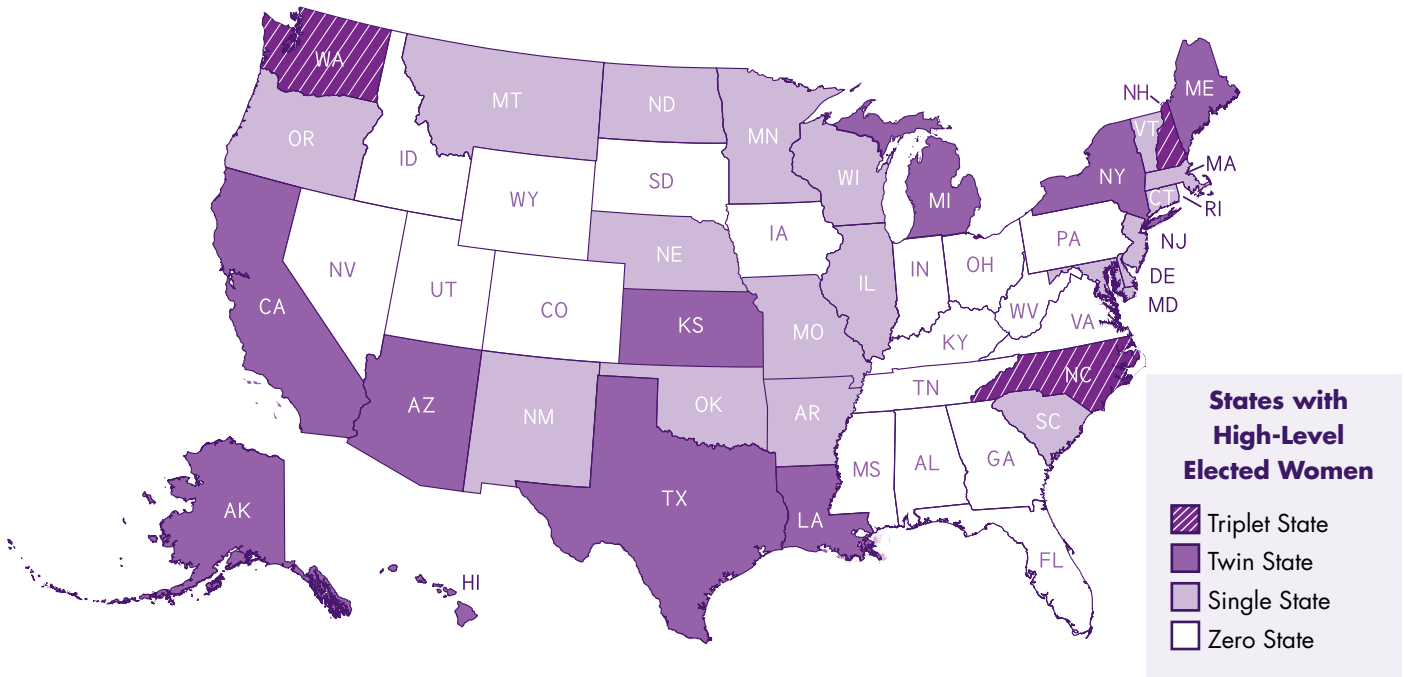
Of the 20 women currently serving in the US Senate, **more than half (13 of the 20) are representing twin states**. Some hold both Senate seats from their home state (e.g. *California and Washington*), or may hold a Senate seat while another woman simultaneously holds the governor’s office (e.g. *New Hampshire*). In others, an outgoing female senator or governor has been replaced by an incoming woman (e.g. *New York*). Still others are serving in states that were at one point (since 1992) a twin state, but do not currently have the distinction of two female high-level office holders (e.g. *Maine*).

BREAKDOWN OF STATES WITH “TWINS” and “TRIPLETS” SINCE 1992

Senate Twins [*]	Governor Twins ^{**}	Senate + Gov [†]	Triplet States ^{††}	Senate Twins [*]	Governor Twins ^{**}	Senate + Gov [†]	Triplet States ^{††}
Alaska		x		Michigan		x	
Arizona	x			New Hampshire	x	x	x
California	x			New York	x		
Hawaii		x		North Carolina		x	x
Kansas	x	x		Texas		x	
Louisiana		x		Washington	x	x	x
Maine	x						

^{*} Senate Twins refers to two women senators serving either together or within two election cycles.
^{**} Governor Twins refers to an outgoing female governor being replaced by an incoming woman in direct succession.
[†] Senate + Gov refers to a woman serving as senator while or close to another serving as governor.
^{††} Triplet States refers to three women serving as senator(s) and governor, concurrently or within two election cycles.

MAP COLOR-CODED BY HIGH-LEVEL WOMEN ELECTED SINCE 1992



STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE/NEXT STEPS

With campaigns for top political offices requiring increasingly large sums of money, both organizations and individuals are becoming more strategic with their resources. The twin states phenomenon provides an opportunity to target specific states with an increased likelihood of electing women to high-level offices.

Despite the relatively small number of states that have achieved twin status since 1992, the growing number of twins demonstrates a swifter route to political parity.

1. There are concrete **actions within states** that may help facilitate the election of women to highest political office. For example:
 - a. Electing more women to the state legislature and ensuring their inclusion in state legislative leadership positions;
 - b. Establishing same-day voter registration; and
 - c. Enacting clean-elections/public financing laws.
2. Where state characteristics are not changeable, in order to maximize the chances of electing female senators and governors, activists should be willing to **consider non-traditional target states**, with characteristics that include:
 - a. Higher levels of education;
 - b. A history of women serving in the state's Congressional delegation; and
 - c. Greater racial and ethnic diversity.
3. Candidates' **succession planning** can play an integral role in building the bench and preparing the next wave of female candidates:
 - a. Experienced politicians (especially those holding Senate or governor's seats) can provide guidance to their junior colleagues about committee assignments, relationship-building, and donor networks to facilitate future runs for highest-level office; and
 - b. Support **mentoring and networking** within a state identified as a single or twin.
4. Since nearly half of all members of Congress served previously in their state legislature, to help states become singles or twins encourage and support more women to run (and win) in races for lower-level office:
 - a. Better **prepare the pipeline** through training and recruitment; and
 - b. Support the establishment of networks to facilitate and improve **retention** and professional growth of women elected officials.

This study provides an additional lens to view the movement to increase women's representation in both governors' mansions and the halls of Congress. While single states are a "good bet" for women as candidates for high office, other states with similar factors as single or twin states may also be ripe for shattering the glass ceiling.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY

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For a more detailed examination of the Twin States study,
and a review of project methodology visit:

www.politicalparity.org/research/twinstates