



# Women in Elected Office: Challenges & Opportunities in Erie County



**Presented by:**  
Erie County  
Commission on the Status of Women  
95 Franklin Street  
Buffalo, New York 14202



## A message from ERIE COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

On behalf of the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women, it is with great anticipation that we share our latest report entitled, *Women in Elected Office: Challenges and Opportunities* with our community. The report offers a snapshot of the political landscape in Erie County with a focus on women in elected office.

Women comprise 52 percent of Erie County's total population, 49.5 percent of its labor force, and 53 percent of the county's registered voters. <sup>1</sup> Women currently comprise nearly 33 percent of elected government officials with men comprising nearly 68 percent <sup>2</sup>.

It has been nearly 100 years since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in August of 1920. While progress has been made with regard to women participating in the democratic process of voting; women continue to be woefully underrepresented in elected office across the United States. A question that deserves our fullest attention is: *why has this remained such a salient feature of our political landscape in the United States?* The answers are as varied as an individual's political opinions; rigid gender roles, sexual stereotypes and overt sexism, women's unwillingness to run, seek campaign funding, weather the brutal storms of campaigning; and the list goes on.

One thing is for certain, women waged a long and hard fought battle to win the right to vote. We stand on the shoulders of our foremother and sister suffragists. It was their vigilant commitment to creating a more perfect Union; ***one that included women in the political process*** that we stand here today.

This report does not attempt to answer this complex question; rather we offer a snapshot of the landscape here in Erie County and nationally with the intention that it will offer some new insights into what women have achieved, and the challenges that we continue to confront. We also hope that it will spark further discussion as well as action with regard to women seeking elected office in greater numbers.

This report was compiled by a dedicated team that includes: Joyce Cwiklinski, Junior Secretary for the Erie County Executive, who collected the reams of data on elected officials over the last 50 years, as well as offered her expertise and knowledge of Erie County politics; our ECCSW graduate interns from the University at Buffalo, doctoral candidate, Hilary Vandenbark, compiled, synthesized and contextualized the data and the narrative; masters student, Shannon Linehan researched and compiled additional data, and Melissa Daily, Erie County graphic artist, Information & Support Services - put it all together! We would also like to thank the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey for allowing the ECCSW to reprint their invaluable data included in this report.

With sincere thanks,

Karen King,  
Executive Director, Erie County Commission on the Status of Women

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Estimates, September, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Erie County Board of Elections Archives, October 2017.

# **Women in Elected Office: Challenges and Opportunities in Erie County**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

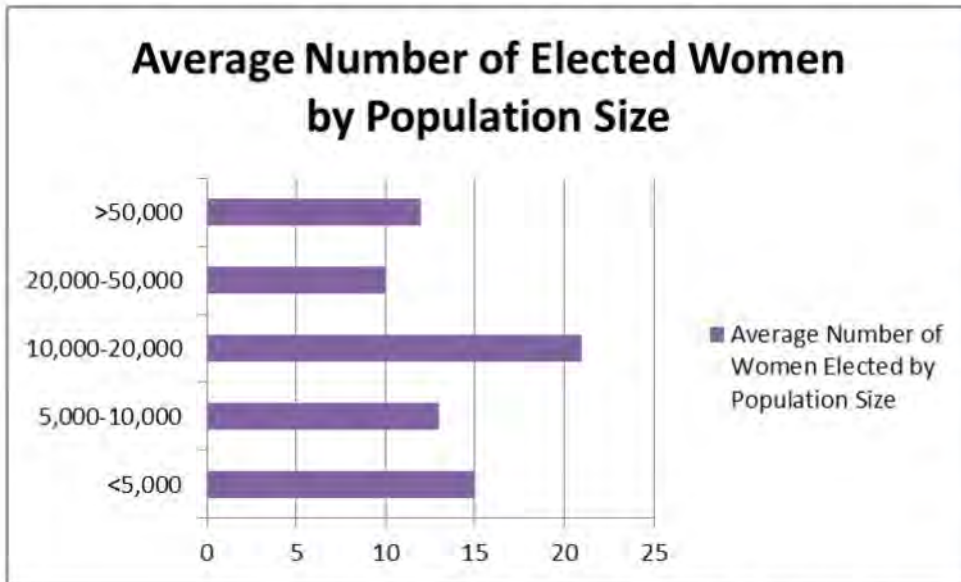
Women face many obstacles to equal representation in elected positions across the nation and at each level of public office. Political office continues to be a male-dominated field in Erie County, New York, as this report will demonstrate in detail. While most studies emphasize women's political participation at the national level, less is known about women's political representation in local elections. As of the 2016 election cycle, women hold 19.4 percent of seats in the House of Representatives and 21 percent of Senate seats, ranking the United States 101st in global representation of women at the national level.<sup>1</sup> Typically, women at the national level start in local and state politics. Women's candidacies for mayoral office across the nation gained traction in the early 1970s and peaked in the mid-1990s, according to Ferreira and Gyourko's 2014 study.<sup>2</sup> Women are generally successful in legislative positions in America's cities and towns. These national trends are also evident in Erie County. This report seeks to shed light on the current status of women in Erie County's political landscape as well as the challenges women face in running for office and opportunities for women in local elections.

Why is women's political representation and engagement important? Around the world, UN Women finds that women's increased political participation and representation improves democratic processes and generates laws around gender-based violence, child health and welfare, and family leave.<sup>3</sup> Multiple studies have shown that American voters are less engaged in local elections as opposed to federal ones and that women are generally less engaged than men in politics.<sup>4</sup> In part, this is the result of gendered perceptions of women's fitness for office and political life. Ferreira and Gyourko hypothesize that women's political skills are not immediately observable until they get into office, where they tend to have positive policy outcomes consistent with their campaigns.<sup>5</sup> Thus, women must be given a chance to demonstrate their abilities but discriminatory views may prevent women from getting that opportunity. Once women are elected, however, it improves people's perception of women as leaders: "When people observe women governing in the news or at political events, these observations may change discriminatory assumptions about the ideal profile of leaders and, consequently, women's ability to govern."<sup>6</sup> Even as candidates, Karp and Banducci assert women "in positions of power may serve as a powerful symbolic cue that 'politics is not just a man's game.'"<sup>7</sup> Women as citizens and voters tend to be more engaged when they see themselves represented in office, according to these studies.

It is not only electing women to any political office that matters; the offices to which women are elected are also important for policy outcomes and political visibility. For instance, mayors "could facilitate the reallocation of resources in a city to serve one's political preferences. Legislators, on the other hand, have to negotiate with other representatives (and possibly the executive) to pass legislation, so the impact of an added female legislator may not be as effective."<sup>8</sup> At every level of government, women are more successful in elections for legislative positions than executive ones. However, women in executive positions in the United States generally do not have the same policies directed at women's issues as those in other countries due to the fact that many mayoral candidates seek to court a broad base of voters.<sup>9</sup>

Geography and population also play a role in the political success of women. Ferreira and Gyourko found that geography was a more important factor than political party affiliation in women's success for mayoral offices.<sup>10</sup> Women tended to do better in moderately sized cities and particularly in cities on the West coast. Women tend to be least successful in rural areas and towns where there are fewer elected positions for which to run.

The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women developed this report to discover what obstacles women face in their political participation in our communities as well as to determine if Erie County is consistent with national electoral trends. Women’s political participation and representation have become hallmarks of democracy and women’s status around the world. The ECCSW’s mission is to elevate women’s status in Erie County and therefore we aim to shape how women and girls see themselves as potential community leaders as well as identifying and navigating the potential challenges specific to women running for office.



**Women are most successful in medium-sized towns as well as very small towns, which runs counter to national trends.**

### PRELIMINARY FINDINGS<sup>11</sup>

#### Low Numbers of Women in Legislative and Executive Positions:

Since 1953, women have held between five and 16.5 percent of councilor positions between Erie County’s cities and towns. The disparity is even more pronounced in executive positions. A woman has never held the County Executive position. Buffalo has never elected a woman to the Mayor’s office and Lackawanna and Tonawanda have each elected only one. Since 1953, women have comprised 12 percent of Town Supervisors in Erie County, however they have only won 7 percent of town supervisor elections, meaning that men are 13 times more likely to be re-elected to that position.

#### Disparities in Re-Election Bid Outcomes:

Throughout the towns in Erie County, men are, on average, 4.3 times more likely to win re-election than women as calculated by comparing the number of terms men and women have served.

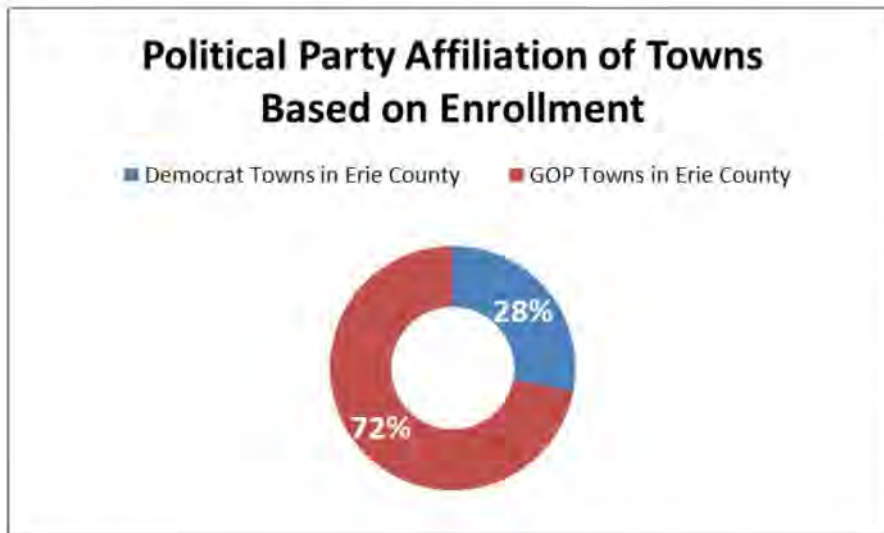
**Men are 4.3 times more likely to win re-election than women.**

#### Geographic Differences in Women’s Political Success:

Women are generally more successful in larger towns, but less successful in the cities of Erie County. Many rural towns have two women currently in office. The City of Buffalo has zero women between the Mayor, Comptroller, and nine City Councilor positions; the North and Lovejoy districts in the City of Buffalo have never elected a woman to represent them on the city council.

### Political Party Associations and Elected Women:

Based on the political party enrollment figures from the Erie County Board of Elections, 72 percent of towns in Erie County are Republican-dominated and 28 percent of towns lean Democrat.<sup>12</sup> Towns with a population under 50,000 tend to lean Republican (such as Brant, Boston, and Marilla) whereas larger towns tend to lean Democrat (for example, Amherst and Tonawanda). Voters in Erie County's cities are overwhelmingly Democratic with 69 percent of enrolled voters. 11 percent of voters in cities identify as Republican with an additional 20 percent registering with smaller parties, such as the Green party, Reform party, Conservative party, and unaffiliated voters.



Women are more likely to be elected in Republican towns, averaging 14 women elected since 1953. Democrat towns average 12 women elected to office since 1953. 75 percent of women elected to office since 1953 have been elected in towns that are currently Republican. The town of Sardinia has a population of 2,775 people and has elected the most women of any Erie County town at 22 women and is 48 percent Republican.

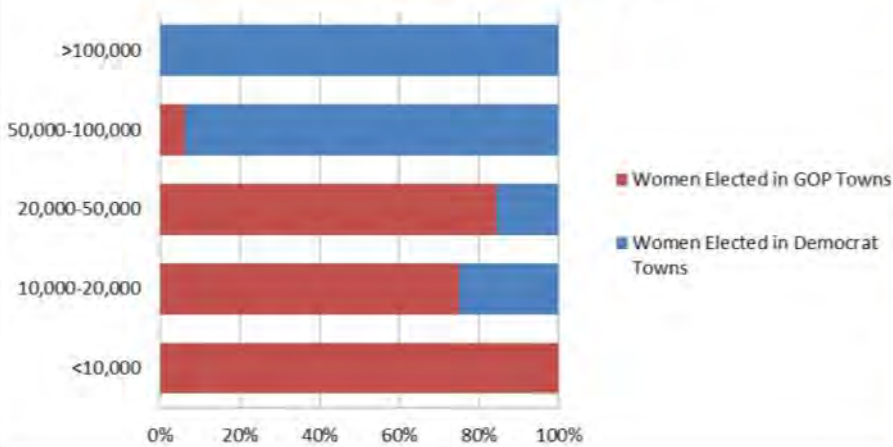
### Gender Imbalance in County Judiciary Positions:

Men are significantly more likely to be elected to any judicial position in Erie County; including the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of the State Supreme Court which are elected in part by Erie County voters. Women have accounted for 14 percent of all judges elected in Erie County. 21 percent of city judges, including the chief judge, have been women. Women account for 18 percent of all elected Town Justices since 1953. Women have held 30.5 percent of judicial seats at the County level. Judicial positions included in the analysis are: Chief Judge of Buffalo, City Judge, County Judge, Surrogate Judge, Family Court Judge, Town Justice, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of the State Supreme Court. The smallest gender gap is in the position of Family Court Judge in which 44 percent of judges have been women.

### Lack of Women in State and Federal Office:

The relative lack of success women have had in Erie County is mirrored in women's struggle to access state positions representing Erie County. Women have held just four percent of New York state senator positions and 14 percent of state assembly seats. Of all state positions since 1953, women have held 11 percent of the seats. No woman has ever been elected Governor of New York and only four women have held the Lieutenant Governor position. No women have been elected as the State Attorney General or the State Comptroller. A woman was recently appointed to the State Attorney General office. According to the Center for American Women and Politics, 29 women have represented the state as Senators or Representatives in the U.S. Congress.<sup>13</sup> 16 percent of State Supreme Court Justices have been women.

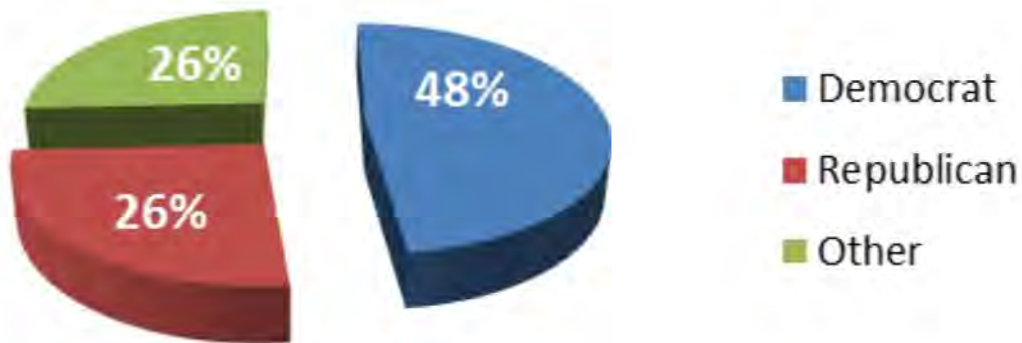
### Percentage of Elected Women by Party Affiliation and Population Size



**Women in small Republican towns are more successful than in small Democratic towns. Women in large Democratic towns are more successful than in large Republican ones.**

The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University notes a large surge in female candidates at each level going into the 2018 election cycle. At the federal level, they note the increase is partly due to the increase in female incumbents and challengers.<sup>14</sup> Dittmar's research asserts that female candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives are primarily Democrats but women running for state offices are mostly Republicans.<sup>15</sup> While women are running in increasingly large numbers, they still account for less than one-quarter of total candidates. When Dittmar published the data on November 20, 2017, 68 women were identified as potential candidates<sup>16</sup> for the 36 gubernatorial seats at stake in 2018, a 143 percent increase from that time in the previous 2014 election cycle.<sup>17</sup> Of the 84 women serving in the House of Representatives, 74 percent are Democrats.<sup>18</sup>

### Political Party by Voter Enrollment Erie County Total



## DATA COLLECTION METHODS, ANALYSIS, AND LIMITATIONS

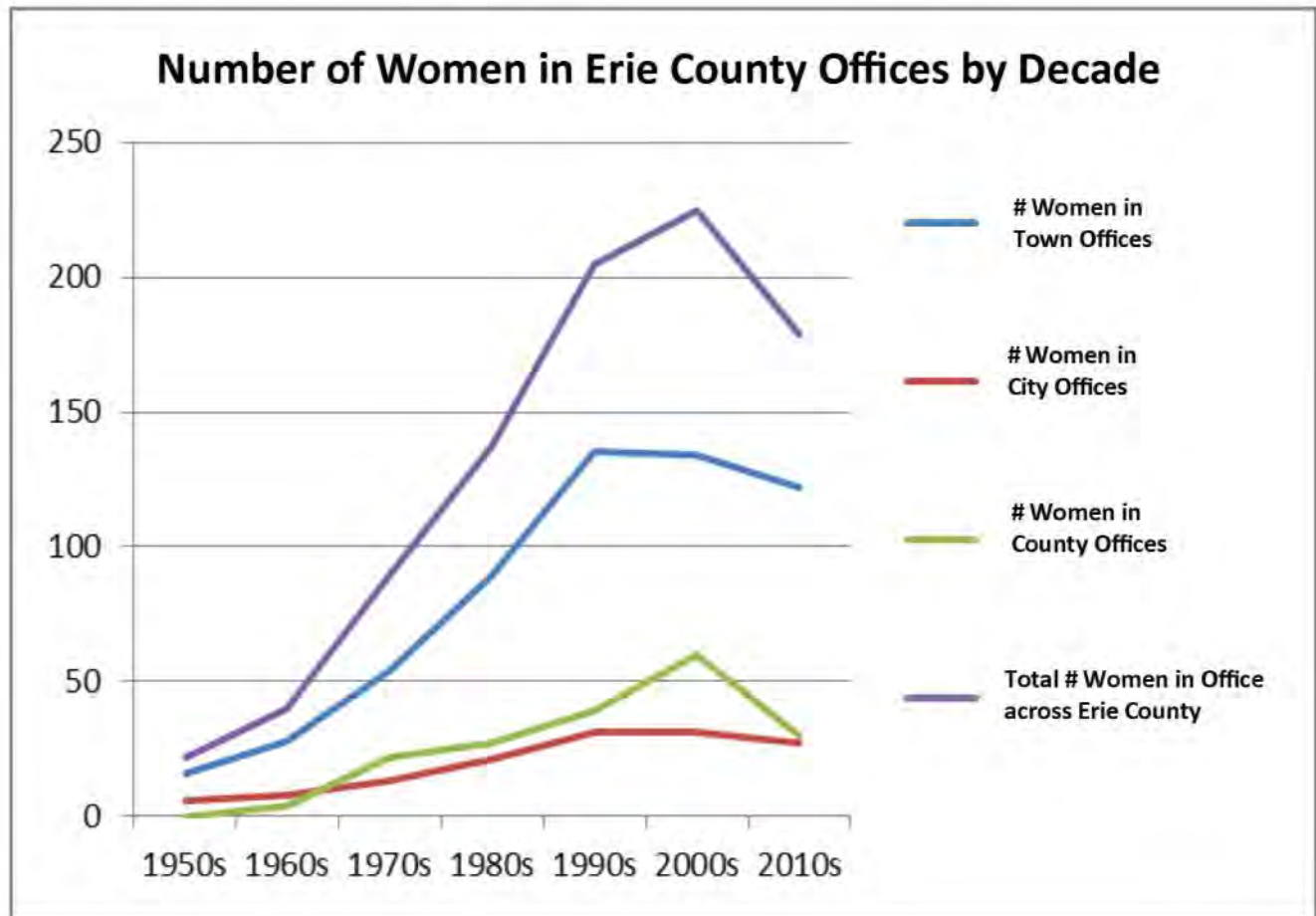
The data in this report comes from the Erie County Board of Elections archives. It was initially compiled by the Erie County Executive Office in August, 2017 and then sent to the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women for analysis in September-October, 2017. The ECCSW then organized the data by gender and number of terms. The data is broken down by location, position, and gender of elected officials in Erie County at the federal, state, county, city, and town level. Many towns have slight variation in their elected positions. Some towns elect their Assessors, Collectors, and Comptrollers, some towns have always appointed these positions, and others previously elected these positions but have transformed them into appointed positions. Thus, these positions are included in the calculations for the total number of women elected in town offices broadly, but those who hold these positions as appointees are not included in the calculation. The Erie County Board of Elections does not maintain archives on villages, who keep their own election histories. Due to this, the villages of Erie County are not included in the aggregate data. However, this report will provide a snapshot look at three of the villages whose election data were accessible as well as a look at the current gender composition of village boards. In general, the Board of Elections data begins in 1953 and continues to 2025 when some of the elected terms will expire. The exception is the City of Buffalo whose mayoral election data goes back to 1939.



While this data is extensive and can tell us much about the progress women have made since 1953 in Erie County as well as the hindrances they have encountered, it does not tell us all the relevant information. It cannot tell us how many women have run and lost their election or whether women have run again after an unsuccessful attempt. It also leaves out important information such as race, disability status, or age that could lead to a more nuanced analysis of challenges facing specific women. This data also cannot tell us what kinds of policy outcomes women have championed and whether these are consistent with their campaign promises.

## CURRENT STATUS OF ELECTED WOMEN IN ERIE COUNTY

Across Erie County, women currently compose only 31.2 percent of elected government officials with men comprising the other 68.8 percent at the time of publication. There is a dearth of women in the executive branches of the towns and cities in Erie County. No woman holds a mayoral office and only six women are Town Supervisors, out of 25 Supervisor offices. While women are typically more successful in legislative branches, of the 128 council and legislature seats in Erie County at the town, city, and county levels, only 31 (24.2 percent) are currently held by women. There are no women serving as Councilors in the towns of Clarence, Concord, Orchard Park, Wales, West Seneca, or the city of Buffalo. Across Erie County's villages, there are currently 54 men serving as Mayors or Trustees. 18 women currently hold Trustee positions. No women hold a mayoral position in Erie County villages.



**Women's political representation peaked in the late 1990s and early 2000s. We are currently seeing a downward trend. Women are least successful in Buffalo, Lackawanna, and Tonawanda.**



However, the data reveals that women dominate the Town Clerk office; all but one Town Clerk in Erie County are women and very few men have held it since women began running in large numbers for the office in the 1960s and 1970s. The Town Clerk's responsibilities include maintaining town records, taking meeting minutes and constructing the agenda for council meetings as well as other administrative responsibilities depending on the town.

## FINDINGS

Women's representation in political office in Erie County has steadily increased since 1953. While there are currently eight times more women in office than there were in the 1950s, we are seeing a downward trend in women's participation and election in Erie County (See "Election 2017 Highlights"). At the time of publication, women comprise 46 percent of elected officials in Erie County, 18 percent of which are judicial offices. Women have also been increasingly successful in pursuing executive positions in towns of Erie County. Women are also consistent with national trends in electing more women to Councilmember offices. According to the National League of Cities, "representation of women on America's city councils increased in all three city size categories between 1989 and 2001. The proportion of women grew from 21 to 25 percent in small cities, 25 to 36 percent in medium-sized cities, and 33 to 36 percent in large cities."<sup>19</sup> Buffalo would be an exception to this trend given that no women currently serve on the city council.

Since 1953, women have accounted for only 18 percent of elected officials in Erie County's towns. 30 percent of the women were elected to the town clerk office. Nine percent of elected women were Town Supervisors and 41 percent were elected to represent constituents on the town councils. The positions of town justice, assessor, and collector account for the other 20 percent which are elected in some towns and appointed in others.

The picture is even dimmer in Buffalo, Lackawanna, and the City of Tonawanda. 53 percent of the 51 women in city offices were Councilors. 39 percent were City Court Judges. Only 4 percent of women were elected Mayor with an additional 4 percent of women serving as appointed City Treasurers. Women have never held the offices of Chief Judge of Buffalo, Comptroller, or City Attorney.

In contrast, men have held 87 percent of city offices since 1953. Historically, they account for 89 percent of City Councilors and 93.5 percent of Mayors, excluding Mayors elected in Buffalo 1939-1949.

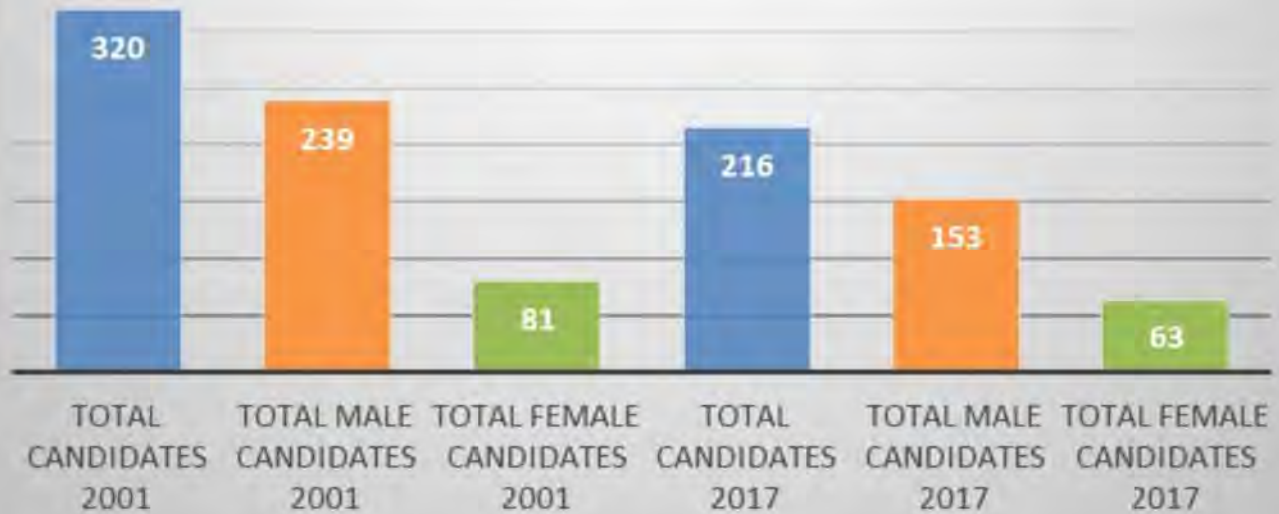
At the County level, women have comprised 19 percent of County Legislators.<sup>1</sup> There has never been a female County Executive, District Attorney, or Sheriff. 20 percent of County Clerks have been women. Women currently hold 43 percent of county positions.

### Village Snapshots

- Currently, women hold 25 percent of positions in Erie County's villages. On average, women only hold one trustee position in the villages of Erie County.
- Since 1853, the Village of Akron has only elected five women to the Board of Trustees. The first woman elected to village office in Akron was Ruth Brand in 1958.
- East Aurora has elected 11 women to the Board of Trustees beginning in 1973.
- In the past 20 years, the Village of Kenmore has only elected two women to the trustee position.

<sup>1</sup> Six legislative districts were consolidated from 17 to 11. This figure is calculated from the 11 remaining districts that was available to us.

## Total Candidate Breakdown 2001, 2017



However, women still face setbacks; in addition to persistent underrepresentation, 35 positions in Erie County's towns have been eliminated since 2005. 80 percent of these were offices for which women successfully ran. These offices tend to be Council Member positions whose districts were eliminated during redistricting, bureaucratic offices that became appointed positions, or positions whose duties were absorbed into another office, such as the Town Clerk's office.

Women are also less likely to win re-election. It is unclear from the available data if women lost the next election or declined to seek re-election. An exception to this trend would be women seeking re-election after having been appointed to a vacant position. Of the 91 women appointed to fill a vacancy, 71 won the following election.

**PERCENTAGE OF 2001 CANDIDATES BY GENDER**

Male Candidates 2001 Female Candidates 2001

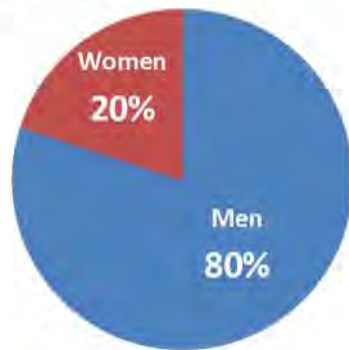


**PERCENTAGE OF 2017 CANDIDATES BY GENDER**

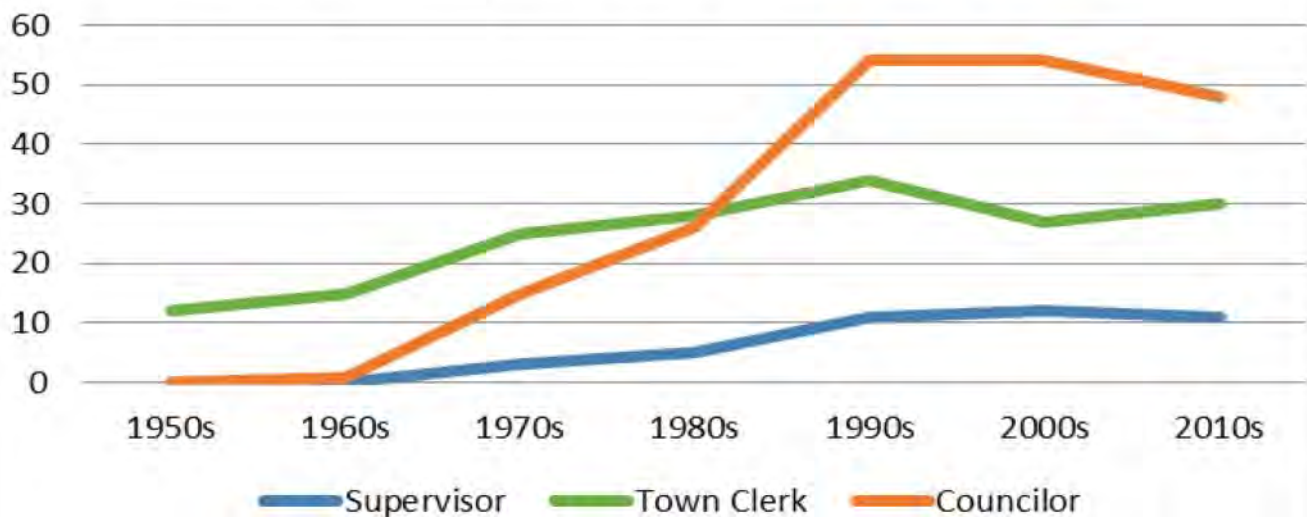
Male Candidates 2017 Female Candidates 2017



## Town Positions 1953 - Present



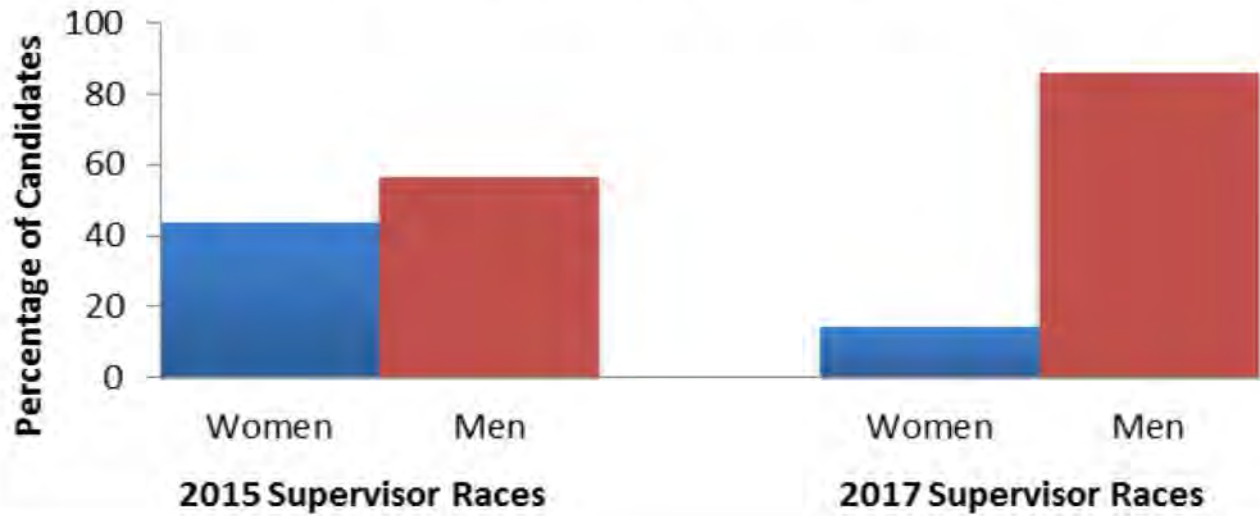
## Women Holding Key Town Positions by Decade



Another barrier women face is lacking the confidence and resources to run a campaign in the first place. Lawless finds that men are 40 percent more likely to have run for office than women.<sup>20</sup> Lawless and Fox find that women tend to dislike the idea of asking for campaign donations, or cultivating necessary relationships with donors. Women are less likely to be the object of party recruiters as well; recruiters are often men who may “indirectly favor men.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, women are not as likely to receive institutional party support.

In addition to this lack of support, Lawless also argues that women do not see themselves as qualified candidates despite having equal credentials to many male candidates.<sup>22</sup> Lawless and Fox find that women were discouraged from running for office because of “their more demanding household obligations, and their self-perceptions that they are not qualified to run or likely to win.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is not simply a lack of interest in political office that deters women, but the social context of gender roles as well.

## Candidates in Most Recent Supervisor Race by Gender



### 2015:

**Cheektowaga, Clarence, Eden, Evans, Grand Island, Lancaster, Newstead, North Collins, Town of Tonawanda, and West Seneca.**



### 2017:

**Alden, Amherst, Aurora, Boston, Brant, Colden, Collins, Concord, Elma, Hamburg, Holland, Marilla, Orchard Park, Sardinia, and Wales.**

## ELECTION 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

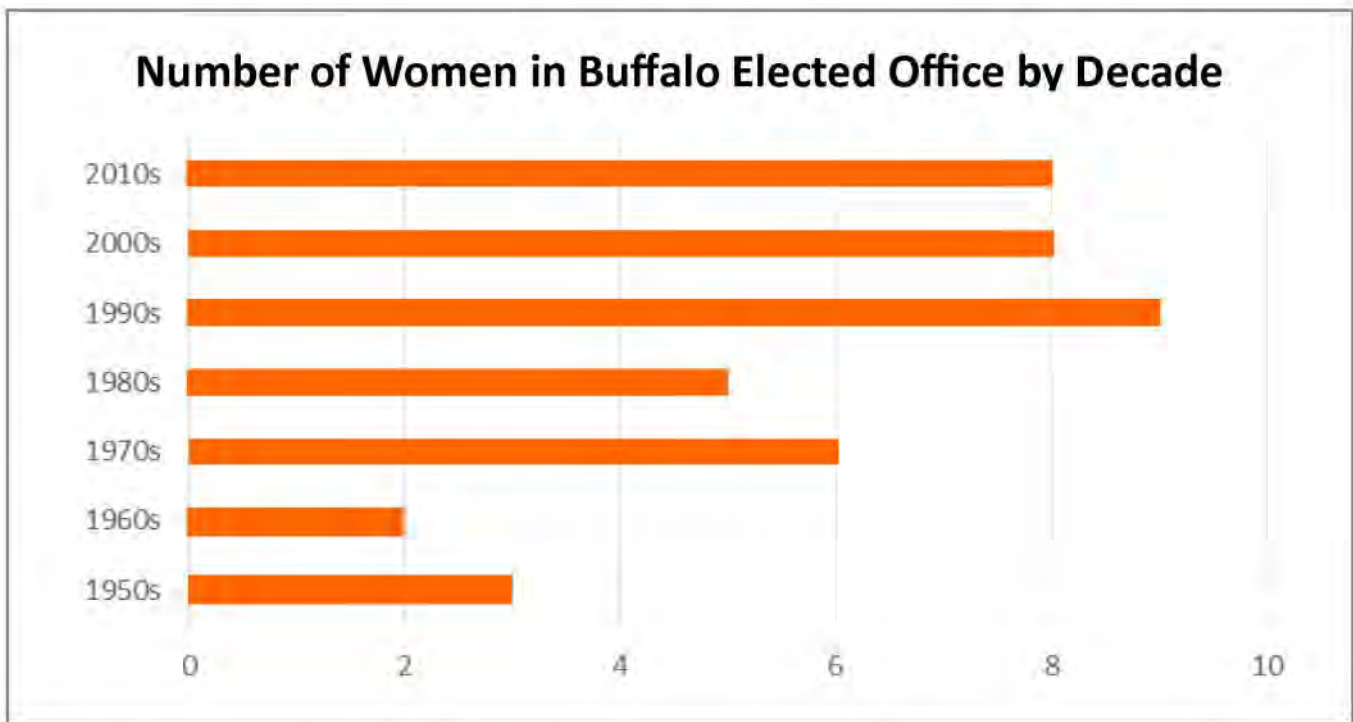
During the 2017 Erie County election cycle, women won 38 of the 146 open seats. Five more men found seats in Town Supervisor positions, leaving women with a nearly two percent decline in that position from the previous election cycle. Women lost three seats across Erie County's towns, bringing the number of women currently serving in office down to 71 (a one percent decline from 2016). Less than 50 percent of the women who filed petitions ended up winning the seat; 77 women filed petitions for candidacy; 63 ended up on the final ballot; 38 women won. Many of the women who filed petitions for candidacy did not make it to the final ballot, either being defeated in primaries or dropping out of the race prior to the election. Women accounted for 35 percent of candidates who filed petitions across Erie County but only 29 percent of final ballot candidates.

Two women ousted men in Town Councilor positions in Boston and Grand Island. Men unseated three women in Cheektowaga, Collins, and Eden. Women in Brant and Hamburg won seats in two newly-allocated Town Council positions.

The 2001 election cycle provides an interesting contrast to the 2017 cycle in Erie County. For instance, there were 75 more seats up for election (six of which were county legislator seats that were consolidated later). 18 more women ran in 2001 than 2017 and women won 14 more seats than women in 2017. However, due to the 18.5 percent decrease in the number of open seats, women accounted for four percent more of the total candidate population in 2017 and there was also a four percent increase in women winners relative to men. The more seats open in elections, the better women's chances of winning those seats. Although women represented a higher percentage of total candidates, there were still significantly fewer women participating in the election. Fewer women won elections due to the fact that there were fewer opportunities in 2017.

On the final ballot in 2017, 25 women ran as Republicans and 21 ran as Democrats. 10 women were listed under both major parties and some minor parties. Four women ran exclusively for minority parties, such as the Green and Conservative parties.

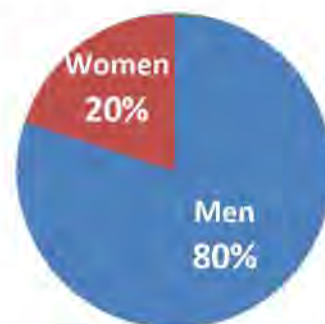
In 2001, 30 women ran as Democrats. 34 women campaigned as Republicans. Five women ran under all major parties and five as independent candidates or under other parties.



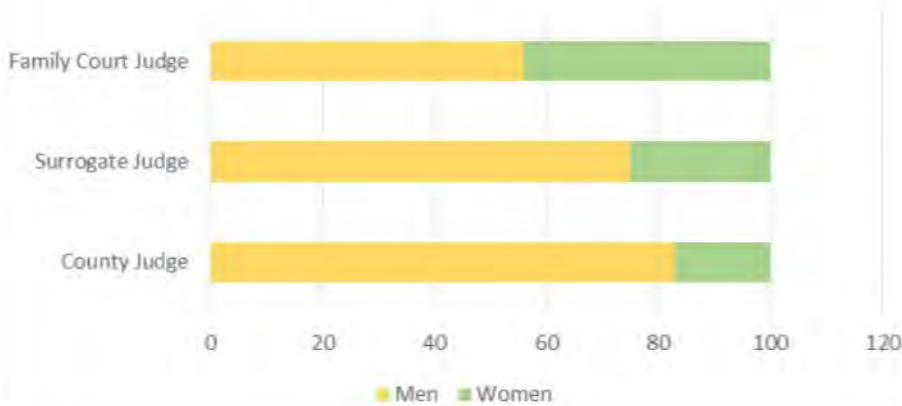
**City Positions 1953 - Present**



**Town Positions 1953 - Present**



**Percentage of County Judicial Positions by Gender 1953-Present**



**Women are fairly successful in judicial positions, particularly Family Court Judges.**

### **ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS**

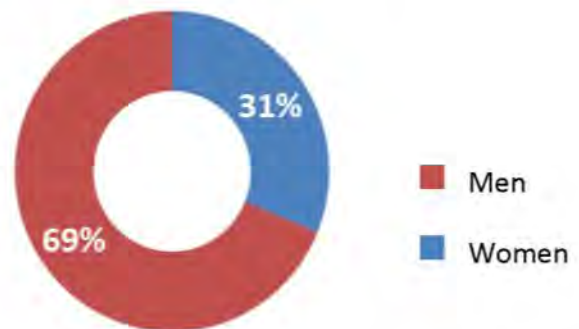
There are many reasons women have not been represented equally in the political realm, as this report has demonstrated. The largest barrier to women's representation is a low interest in running for office in the first place as well as women not viewing political life as a viable or desirable career path. This "ambition gap," as Lawless describes it, must close before the representation gap can be closed. National organizations such as Emily's List and the National Women's Political Caucus aim to recruit women to run for office and provide the necessary campaign supports that women seldom get from political parties.

**Women currently hold just**

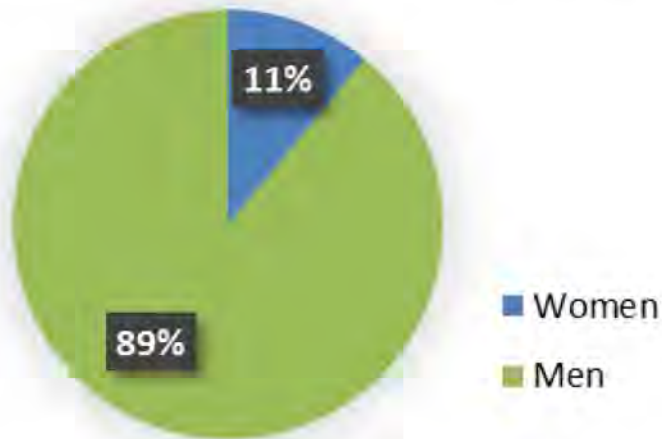
**31%**

**of offices in Erie County.**

**Gender Distribution of Erie County Elected Officials 2017**

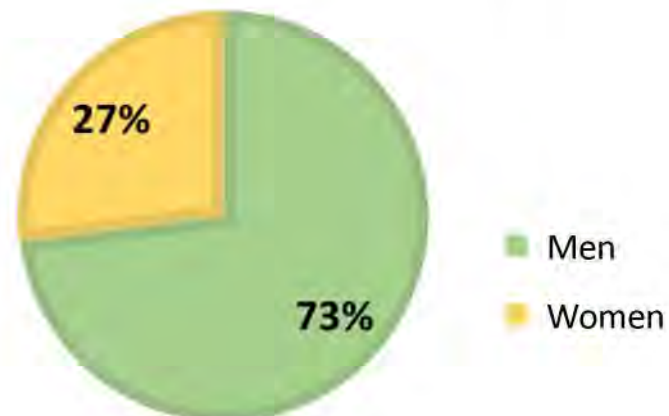


## PERCENTAGE OF STATE SEATS BY GENDER



**Women have difficulty accessing higher office in New York State.**

## LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR BY GENDER



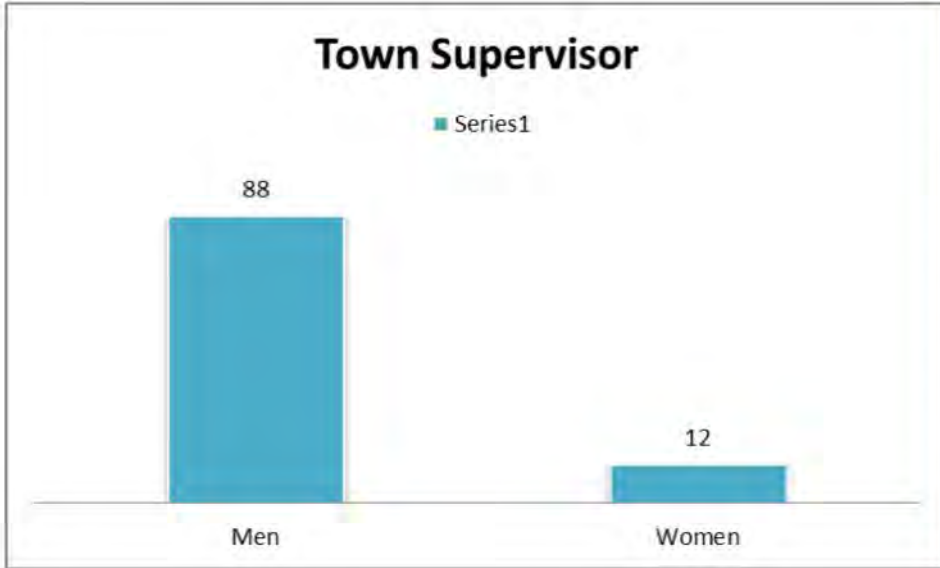
The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women is proud to participate in a New York coalition program entitled First Amendment, First Vote. First Amendment, First Vote aims to work with high school-aged girls across the state to prepare them to vote knowledgeably in their first election, to advocate for legislation as constituents, connect with their representatives, and to explore political office as a career option. By working with young women, perhaps we can end the ambition gap in the next generation of leaders.

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, New York State ranks in the bottom third of states for voter registration rates for women as well as among the worst in terms of women voter turnout.<sup>24</sup> However, New York is also in the top third of states for women's representation. Working with high school girls, First Amendment, First Vote can help close these registration and voter turnout gaps and hopefully encourage true gender parity at every level of office in Erie County.

# OFFICE DESCRIPTIONS

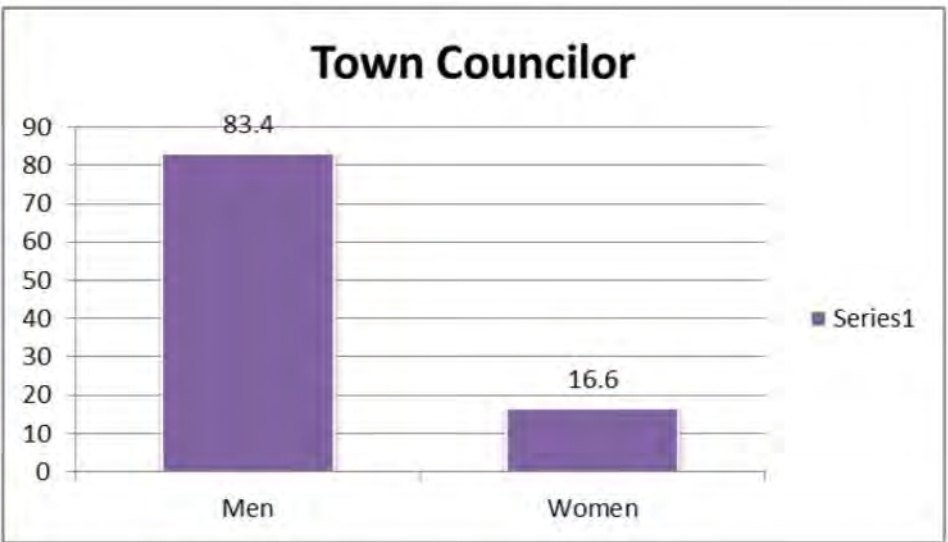
## Towns, Cities, County

The following section includes descriptions of each elected office at the town, city, and county level as well as the historical gender breakdown of the position in percentages.



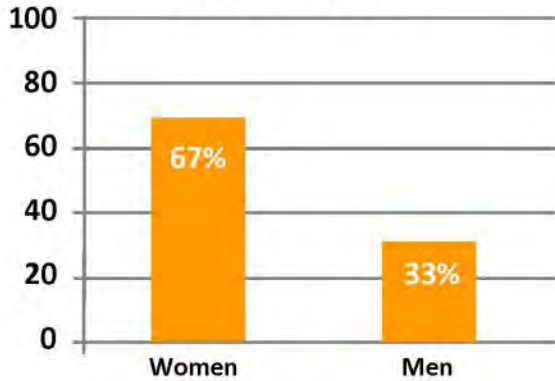
**Town Supervisors** are the executive branch of town governments in New York State. They develop policies and budgets as well as overseeing the maintenance of the town. They also sit on town councils and have a vote but no veto or tie-breaking power. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

**Town Councilors** develop and vote on legislation of concern to the town. They are supposed to support legislation that is in their constituents' best interests. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.





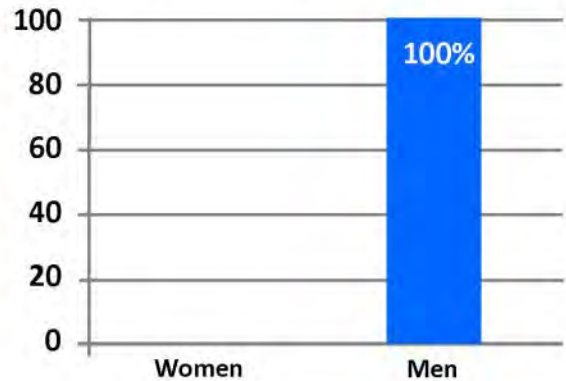
### Town Clerk



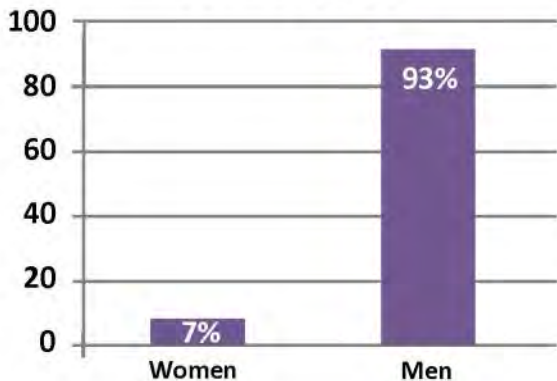
The **Town Clerk**'s responsibilities include maintaining town records, taking meeting minutes and constructing the agenda for council meetings, keeping the auto bureau and legal records, and where applicable, pistol permits and dog licenses. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

The **Town Superintendent of Highways** is charged with maintaining the town roads in collaboration with the County. They orchestrate snow removal, de-icing, and fixing potholes as well as any road projects. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

### Superintendent of Highways

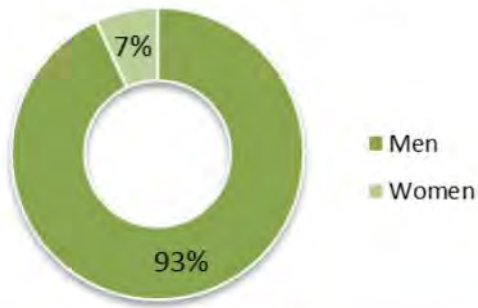


### Town Justice



The **Town Justice** presides over small criminal matters, landlord-tenant disputes, vehicle and traffic infractions, and small claims civil court. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

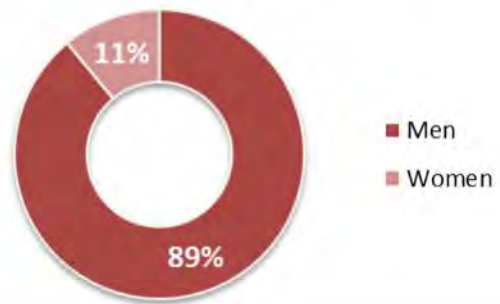
## Mayor 1953 - Present



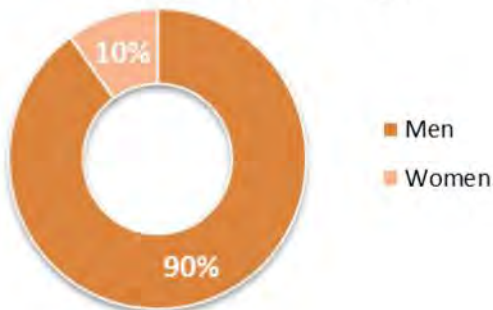
**Mayors** are the executive branch of city governments in New York State. They develop policies and budgets as well as overseeing the city functions. While the ECCSW has Buffalo's mayoral election data from 1939-present, for the sake of consistency with Lackawanna and Tonawanda, we have calculated the percentages from 1953-Present.

**City Councilmembers** develop and vote on legislation of concern to the city. They are supposed to support legislation that is in their constituents' best interests. They serve on committees and explore issues and develop legislative solutions. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## City Councilmembers



## City Court Judge



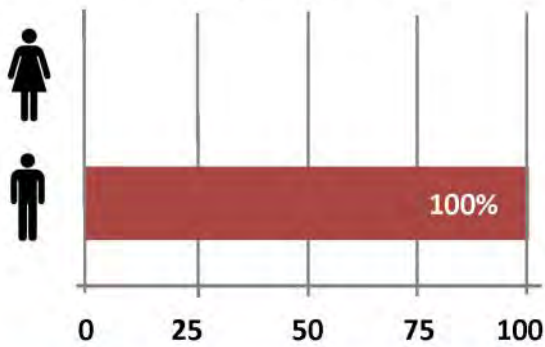
The **City Court Judge** manages traffic and misdemeanor offenses. In larger cities, they oversee more serious offenses as well. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

The **City Comptroller** acts as a financial oversight officer of the city, conducting audits and reviewing budgets as necessary. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## City Comptroller



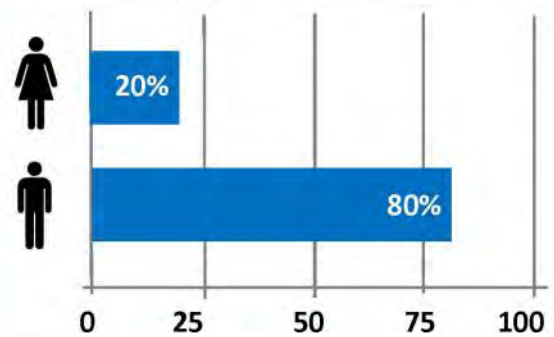
## County Executive



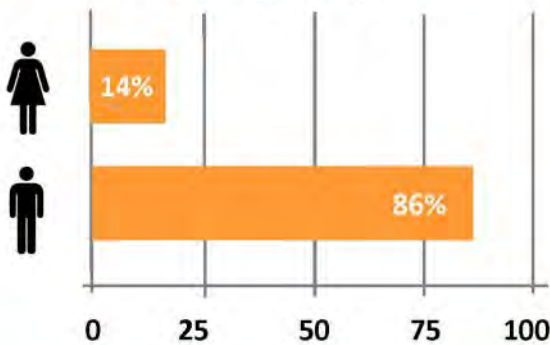
The **County Executive** is the chief office in the county. They are in charge of maintaining services and programs, developing policies, working with the legislature, and overseeing the county budget. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

Each of the **County Legislators** representing Erie County's 15 districts works together to develop bills and laws to address concerns in Erie County. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## County Legislator



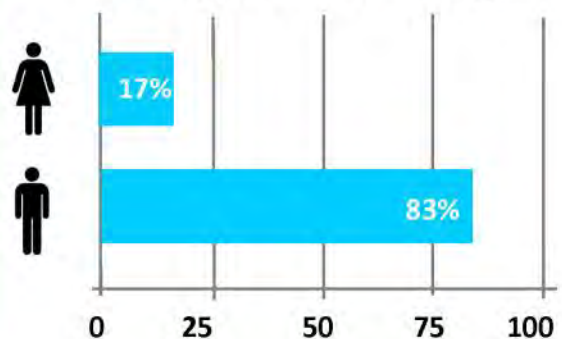
## County Judge



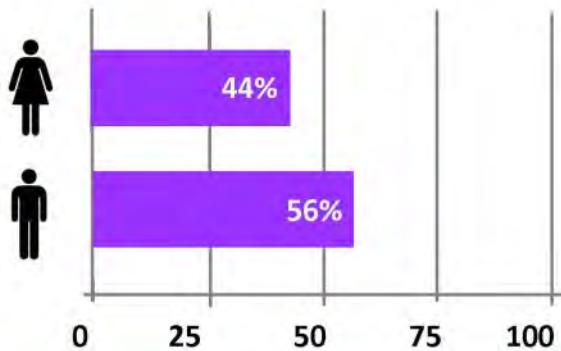
The **County Judge** is the highest officer of the County Court which adjudicates serious felony criminal charges as well as some civil claims. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

The **Surrogate Court Judge** handles all estate proceedings, some adoption cases, and probate cases. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## Surrogate Court Judge



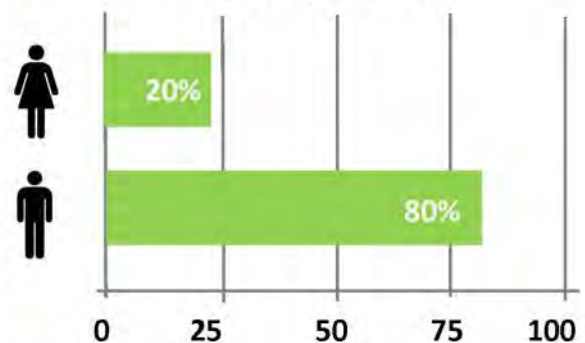
## Family Court Judge



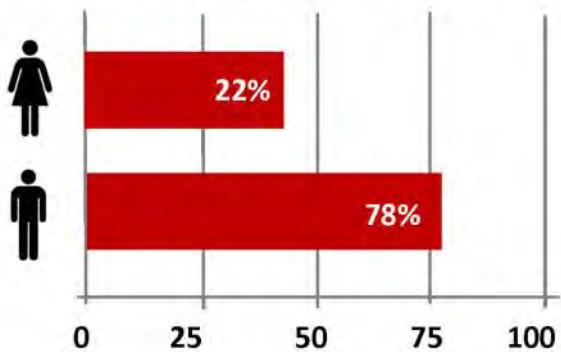
The **Family Court Judge** oversees all family matters from orders of protection for domestic violence, adoptions, juvenile cases, child abuse and neglect, custody issues, child support, and other matters. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

The **County Clerk's** responsibilities include maintaining records and overseeing the clerical needs of the county. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## County Clerk



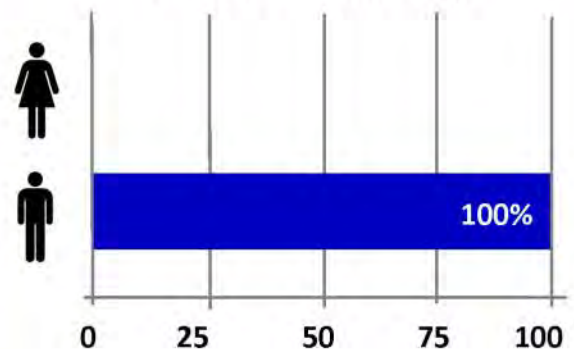
## County Comptroller



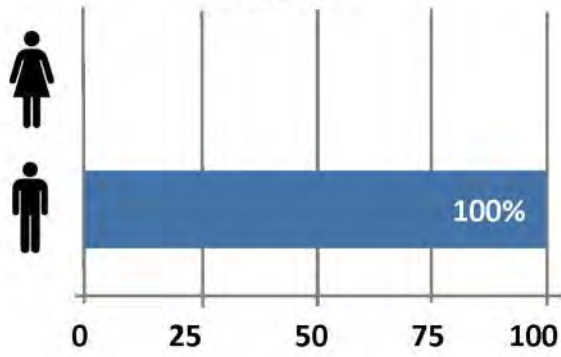
The **County Comptroller** acts as a financial oversight officer of the county, conducting audits and reviewing budgets as necessary. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

The **District Attorney** is the chief prosecutor of the County. They assign Assistant District Attorneys to criminal cases and ultimately determine whether to bring charges before a judge or grand jury. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## District Attorney



## Sheriff



The **County Sheriff** is responsible for law enforcement activities on the county level and manages the sheriffs they oversee. This chart reflects the data from 1953 - present.

## INDEX OF REFERENCES

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- <sup>2</sup>Fernando Ferreira and Joseph Gyourko, “Does Gender Matter for Political Leadership? The Case of U.S. Mayors,” in *Journal of Public Economics*, 112 (2014), 25.
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- <sup>4</sup>Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan A. Banducci, “When Politics is not just a Man’s Game: Women’s Representation and Political Engagement,” in *Electoral Studies* 27 (2008), 105-106.
- <sup>5</sup>Ferreira and Gyourko, 29.
- <sup>6</sup>Amy C. Alexander, “Change in Women’s Descriptive Representation and the Belief in Women’s Ability to Govern: A Virtuous Cycle,” in *Politics and Gender*, 8 (2012), 439-440.
- <sup>7</sup>Karp and Banducci, 106.
- <sup>8</sup>Ferreira and Gyourko, 25.
- <sup>9</sup>Ferreira and Gyourko, 29.
- <sup>10</sup>Ferreira and Gyourko, 25.
- <sup>11</sup>Erie County Board of Elections Archives, August, 2017. Erie County Board of Elections 2017 Results, November 2017. Brant Town Clerk Office, March, 2018.
- <sup>12</sup>Erie County Board of Elections.
- <sup>13</sup>State Fact Sheet - New York." *Center for American Women and Politics*. [Accessed May 30, 2018]: [http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state\\_fact\\_sheets/ny](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state_fact_sheets/ny)
- <sup>14</sup>Kelly Dittmar, “Women Candidates in Election 2018,” *The Center for American Women and Politics*. November 20, 2017: <http://cawp.rutgers.edu/research/closer-look>
- <sup>15</sup>Dittmar, “Women Candidates in Election 2018.”
- <sup>16</sup>Dittmar, “Women Candidates in Election 2018.”
- <sup>17</sup>Dittmar, “Women Candidates in Election 2018.”
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- <sup>21</sup>Lawless, 355.
- <sup>22</sup>Lawless, 355.
- <sup>23</sup>Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, “Why are Women Still Not Running for Office?” *The Brookings Institute: Issues in Governance Studies*, 16 (2008), 4.
- <sup>24</sup>“Political Participation,” *Institute for Women’s Policy Research*, <https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/political-participation/political-participation-full-section/#pptrends> [Accessed October 24, 2017]

# TRAILBLAZING WOMEN OF NEW YORK

## Trailblazing Firsts:

### **Ruth Sears Baker Pratt of New York U.S. Representative 1929-1933**

The first woman elected to the New York City Council, Congresswoman Ruth Pratt of New York was one of the few early Congresswomen to have prior experience in elective office. A government reformer and fiscal conservative, Pratt, on the eve the Great Depression, utilized her position as the first woman to serve on the New York City council to win a U.S. House seat representing Manhattan's "silk stocking" district. Pratt rejoiced on election night: "I did not run as a woman. I ran for the Board of Aldermen and for Congress not as a woman but as a citizen." When she took her seat in the 71st Congress, Pratt became the first woman to represent New York in the national legislature.



RUTH SEARS BAKER PRATT



SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

### **Shirley Chisholm of New York U.S. Representative 1969-1983 Presidential Candidate 1972**

In 1968, Shirley Chisholm made history by becoming the United States' first African-American congresswoman, beginning the first of seven terms in the House of Representatives. After initially being assigned to the House Forestry Committee, she shocked many by demanding reassignment. She was placed on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, eventually graduating to the Education and Labor Committee. Chisholm became one of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1969, and championed minority education and employment opportunities throughout her tenure in Congress.

Chisholm went on to make history yet again, becoming the first African American and the second woman to make a bid for the U.S. presidency with a major party when she ran for the Democratic nomination in 1972.

**Geraldine Ferraro of New York**  
**U.S. Representative 1979-1985**  
**Vice Presidential Candidate Nominee 1984**

Geraldine A. Ferraro was a member of Congress and the first woman to run for the U.S. vice presidency on a major party platform. Ferraro worked as an assistant district attorney before being elected as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1978. Ferraro was the first woman to chair her party's 1984 platform committee and the first female vice presidential nominee, running with Walter Mondale.



GERALDINE FERRARO

**Mary Anne Krupsak of New York**  
**Lieutenant Governor 1975-1978**

In 1974, she became the first woman elected to statewide office as Lieutenant Governor of New York. A graduate of the University of Rochester, Krupsak began her career working for Governor Harriman, but would spend almost a decade working in the New York State Assembly and Senate. Her years in State office were marked by strong leadership and social advocacy. She worked tirelessly to promote women's rights, sponsoring legislation to modify evidentiary requirements for rape trials and introduced a resolution declaring February 15, 1974 "Susan B. Anthony Day." As Lieutenant Governor, Krupsak made government more accessible and efficient, traveling the state to address the issues of all New Yorkers and suggesting ways to cut down on government waste. In 1978, Krupsak challenged her former running mate, Hugh L. Carey, for the Democratic nomination for Governor but was defeated in the primary.



MARY ANNE KRUPSAK



**Louise Slaughter of New York**  
**U.S. Representative 1987-2018**

Louise M. Slaughter was the first female chair of the House Rules Committee and one of the longest-serving Democrats in Congress. As the top Democrat on the committee that set terms of House floor debate, she often sparred with her GOP colleagues about policy, often late into the night. But Republicans on the panel respected her and regarded her as a fierce protector of her party's agenda. She was the author of landmark pieces of legislation in Congress, including one that barred members of Congress from insider trading, and was the co-author of the Violence Against Women Act.



LOUISE SLAUGHTER

## HISTORIC NEW YORK SUFFRAGISTS



A Brooklyn-born suffragist and educator, Smith was the first African American woman to found a suffrage organization (the Equal Suffrage League). She was also the first black woman to become a principal in the New York public school system.

**Sarah J. Smith  
Thompson Garnet  
1835-1911**

After her meeting with Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1851 (Anthony was not at the famous Seneca Falls convention), the women formed a life-long partnership campaigning for women's rights.



**Susan Brownell Anthony  
1820-1906**

Gage was a suffragist, Native American activist, freethinker, and author raised in an abolitionist household. She, along with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was a founding member of the National Woman Suffrage Association and served in various offices of that organization.

**Matilda Joslyn Gage  
1826-1898**



A Polish immigrant, Schneiderman was a renowned feminist, labor activist, talented organizer and speaker based in New York City. She was a leader of The Women's Trade Union League, which supported Women's Suffrage by achieving gains for working class women.

**Rose Schneiderman  
1882-1972**



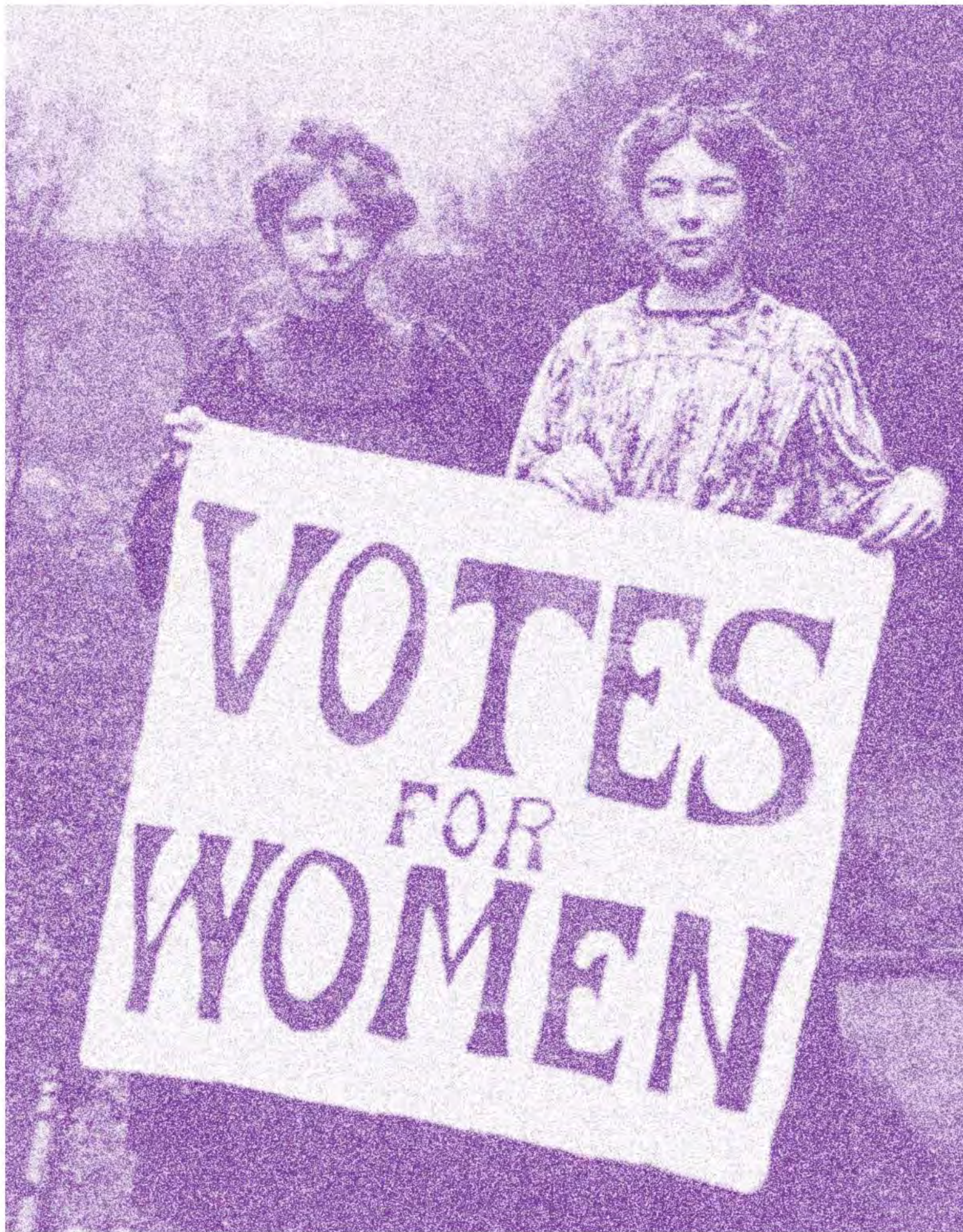
Bloomer was Women's Rights and temperance advocate born in Homer, NY. She was the editor of the first newspaper for women, The Lily, a publication of the Seneca Falls Ladies Temperance Society from 1849-1853.

**Amelia Bloomer  
1818-1894**

Belmont was a strategist, organizer and major financial supporter of the Suffrage Movement. She founded the Political Equality League and co-founded the National Women's Party for whom she bought headquarters in Washington, DC.

**Alva Vanderbilt Belmont  
1853-1933**





**VOTES  
FOR  
WOMEN**