

# Gender Equity in Political Leadership in the U.S.

5 Slide Series, Volume 119

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**The Menges Group**

Strategic Health Policy & Care Coordination Consulting

# Overview of Gender Equity in Political Positions

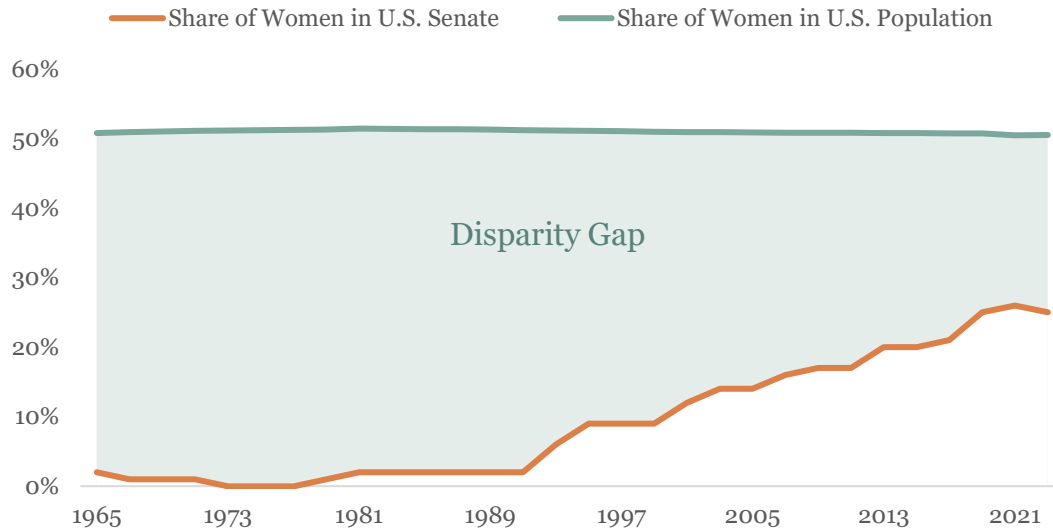
- Extreme gender inequities exist with regard to political leadership positions in the U.S.
- While improvements have occurred, we are nowhere near parity in the executive branch of government (president, vice president, governors), and in the legislature. We are currently near parity with the Supreme Court, with women holding four of the nine seats.
- As context, the nation's age 35+ population is comprised 51.7% of females. Achieving proportional parity would therefore require that females hold slightly more positions of power than males.
  - A further statistical context point regarding our talent pool is that as of 2021, 56% of all persons enrolled in college were female.
- Achieving historical parity would require that no males hold any of these offices *for centuries*. The obvious unfairness and inappropriate of doing that illustrates how off base the gender mix of political leaders in this country has been.

# Evolution of Women in Political Leadership Positions

- In the most important and visible position of power, the presidency, all 45 office holders have been men.
- Only one female (Kamala Harris) has held the position of Vice President. 49 persons have served in this position.
- Women make up 28% of all members of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. This proportion has been trending upward – it was 18% during 2013, for example.
- Of the 115 justices who have served on the U.S. Supreme Court, just six (5%) have been women. Today, four of the nine justices (44%) are women.

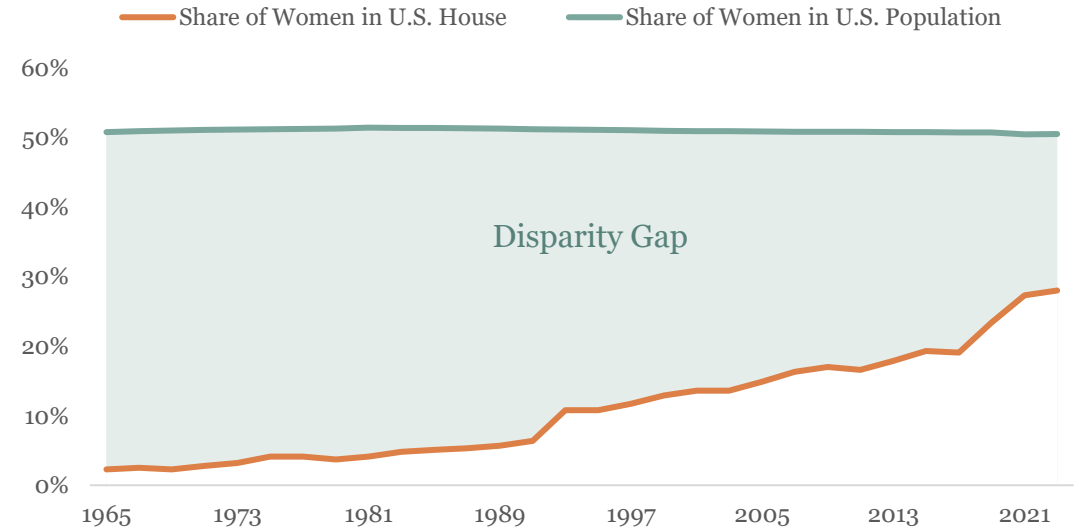
# Evolution of Gender Mix of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives

## Women in the U.S. Senate (1965-2023)



- At the start of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2023, 25 women were serving in the U.S. Senate, accounting for 25% of the chamber. Of the 25 women senators:
  - 16 are Democrats and nine are Republicans.
  - 22 are White, two are Asian American, and one is Hispanic.

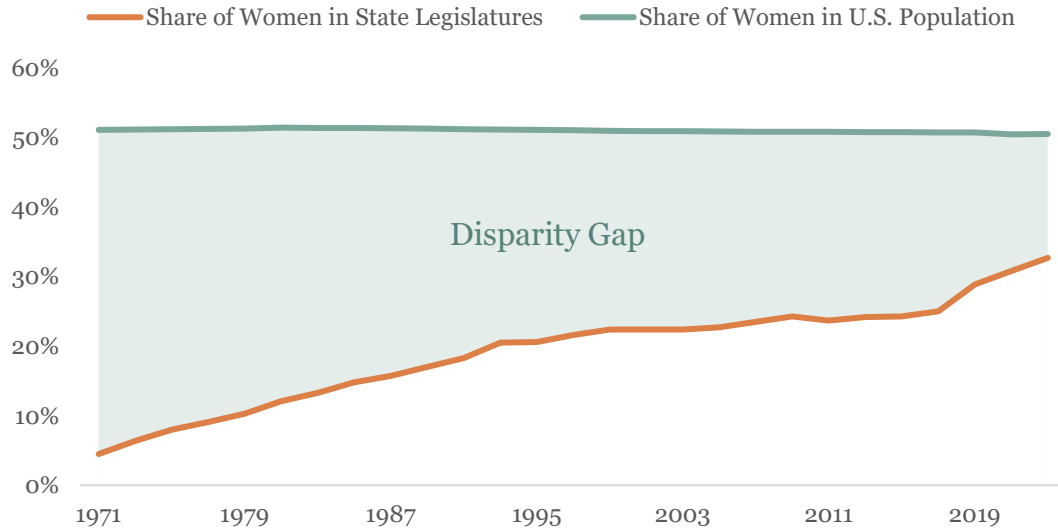
## Women in the U.S. House (1965-2023)



- At the start of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, 124 women were voting members in the House of Representatives, accounting for 28% of the chamber. Of the women representatives:
  - 91 are Democrats, and 33 are Republicans.
  - 26 are Black, 18 are Hispanic, seven are Asian American, and two are Native American.

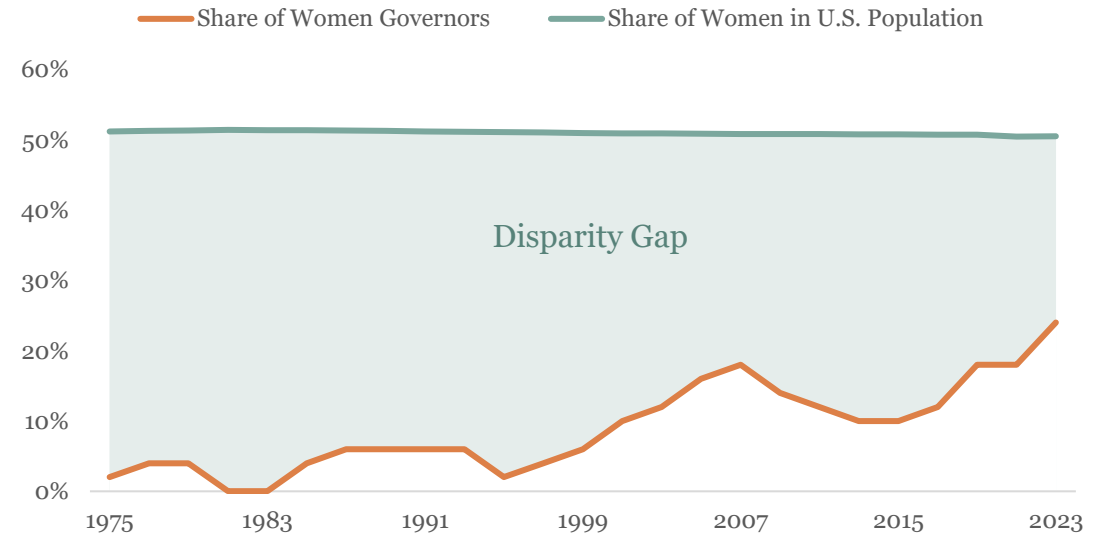
# Evolution of Women in Political Leadership Positions (cont.)

## Women in State Legislatures (1971-2023)



- Women make up 30% of state senate seats and 34% of state house or assembly seats.
- In 2019, NV became the first and only state with a majority-women state legislature, with women holding a 62% majority. WV has the smallest share, with 12%.

## Women Governors (1975-2023)



- To date, 49 women have served as governors in 32 states.
- In 2023, 12 women – eight Democrats and four Republicans – serve as governors.

# Reaching Gender Parity in U.S. Politics

## Barriers for Women Seeking High Political Office

- Americans point to the following as obstacles for women seeking office:
  - 84% say family responsibilities make it harder for women to run for office.
  - 81% say women have to do more to prove themselves than men.
  - 81% say women get less support from party leaders.
  - 80% say many Americans aren't ready to elect a woman to higher office.
  - 79% say women face gender discrimination.
- Notably, a growing share of respondents point to family responsibilities as a major barrier (44% in 2023; 36% in 2018). Given ongoing and impending demographic shifts, caregiving duties are likely to disproportionately fall to women without intervention.

## Policies to Support Gender Parity in U.S. Politics

The following policies and actions can help increase the representation of women in public office:

- Actively recruit women outside of traditional networks.
- Establish gender parity targets for political parties and political action committees and increase funding for women candidates.
- Improve family-friendly workplace policies, such as telework options, paid leave, and affordable and flexible child care.
- Foster culture of equity and respect on campaign trails.

Bleiweis R, Phadke S. The State of Women's Leadership – And How to Continue Changing the Face of U.S. Politics. Center for American Progress. Published January 15, 2021.

# 5 Slide Series Overview

Our 5 Slide Series is typically a monthly publication whereby we briefly discuss/address a selected topic outside the confines of our client engagements. The Menges Group has developed a variety of datasets that we use to support our 5 Slide Series and client projects.

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