

Humphrey School of Public Affairs

American Elections: Is 2012 the Year of the Woman?

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MODERATED BY PROFESSOR KATHRYN PEARSON

The media herald the 2012 elections as the "Year of the Woman" because woman candidates and voters are expected to decide the make-up of Congress and who wins the White House. Here's what is true: women voters may be the swing vote that decides congressional and presidential elections. Here's what is missing: the number of women in elected office and running for election is likely to remain small and out of whack with the proportion of men. Why? Does it matter?

JENNIFER LAWLESS

Jennifer Lawless serves as the current director of the Women & Politics Institute, as well as an Associate Professor of Government at American University. She received her Ph.D. from Stanford University in 2003 and her B.A. in from Union College in 1997; both degrees were in political science. Lawless was hired at American University in the fall of 2009. Before this, Lawless was employed at Brown University as an Assistant Professor of Political Science. Lawless currently serves as the editor of *Politics & Gender*, a political science journal currently housed at the Women & Politics Institute.

The central focuses of Lawless's courses and research are women and politics, campaigns, and elections. Courses she has taught at American University include: "Women & Politics," "Women & Political Leadership," and "Women, Politics & Public Policy." Her research regarding female candidates and election results is published in a number of political science journals, including *American Journal of Political Science*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *The Journal of Politics*, *Politics & Gender*, and *Women & Politics*. Her commentary has appeared in newspapers such as, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* and other local publications.

With Richard L. Fox, Lawless is the co-author of two books: *It Still Takes A Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *It Takes A Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). She is also the author of *Becoming a Candidate: Political Ambition and the Decision to Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).



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