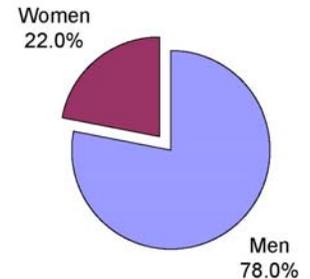


# Women in the Wisconsin Legislature, 2009

## Highlights of the General Election

- The total number of women in the Wisconsin State Legislature **declined** from 30 in 2008 to 29 following the November 4th general election — the lowest level in more than two decades.
- Nonetheless, when women ran for Assembly **open seats**, they won 75% of the time.
- When women serving in the Senate and Assembly ran as **incumbents** in contested races they won every time.

Wisconsin State Legislature, 2009



## Women in the Wisconsin State Legislature, 1981–2009

Year	Senate	Assembly	Total
1981	2	18	20
1983	2	24	26
1985	3	22	25
1987	4	24	28
1989	5	32	37
1991	5	27	32
1993	9	27	36
1995	9	23	32
1997	10	22	32
1999	11	20	31
2001	11	22	33
2003	9	28	37
2005	8	26	34
2007	8	22	30
2009	7	22	29

\*There are a total of 132 seats in the WI State Legislature (33 Senate & 99 Assembly).  
Source for historical figures: WI Legislative Reference Bureau.

## How Wisconsin Compares

According to the Women Legislators Network of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Wisconsin ranks 31st for the share of women serving in its State Legislature following the November 4, 2008 general election. By comparison, Minnesota ranks 4th (35%) and Illinois ranks 16th (28%). NCSL reports that, on average, women hold 24% of legislative seats in the 50 states.

In the November 4, 2008, general election, women were elected to serve in 29 (22.0%) of the 132 seats in the Legislature for 2009.\* This is slightly less than the number of women who served in the 2008 legislative session, continuing the overall decline in state legislative seats held by women in Wisconsin. The total number of women in the Wisconsin State Legislature now stands at its lowest level in more than two decades.

**SENATE** Women were elected to serve in seven (21.2%) of the 33 seats in the Wisconsin State Senate for 2009, down from eight seats in 2008.

Among the eight female members of the 2008 Senate, six seats were on the November 4<sup>th</sup> ballot.:

- three were re-elected to their seats in contested elections;
- two were re-elected to their seats in uncontested elections; and
- one woman serving in the 2008 Assembly did not seek re-election and her open seat went to a male candidate.

As a result, the overall number of the seats in the Senate held by women fell by one member – from eight to seven.

The 2009 total represents the lowest number of seats held by women in the Senate since 1991. The highest number of women elected to the Senate was 11 in both 1999 and 2001.

**ASSEMBLY** Women were elected to serve in 22 (22.2%) of the 99 seats in the Wisconsin State Assembly for 2009. This is the same number of women serving in the Assembly in 2008. While the overall number of women serving was unchanged by the Nov. 4th general election, several new women will join the Assembly in 2009. Among the 22 Assembly seats held by women in 2008:

- eleven were re-elected to their seats in contested elections;
- seven were re-elected to their seats in uncontested elections;
- four women serving in the 2008 Assembly did not seek re-election and, in all cases, their open seats were filled by male candidates; and
- four newly elected women will begin their first terms in the Assembly in 2009:
  - three women were elected to open seats previously held by men; and
  - one woman defeated an incumbent for his seat.

The current total is the lowest number of seats held by women in the Assembly since 1987. The highest number of seats held by women was 32 in 1989.

*\*This report is based on uncertified election results from the November 4, 2008, general election.*