

Have Women State Legislators In the United States Become More Conservative?: A Comparison of State Legislators in 2001 and 1988

Susan J. Carroll

ABSTRACT

Women state legislators in the United States in 2001 are more liberal in their political ideology and policy attitudes than their male colleagues, just as they were in 1988. Nevertheless, a notable change is evident in the ideological predispositions of Republican Party women, especially in the lower houses of the legislatures. Republican women representatives in 2001 are more conservative and more like their male counterparts than they were in the late 1980s.

RÉSUMÉ

En 2001, Les législatrices d'état aux États-Unis sont plus libérales dans leur idéologie politique et leur attitude envers les politiques que leurs collègues du sexe opposé, tout comme elles l'étaient en 1988. Cependant, un changement notable est évident dans les prédispositions idéologiques. Les représentantes Républicaines en 2001 sont plus conservatrices et plus comme leurs homologues masculins qu'elles ne l'étaient vers la fin des années 80.

A considerable body of research has found gender differences in attitudes on public policy issues and legislative priorities among public officials, especially legislators, in the United States (US). A number of studies have documented that women legislators of both Democratic and Republican parties tend to be more liberal than male legislators of the same party (e.g., Carey et al. 1998; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Frankovic 1977; Johnson and Carroll 1977; Leader 1977; Stanwick and Kleeman 1983; Welch 1985). Sizable proportions of women legislators also have been found to identify themselves as feminists (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Dolan and Ford 1998). Similarly, research has shown that women legislators are more likely than their male counterparts to give priority to, introduce, and work on legislation related to women's rights (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Mezey 1994; Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1994; Thomas and Welch 1991) as well as legislation in areas such as health care, education, and the welfare of families and children (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Thomas 1991 & 1994).

Have these gender differences diminished in recent years? Are US women legislators less liberal today than they were in earlier years? There are a number of reasons to expect that women legislators in the United States are now more conservative and more like their male colleagues ideologically than they were a decade or so ago.

First and foremost, the US political environment grew increasingly conservative in the 1990s, and the women elected to state legislatures competed successfully in this more conservative climate. The so-called "Year of the Woman" in 1992, which witnessed record numbers of women elected to Congress, was followed by the so-called "Year of the Angry White Male" in 1994 in which Republicans gained control of Congress for the first time in decades. Several of the liberal Democratic women first elected in 1992 were defeated in this election, and a new cohort of very conservative Republicans were elected. In the state legislatures the increasingly conservative climate was reflected in the fact that Republicans fared much better in the 1990s than they had in the 1980s. According to *The Book of the States, 1988-89 Edition*, 38.2 percent of state senators and 29.0 percent of state representatives throughout the country were Republicans in 1987-88 (Council of State Governments 1988). By January 2002, these Republican proportions had grown to 47.0 percent of state senators and 47.8 percent of state representatives (National Conference of State Legislatures 2002) - fairly dramatic increases in just over a decade.

In addition, the Christian Right became an increasingly influential force in US politics in the 1990s although it seemed to exert less influence at the end than during the middle of the decade (Wilcox 2000). The

Christian Right has pursued a very partisan strategy, working within the Republican party and becoming a dominant force in the party organizations of several states (Oldfield 1996; Persinos 1994; Wilcox 2000). Of the six states with the highest proportions (all over 30 percent) of women state legislators in 2001, three (Washington, Arizona, and Oregon) were identified by John F. Persinos in *Campaigns & Elections* as among the states where the Christian Right had a "dominant" influence in the state Republican party in the mid-1990s, and two (Nevada and Kansas) were states where the Christian Right had "substantial" influence in the state party organization (1994; Wilcox 2000, 77). Of these states, only Washington and Arizona, which moved up in the rankings from fifth and sixth in 1988 to first and second in 2001 (Center for American Women and Politics 2001), were even ranked among the top ten states with the largest proportions of women legislators in 1988 (Center for the American Woman and Politics 1988). Since several states experienced substantial growth in the number of women legislators over the same time period that the Christian Right was exerting great influence within those states, one might expect that some of the growth in the numbers of women legislators over the 1990s reflected the movement of more conservative women into office in those states.

A third reason to expect that women legislators may now be more conservative than they were a decade ago is also related to the particular states which have seen the greatest growth in the numbers of women legislators in recent years. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox analyzed a variety of factors in an attempt to explain variations among states in the proportion of women in state legislatures. They concluded that women initially made inroads in states with the most hospitable climates - for example, states with disproportionately liberal and well-educated voters. They further observed: "More recently, women have begun to make rapid progress in the set of states that might be thought of as constituting the 'second tier' of hospitality to women candidates. These states have voters who are not quite as well educated or as liberal as the Early Leader states, but who are better educated and more liberal than in states with fewer women legislators" (1998, 116). One would expect that the women elected in these second-tier states, like the voters in these states, might be less liberal than those from states where women made their initial gains, and as a result, one might expect women legislators today to be somewhat more conservative than they were several years ago.

If there has been a shift toward greater conservatism among women state legislators and a reduction in the ideological gender gap among state legislators, one would certainly expect these changes to be most evident among Republicans. Not only has the

Christian Right exerted its influence largely within the Republican party, but also many moderate Republican women have for the past several years felt betrayed and abandoned by their party. Tayna Melich has documented in great detail the pain and struggles that moderate Republican women have faced at the national level as their party has increasingly adopted the agenda of social conservatives and acted in ways that Melich views as anti-woman. She has explained: "In 1980 the national leadership of the Republican party adopted a misogynist strategy that deliberately exploited this backlash [against the women's movement] to win votes. It has pursued this strategy ever since" (1998, 5). Perceiving that their party had been hijacked by the Religious Right, Melich and other women who shared her moderate-to-liberal views on social issues often felt that there was no longer a place for them in the Republican party. As Melich explained:

The Republican party of my youth no longer exists. While there are still pockets of Republicans scattered around America who reject the fundamental elements of the agenda of the Religious Right and the New Right, it is no longer possible to ignore the contradictions that since 1980 have subverted the party's traditional vision. These aberrant ideas have eaten at the national party, spreading like a cancer... (1998, 368-69)

To the extent that the anti-woman, anti-moderate dynamics described by Melich were reproduced at state and local levels as well as at the national level, one might expect to find fewer moderate Republican women among current state legislators. Moderate Republican women not only may have felt less comfortable within their party, but also may have found it increasingly difficult to win nominations as social conservatives assumed a more dominant role. If elected, they may have found it more difficult to move the more moderate items on their legislative agendas, leading them to have less interest in continuing in office.

The remainder of this paper examines the question of whether women legislators are now more conservative and more like their male colleagues ideologically than they were a decade or so ago, using data from nationwide surveys of women and men legislators conducted in 2001 and 1988. The analysis explores whether the gender gap in ideological orientations and policy attitudes so evident in pre-1990s research on legislators continues to exist in the post-1990s political environment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA SETS

In the summer of 1988 under a grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) conducted a nationwide survey of women and men serving as state legislators. Four samples of legislators were drawn: (1) the population of women state senators (N=228); (2) a systematic sample of one-half of women state representatives (N=474); (3) a systematic sample of male state senators, stratified by state and sampled in proportion to the number of women from each state in our sample of women state senators (N=228); and (4) a systematic sample of male state representatives, stratified by state and sampled in proportion to the number of women from each state in our sample of women state senators (N=474).¹

A telephone interview of approximately one-half hour in duration was attempted with each of the legislators, resulting in the following response rates: 86 percent for female senators; 87 percent for female representatives; 60 percent for male senators; and 73 percent for male representatives. Respondents did not differ significantly from all the legislators selected for any of the four samples in their party affiliation, the one variable for which we have data for all legislators.

In the summer of 2001 under a grant from the Barbara Lee Foundation, CAWP conducted a similar nationwide survey of women and men serving as state legislators, following the same sampling procedure used in 1988 and replicating many of the questions from the 1988 survey to allow for over-time comparisons. Four samples of legislators were drawn: (1) the population of all women state senators (n=396); (2) a systematic sample of one-half of women state representatives (n=718); (3) a systematic sample of male state senators, stratified by state and sampled in proportion to the number of women from each state in our sample of women state senators (n=396); and (4) a systematic sample of male state representatives, stratified by state and sampled in proportion to the number of women from each state in our sample of women state senators (n=718).

Response rates for the 2001 survey were: 56 percent for female senators; 58 percent for female representatives; 40 percent for male senators; 49 percent for male representatives.² As in 1988, respondents and non-respondents in 2001 did not differ significantly in their party affiliation, the one variable for which data were available for all sampled legislators.

Like the US Senate and US House of Representatives, state senates and state houses are very different political institutions. The lower houses of state legislatures vary considerably in size and influence across the states while state senates tend to be smaller

and show less variation. In addition, senate seats are generally considered more prestigious and thus recruitment to state senates may differ from recruitment to state houses. Because of these differences, state senators and state representatives are analyzed separately throughout this paper.

GENDER DIFFERENCES: A FIRST LOOK

On initial examination, there appears to be little evidence for the hypotheses that women legislators have become more conservative and gender differences have diminished. When women and men legislators are compared, women in 2001 are found to be more liberal than men in their ideological orientation and attitudes on policy issues just as they were in 1988, and they show few signs of greater conservatism over time.

On both the 2001 and the 1988 surveys, state legislators were asked identical questions about their general political ideology. In both years moderately strong and statistically significant differences between women and men legislators were evident (Table 1). Women state senators and state representatives were more likely than their male colleagues to self-identify as liberals and less likely to consider themselves conservatives in both 2001 and 1988.

Moreover, there is no evidence that the population of women legislators, considered as a whole, has become more conservative in their general political ideology. Unlike male representatives who were more likely to identify as conservatives in 2001 than in 1988, women representatives were equally as likely to call themselves conservatives (and liberals) in 2001 as they were in 1988. Moreover, women representatives were about equally divided between liberals and conservatives with the largest proportion of women representatives in both years self-identifying as moderates (Table 1).

In contrast to women representatives whose ideological identification remained stable over time, women senators were actually a little more likely to consider themselves liberals, and a little less likely to consider themselves conservatives, in 2001 than in 1988. (Male senators also did not shift in a conservative direction.) While a majority of women senators in 2001 preferred to think of themselves as moderates, they were actually more likely to consider themselves liberals than conservatives (Table 1).

Three issue items from the 1988 survey were also repeated verbatim in 2001. They provide a second test of the hypotheses that gender differences have diminished and that women legislators have become more conservative over time. The items measured attitudes toward the free enterprise system, the death penalty, and parental consent for abortion. In both years

women legislators were somewhat less likely than men to express conservative attitudes on all three issues, and the differences between women and men were statistically significant (Table 1). Moreover, gender differences do not appear to have diminished from 1988 to 2001; in fact, on the item asking whether the private sector can find ways to solve our economic problems, gender differences appear notably larger among state senators in 2001 than in 1988 due primarily to an increase in conservative responses among men.

Evidence is mixed on these issue items as to whether women legislators' views have become more conservative over time. Slightly larger proportions of women state representatives expressed conservative positions on free enterprise and parental consent in 2001 than in 1988, but women state representatives were notably less likely to take a conservative position on capital punishment in 2001 than in 1988. While the attitudes of women state senators on free enterprise and the death penalty were fairly consistent in 1988 and 2001, somewhat fewer women senators expressed conservative views on parental consent in 2001 than did so in 1988 (Table 1).

SHIFTS IN PARTISAN COMPOSITION OF LEGISLATURES

Although gender differences did not seem to diminish between 1988 and 2001 and women state legislators overall did not appear notably more conservative, this pattern of stability obscures significant partisan shifts that have taken place. These partisan shifts are highlighted in Table 2. As one might expect, the more conservative political climate of the 1990s does seem to have dramatically affected the partisan composition of state legislatures. As noted earlier, the population of state legislators was much more Republican in 2001 than in the late 1980s. *The Book of the States, 1988-89 Edition* reported that only 29.0 percent of all state representatives were Republican; by 2001 this proportion had grown to 47.8 percent. The Republican increase among state senators was not as great but still substantial (Table 2).

In stark contrast to this pattern for all legislators, the partisan composition of the population of women state legislators changed far less dramatically, and the direction of the change was opposite to that for legislators overall. The population of women legislators was slightly less Republican (and thus more Democratic) in 2001 than in 1988. The proportion of Republicans among women decreased from 38.7 percent to 35.7 percent for state senators and from 41.4 percent to 39.7 percent for state representatives.

In 1988 women senators were just as often Republican and women representatives were more often

Republican than the nationwide population of legislators overall. In 2001 women in both houses were notably less often Republican than legislators overall (Table 2).

These underlying partisan shifts suggest that while the Republican party has gained strength in state legislatures, Republican women have not shared equally in their party's success. Given the growth of Republican representation among legislators, one would expect the proportion of Republicans among women legislators to have grown at a parallel rate. The fact that this has not happened is consistent with Melich's observation that her party has not been particularly hospitable at least for some types of Republican women and points to the need for further analysis, controlling for party, to develop a more complete understanding of possible changes from 1988 to 2001 among women legislators and between women and men.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS: THROUGH THE LENS OF PARTY

Reflecting the partisan shifts over time described above, the women legislators in the 2001 CAWP study were more often Democratic, relative to their male counterparts, than were the women legislators in the 1988 study. Consequently, the fact that gender differences appeared as strong and women legislators seemed no more conservative in 2001 than in 1988 may be largely a function of the fact that women legislators in 2001 were more often Democratic and men more often Republican than in 1988. While *women legislators overall* were neither more conservative nor more like their male counterparts ideologically in 2001 than in 1988, perhaps *Republican women legislators* in 2001 were, in fact, both more conservative than in 1988 and equally as conservative as their Republican male counterparts.

As a first step in examining this possibility, Tables 3 and 4 present the attitudes of both Republican and Democratic legislators on three general ideological measures for both the 2001 and 1988 samples. The first is the measure of general political ideology described earlier. For the other two measures, legislators were asked whether or not they would use the labels "feminist" and "Christian conservative" ("religious fundamentalist" in 1988) to describe themselves.

Looking first at the general measure of political ideology, gender differences were moderately strong and statistically significant for Democrats in both chambers in 2001. Gender differences were also evident, although not statistically significant, among Republican senators. However, they were almost nonexistent among Republican representatives (Table 3). In contrast to these findings, in 1988 gender

differences in political ideology were moderately strong and significant for Republicans as well as Democrats (Table 4). Thus, gender differences apparent among Republicans in the earlier study appear considerably diminished in 2001.

A close look at Tables 3 and 4 suggests that while Republican men became slightly more conservative between 1988 and 2001, Republican women, especially in the house, were considerably more conservative in 2001 than in 1988. The proportion of Republican women representatives who identified as conservatives increased from 44.3 percent in 1988 to 61.1 percent in 2001. Meanwhile, the proportion of moderates among Republican women representatives declined from more than half to just over one-third (Tables 3 and 4).

The measures of feminist identification and identification as a Christian conservative provide somewhat different patterns, but in both cases Republican women representatives show the greatest change from 1988 to 2001. Significant gender differences in feminist identification are evident for Republican as well as Democratic senators and representatives in both 2001 and 1988 although they are less pronounced in 2001. Democratic women were about as likely in 2001 as they were in 1988 to call themselves feminists, and a majority in both state houses and state senates identified with the label in both years. Not surprisingly, Republican women were much less likely than Democratic women to consider themselves feminists in both years. Just over one-fourth of Republican women senators and representatives embraced the feminist label in 1988; this number declined slightly for Republican women senators in 2001 but decreased more dramatically for Republican state representatives, only 13.8 percent of whom identified as feminists.

Relatively few legislators of either gender identified with the label "religious fundamentalist" in 1988, but in every case men were more likely to do so than were women (Table 4). The label "Christian conservative" was much more popular among legislators in 2001. Because the measures were different, it is impossible to tell whether the difference in results between 1988 and 2001 is due to a growth in conservative religious identification or merely the inclusion in the 2001 survey of a more popular label. Nevertheless, although the measures were different, the pattern of gender differences in response across the two studies is very suggestive. Like the 1988 pattern, the 2001 pattern for Democrats in both chambers and Republicans in the senate is that women were less likely than men to identify with the label. However, this is not true in the case of Republican representatives where the women in 2001 were slightly more likely (although not

significantly more so) than the men to call themselves "Christian conservatives." Moreover, unlike the pattern in 1988, Republican women representatives in 2001 were notably more likely than Republican women senators to embrace this label (Table 3).

Thus, on all three general ideological measures - political ideology, identification as a feminist, and identification as a Christian conservative - Republican women in the lower chamber showed signs of greater conservatism in 2001 than in 1988. Republican women representatives in 2001 were considerably more likely to consider themselves conservatives and less likely to consider themselves feminists than in 1988, and they were more likely than Republican women senators and Republican male representatives to identify themselves as Christian conservatives.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES ON POLICY ISSUES: THROUGH THE LENS OF PARTY

Is increased conservatism among Republican women representatives in 2001 evident in their public policy attitudes as well as on more general ideological measures? The data presented in Tables 5 and 6 suggest an affirmative answer to this question.

Table 5 presents the proportions of Republican and Democratic women and men who gave conservative responses on the ten public policy issues that were included in CAWP's 2001 survey. Gender differences were often, but not always, present once party was taken into consideration.

The issues divide roughly into four groups. The first group consists of issues where gender differences seem to be minimal (although party differences are quite pronounced). The questions about faith in the ability of the private sector to solve economic problems and support for the death penalty seem to fit best into this category. Although women sometimes showed somewhat less conservative tendencies, gender differences on these issues were not statistically significant except in the case of Democratic representatives where women were notably less likely than men to support capital punishment.

The second group of issues consists of those where clear, statistically significant gender differences are apparent among Democrats but not among Republicans. These include parental consent, school vouchers, and prayer in public schools. In 2001 Republicans in both state senates and state houses appeared less divided by gender on these issues than did Democrats.

The third group consists of issues where significant gender differences exist among all groups of legislators (Democratic senators, Republican senators, Democratic representatives) except for Republican representatives. On these issues, Republican women representatives differed from other women legislators in expressing views that were very similar to those of their male counterparts. The issues in this category include abortion (i.e., attitude toward *Roe v. Wade*), hate crimes, affirmative action, and civil unions for gay and lesbian couples.

The fourth group consists of policy issues where statistically significant gender differences are evident among Democrats and Republican in both chambers. Gun control was the only issue in the CAWP study that fell into this category, and it was the only issue where the views of Republican women representatives differed significantly from the views of Republican male representatives.

Thus, consistent with the findings of previous research, gender gaps were evident on most, but not all, issues for Democrats in both state houses and senates in 2001. Statistically significant gender differences were also apparent on five of ten issues for Republicans in state senates, and smaller differences, although not statistically significant, were apparent on several other issues for Republican women and men in state senates (Table 5).

Republicans in state houses stand out as distinctive from Republicans in state senates and Democrats in both chambers. Only on the issue of gun control was a statistically significant difference evident for Republican women and men serving in state houses. (Republican women representatives were also somewhat less conservative than their male counterparts in their views on the death penalty, a relationship that just missed being statistically significant at the .10 level). On the other eight issues, there was very little difference in the attitudes expressed by Republican women and men representatives. The Republican women were just as conservative in their views as were the Republican men.

This lack of a gender gap among Republican representatives was not evident in 1988. Table 6 presents responses to the three issue items from the 2001 survey that were replicated from the 1988 survey. On all three of these items, statistically significant differences in responses were evident for Republican women and Republican men serving in state houses. Although the data are not presented here, significant gender differences were also found for Republican state representatives on several other issues in 1988 (e.g., building more nuclear power plants, passing the Equal Rights Amendment, prohibiting abortion).

Is the lack of gender difference in the views of Republican men and women in state houses in 2001 due to the fact that Republican women representatives were more conservative in their views in 2001 than in 1988? A comparison of Tables 5 and 6 provides some evidence for this. Republican women representatives were not more likely to favor the death penalty in 2001 than they were in 1988, but neither were their male counterparts. However, Republican women were more likely in 2001 than in 1988 to express faith in the ability of the private sector to solve our economic problems, and they were much more likely to disagree that minors should be able to obtain abortions without parental consent. While Republican men also became slightly more conservative on these two issues between 1988 and 2001, increases in conservative responses were greater for the women.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In 2001 women legislators in the United States were more liberal in the aggregate than their male counterparts in their ideological orientations and attitudes on policy issues just as they had been in the past. However, the gender gap among legislators in 2001 was due more to the disproportionate number of Democrats among women legislators than it had been in 1988.

In 1988 women senators were as often Republican and women representatives more often Republican than the population of state senators and state representatives. In 2001 this was no longer true. State legislators overall were far more likely to be Republicans in 2001 than they were in 1988 while women legislators were slightly more likely to be Democrats in 2001 than they were in 1988. Consequently, women legislators in both chambers in 2001 were much more often Democratic/less often Republican than their male counterparts and, not surprisingly, more liberal.

However, the gender gap among state legislators in 2001 was not due solely to partisan differences between women and men because even among Democrats, women state representatives and state senators were more liberal/less conservative in both their ideology and their attitudes on many issues than their male counterparts. While the same was true for Republicans in 1988, the gender gap that was evident among Republican state representatives in 1988 was for the most part no longer evident in 2001. Among Republican state representatives there were very few items (notable exceptions being identification with feminism and attitudes toward gun control and the death penalty) on which women's attitudes were notably different from men's. Among Republican state senators, unlike Republican state representatives, gender

differences were evident in 2001 although not in all cases as strong as in 1988.

Women state legislators overall do not appear to have been more conservative in 2001 than in 1988. Neither do Democratic women legislators appear to have grown more conservative. However, a notable change was evident in Republican women in 2001 compared with Republican women in 1988, especially in state houses. The proportion of Republican women representatives who identified as conservatives was considerably larger in 2001 than in 1988 while the proportion who identified as moderates declined. Unlike the pattern for Democrats, fewer Republican women in both chambers, but especially in the lower house, identified themselves as feminists in 2001 than in 1988, and two-fifths of Republican women representatives considered themselves to be "Christian conservatives."

The changes evident from 1988 to 2001 among Republican women, especially Republican women in state houses, are consistent with the claims that some moderate Republican women have made about being squeezed out of their party and finding their

party less hospitable to their views than in the past. As Republicans have made gains in state legislatures, Republican women have not kept pace, and moderates simply were not present among the ranks of Republican women legislators in 2001 in the proportions that they were in 1988. The gains for conservative Republican women seem clearly to have come at the expense of moderate Republican women.

Thus, the gender gap in ideological orientations and policy attitudes so evident in pre-1990s research on US legislators continues to exist in the post-1990s political environment, but the underlying dynamics shaping that gap are more partisan than in 1988. While feminists still have some allies among the ranks of Republican women, especially among women in state senates, they are less likely in the early 21st century than in the late-1980s to find support for progressive or feminist policy positions among Republicans in state legislatures. Democratic women legislators appear to be a much stronger source of support for feminist and progressive causes.

ENDNOTES

1. The men were sampled in this manner to insure that we actually compared women and men who served in similar political circumstances and not women and men from states with very different political and legislative environments.
2. There are a number of possible reasons for the lower response rates in 2001 than in 1988, including differences in the survey research firms which administered the study, the greater numbers of legislatures in session while we were conducting the survey in 2001, the increased proliferation of voice mail and answering machines making it more difficult to reach respondents, the increase in telemarketing, and the increased rate of turnover in legislatures with fewer legislators consequently aware of the Eagleton Institute of Politics (the parent organization of CAWP whom respondents were told was conducting the study). However, the major factor leading to lower response rates in 2001 seems to have been the sheer proliferation of surveys of legislators not only by academics, but also by other entities and organizations. Legislators reported that they were asked to participate in several other surveys concurrently with ours.

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Table 1 Gender Differences in Ideology and Policy Attitudes of State Legislators, 2001 and 1988

Ideology ¹	2001				1988			
	Senate		House		Senate		House	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	29.8	12.1	26.3	10.2	22.3	9.5	27.6	15.6
Moderate	51.4	49	47.7	41.7	52.7	48.9	47.3	46.5
Conservative	18.7	38.9	26	48.2	25	41.6	25.1	37.9
tau _c =	.28***		.28***		.23***		.18***	
Policy Issue ²								
Economy	47.2	66.2	54.4	67.5	49.5	55.9	46.2	59.7
tau _c =	.21***		.18***		.10*		.14***	
Death Penalty	46.3	60.5	40.8	66.1	45.3	67.1	52.7	66.9
tau _c =	.20***		.26***		.23***		.20***	
Parental Consent	36.1	68.2	49.4	70.9	44.1	70.6	42.3	65.9
tau _c =	.35***		.23***		.31***		.28***	

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

N(for 2001) = 208-218 women senators; 148-152 men senators; 354-366 women representatives; 295-304 men representatives.

N(for1988)=183-188 women senators; 134-137men senators; 394-401 women representatives; 328-340 men representatives.

¹Legislators were asked: "On most political issues, do you generally think of yourself as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal?"

²Legislators were asked whether they agreed strongly, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the following statements:

If left alone, except for essential regulations, the private sector can find ways to solve our economic problems.

The death penalty should be an option as a punishment for those who commit murder.

Minors should be able to obtain a legal abortion without parental consent.

Table 2 Differences Over Time in Proportions of Republican Legislators

	All Legislators				Women Legislators			
	Senate		House		Senate		House	
	2001	1988	2001	1988	2001	1988	2001	1988
% of Legislators Who Were Republican	47	38.2	47.8	29	35.7	38.7	39.7	41.4

Sources: Council of State Governments 1988; National Conference of State Legislatures 2002; Center for the American Woman and Politics 1988; Center for American Women and Politics 2001.

Table 3 Gender Differences in General Ideological Orientations Among Democratic and Republican State Legislators, 2001

Ideology ¹	Senate				House			
	Democrats		Republicans		Democrats		Republicans	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	46.6	26.1	---	---	39.9	24.1	1.6	0.6
Moderate	51.1	62.3	50.7	38.7	53.5	56	37.3	32.8
Conservative	2.3	11.6	49.2	61.3	6.6	19.8	61.1	66.7
$\tau_{\text{c}} =$	.21***		0.14		.21***		0.03	
Feminist ²	66.2	42	20.8	5.2	54.7	33.3	13.8	4.5
$\tau_{\text{b}} =$	.23*		.23*		.20*		.17*	
Christian Conservative ²	5.1	7.2	28.6	42.9	6.3	19	40.3	36.3
$\tau_{\text{b}} =$	-0.04		-.15*		-.20***		0.04	

*** $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$ * $p < .10$

N = 131-138 Democratic women senators; 69 Democratic men senators; 69-72 Republican women senators; 75-77 Republican men senators; 228-238 Democratic women representatives; 116-121 Democratic men representatives; 126-130 Republican women representatives; 176-179 Republican men representatives.

¹Legislators were asked: "On most political issues, do you generally think of yourself as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal?"

²Legislators were read a series of three "labels that some people reject, but others use to describe themselves." "Feminist" and "Christian conservative" were two of these labels; the third was "political maverick." They were then asked whether they identified with this label.

Table 4 Gender Differences in General Ideological Orientations Among Democratic and Republican State Legislators, 1988

Ideology ¹	Senate				House			
	Democrats		Republicans		Democrats		Republicans	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	36.9	16.9	3.9	---	45.2	29.4	3.6	0.6
Moderate	52.4	64.8	53.2	32.2	43.9	53.1	52.1	38.9
Conservative	10.7	18.3	42.9	67.8	11	17.5	44.3	60.5
tau _c =	.22***		.26***		.17***		.17***	
Feminist ²	62.5	24.6	26.9	10.3	56.7	29.3	27.5	11.1
tau _b =	.37***		.21***		.28***		.21***	
Religious Fundamentalist ²	---	7	6.4	10.5	3.5	7.5	5.3	11.1
tau _b =	-.21**		-0.07		-.09*		-.11*	

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

N = 103-106 Democratic women senators; 69-71 Democratic men senators; 77-78 Republican women senators; 57-59 Republican men senators; 228-231 Democratic women representatives; 174-177 Democratic men representatives; 167-169 Republican women representatives; 162 Republican men representatives.

¹Legislators were asked: "On most political issues, do you generally think of yourself as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal?"

²Legislators were read a series of three "labels that some people reject, but others use to describe themselves." "Feminist" and "religious fundamentalist" were two of these labels; the third was "political party insider." They were then asked whether they identified with this label.

Table 5 Gender Differences in Proportions of Democratic and Republican State Legislators, 2001, Expressing Conservative Positions on Major Policy Issues

Policy Issue ¹	Senate				House			
	Democrats		Republicans		Democrats		Republicans	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Economy	24.6	39.7	87.5	88.5	35.2	34.2	89.3	90
tau _c =	0.1		0.13		0.01		0.04	
Death Penalty	32.6	32.8	73.3	83.1	26.6	47.1	67	80
tau _c =	0.07		0.11		.19***		0.1	
Parental Consent	17	45.5	72.8	85.7	30.5	54.7	83.7	82.1
tau _c =	.35***		0.13		.26***		-0.03	
Roe v. Wade	2.2	10.3	36.8	52.1	8	17.8	49.5	52.3
tau _c =	.28***		.24***		.18***		0.03	
Gun Control	38.8	66.2	88.4	96.1	46.8	77.7	90.6	96.6
tau _c =	.37***		.22***		.36***		.12**	
Hate Crimes	9.7	7.4	36.2	65.2	7.8	16.7	55.8	55.6
tau _c =	.11*		.32***		.13**		-0.02	
Affirmative Action	34.9	43.8	88.1	92	36.7	56.6	90.9	94.9
tau _c =	0.08		.19**		.19***		0.04	
School Vouchers	3.6	5.7	53.1	55.5	7.7	10.2	62	71.2
tau _c =	.14**		0.05		.09*		0.05	
Civil Unions for Gays	15.4	43.3	82.1	91.9	24.9	50	85.2	87.5
tau _c =	.30***		.26***		.27***		0	
Prayer in Schools	19	32.3	66.7	70	24.8	39.5	76.6	72.1
tau _c =	.21***		0.07		.13**		-0.04	

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

N = 129-139 Democratic women senators; 60-70 Democratic men senators; 67-72 Republican women senators; 72-78 Republican men senators; 218-238 Democratic women representatives; 108-121 Democratic men representatives; 117-130 Republican women representatives; 168-181 Republican men representatives.

¹Legislators were asked whether they agreed strongly, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the following statements:

If left alone, except for essential regulations, the private sector can find ways to solve our economic problems.

The death penalty should be an option as a punishment for those who commit murder.

Minors should be able to obtain a legal abortion without parental consent.

I would like to see the United States Supreme Court overturn the Roe versus Wade decision which made abortion legal during the first three months of pregnancy.

They were also asked whether they would strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the following legislative proposals:

A law banning the possession of handguns except by the police and other authorized persons.

A law that would provide harsher penalties for hate crimes.

A law which would allow your state to give preferences in job hiring and school admission on the basis of race.

A law giving parents government-funded school vouchers to pay for tuition at the public, private or religious school of their choice.

A law that would allow gay and lesbian couples to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples.

A constitutional amendment to permit prayer in the public schools.

In computing measures of association (τ_c), the full range of variation in response on these four-point scales was utilized. For the entries in this table, the two categories indicating conservative responses (e.g., agree strongly and agree for the first item listed above regarding the ability of the private sector to solve economic problems) were combined to show the total proportion of respondents providing conservative responses.

Table 6 Gender Differences in Proportions of Republican State Representatives, 1988, Expressing Conservative Positions on Three Major Policy Issues

	Women	Men
Policy Issue¹	%	%
Economy	74	85.9
$\tau_c =$	.14**	
Death Penalty	69.1	86.3
$\tau_c =$	.22***	
Parental Consent	55.3	74.2
$\tau_c =$	.24***	

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

N = 165-170 Republican women representatives; 159-163 Republican men representatives.

¹Legislators were asked whether they agreed strongly, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the following statements:

If left alone, except for essential regulations, the private sector can find ways to solve our economic problems.

The death penalty should be an option as a punishment for those who commit murder.

Minors should be able to obtain a legal abortion without parental consent.