

Campaign Finance and Women's Representation in Canada and the United States³³

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Women remain substantially under-represented in the politics of both the United States and Canada. Even after decades of feminist organizing around this issue, less than one-quarter of national legislators are women in either country. An extensive body of research in both countries has identified a number of factors that explain women's continued under-representation: the single-member electoral system, women's apparent unwillingness to run for office, and in the American case, the very low rate of turnover in Congress.

Another factor that might be added to this list is access to campaign funds. In the United States, and to a lesser extent Canada, electoral competition has become a very expensive undertaking. Contemporary voters are reached not by knocking on doors but by buying television advertising. Campaigns are staffed by high-priced professionals. Media buys, polling, direct dial and a presence on the Internet are the hallmarks of modern campaigns, and all of them are expensive. If we want to understand barriers to the election of women in this era of capital-intensive politics, then it is necessary to examine the issue of whether access to money belongs on the list of impediments to women's election.

This chapter asks whether the systems of campaign finance employed in Canada and the United States contribute in any way to women's persistent under-representation in their national legislatures. Are women able to raise the same campaign funds as male candidates? Have measures designed to channel campaign funds to female candidates made a difference? Are there

³³The author wishes to acknowledge expert research assistance from David de Groot, and to thank Munroe Eagles and Linda Erickson for providing information from datasets they have assembled. All errors in interpretation are my own.

sets of rules governing campaign finance that have a demonstrable effect on the representation of women in legislatures? By examining the experience in Canada and the United States, primarily at the national level but to a lesser extent at the sub-national level, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the interaction of money in politics and women's representation.

The conventional wisdom holds that money is, in fact, a substantial barrier to the election of women in Canada and the United States. Two arguments underlie this assumption. First, despite significant legal gains and widespread participation of women in the workforce, women in both the United States and Canada continue to earn less, on average, than do men. In Canada, women employed full-time year-round earn \$35,258, while similarly employed men earn \$49,250. In the United States, these same figures are \$30,203 and 39,429, respectively.³⁴ Overall, women earn approximately 75% of similarly employed men in Canada and the United States. One might extrapolate from this that women are less able to finance their own candidacies. Alternatively, if one assumes that women are more likely to turn to other women to finance their campaigns, they will be disadvantaged because female donors will have less disposable income than will male donors. Moreover, studies in the United States have found that women are far less likely than men to make campaign contributions. A survey of contributors to Congressional candidates found that three-quarters of habitual contributors were male, that women were more likely to be occasional donors, and that women were more inclined to give smaller amounts to fewer candidates than male voters.³⁵

The second underpinning of the conventional wisdom is a perception that women are in some way less able or less suited to the task of asking potential donors for campaign contributions.³⁶ Although women have traditionally acted as fundraisers for a variety of causes, the prospect of raising money for themselves clashes with societal expectations about women's appropriate behaviour, according to this argument.

In fact, most of the available research on the subject throws into question the validity of these assumptions. In both Canada and the United States, there is no evidence that women are consistently less able than men to raise funds to contest general elections. To the extent that campaign financing affects the electoral representation of women, the difference lies in (a) women's perceptions about the difficulty of raising funds, and (b) their ability to raise funds at the candidate selection level (US Primaries and Canadian nominations). Accordingly, the chapter will break down the electoral process into three components: the decision to run, candidate selection, and the general election. For each stage of the process, the potential and actual implications of campaign finance regulation for women will be discussed.

I. The Decision to Run

Much of the research examining the persistent under-representation of women identifies women's unwillingness to run for office as a factor that contributes significantly to the low numbers

³⁴ Canadian figures supplied by Statistics Canada, drawn from the *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 2001*. American figures provided by the US Census Bureau, *Income in the United States: 2002* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003) 10.

³⁵ Peter L. Francia, John C. Green, Paul S. Herrnson, Lynda W. Powell, and Clyde Wilcox, *The Financiers of Congressional Elections: Investors, Ideologues and Intimates* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 29.

³⁶ For a discussion of the pervasiveness of this assumption in much of the US Women in Politics literature, see Barbara Burrell, *A Woman's Place is in the House* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 102.

of women holding office.³⁷ The source of this unwillingness is not well understood. A number of factors may be in play, including perceptions that politics is a male preserve, a relative lack of interest in politics, and an incompatibility between a political career and family life. But it is certainly possible that one barrier affecting women's willingness to run may be a perception that the task of raising money to mount a competitive candidacy is insurmountable.

In both countries, research has uncovered some evidence suggesting that the prospective of raising money discourages female candidacies. Janine Brodie's research for the Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing found that female candidates in the 1988 federal election reported that funding outweighed all the other factors that female candidates considered to be major barriers to nomination and candidacy.³⁸ It should be noted, however, that Brodie's research only surveyed female candidates, so it is possible that male candidates might have been just as likely to report similar concerns. That said, Erickson's survey of candidates in the 1993 Federal Election found that 85 percent of female candidates, as compared with 77 percent of male candidates, favoured spending limits governing nomination contests.³⁹ Although this is not a direct measure of perceptions of the difficulty of raising money, it may lend some support to the idea that women are somewhat more concerned about their ability to raise sufficient funds than are men.

There is somewhat more compelling evidence that the high cost of running for office discourages women in the United States. Sandy Maisel, Walter Stone and Cherie Maestas have identified potential candidates in a number of congressional districts and studied their decision to run or not to run. They find that the high cost of campaigns appear to deter some potential candidates from running for Congress, and that this effect is greater among women.⁴⁰

Perceptions do not always reflect reality, however. These differential perceptions reflect the conventional wisdom identified above, but as we will see bear very little relation to women's actual ability to raise funds at either the nomination/primary stage or in the general election.

II. Winning the Nomination or Primary

In order to run for office in either Canada or the United States, a candidate must first secure their party's nomination. Both countries have single member plurality electoral systems, so the selection of a candidate is a winner-takes-all situation. This can be contrasted to the construction of a list of candidates in a Proportional Representation system, in which it is possible to balance considerations of gender, ethnicity and other characteristics on a list.

While the two countries share a common electoral system, they have very different practices for selecting candidates. In Canada, the selection of candidates is highly decentralized, with the electoral district associations of political parties exercising considerable autonomy in candidate selection. In all of the major parties, the selection of candidates takes place through a vote of those individuals who hold a party membership in that electoral district at the time of the contest.

³⁷ See, for example, Lynda Erickson, "Women and Candidacies for the House of Commons" in *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation*. Ed. Kathy Megyery, (Toronto: Dundurn).

³⁸ Janine Brodie with Celia Chandler, "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada" in *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation*. Ed. Kathy Megyery, (Toronto: Dundurn).

³⁹ 1993 Candidate Survey, Lynda Erickson Principal Investigator.

⁴⁰ See Clyde Wilcox chapter in this series, note 9.

Generally, parties require that members have held a party membership for a number of weeks prior to the vote in order to be eligible to vote in the nomination contest. For the most part, the selectorates for Canadian political party nominations are relatively small. In his study of nomination contests in the 1993 federal election, Cross (2004) found that the average attendance at a nomination meeting was just over 400 party members, and that the average attendance at a contested nomination was 574. There are, however, always a number of hotly contested nomination battles in which candidates recruit thousands, or even tens of thousands, of new party members. These high profile nominations have been a source of considerable controversy, as they often involve candidates signing up hundreds, if not thousands, of new party members to vote for them. In many instances, these new party members are recruited from specific ethnic or religious groups and often include many new immigrants and possibly even non-citizens (which is not prevented by the rules of some of the parties). Until 2004, nomination contests were governed only by the rules set out by each party. Some parties enforced spending limits for nomination contests, while others did not. As of January 2004, the Canada Elections Act set out limits for nomination spending which are enforced by Elections Canada.

In the United States, the selectorate for party nominations is much wider. Candidate selection takes place through a process of primary elections run by state election officials. While the rules vary from state to state, primary elections mean that the selectorate for choosing candidates is either all voters registered as supporters of the party in question (closed primaries), or all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, who have opted to vote in that party's primary (open primaries). Although voter turnout in these primary elections tends to be very low – around 15 percent⁴¹ – the selectorate is nonetheless much larger than for a Canadian nomination contest.

Because of these differences in magnitude, the financial requirements for mounting a competitive nomination campaign vary greatly between the two countries. In the 1993 Canadian Federal Election, Erickson found that candidates reported spending just over C\$1000 in pursuit of uncontested nominations, and just over C\$3000 when the nomination was contested. In contrast to this, one study estimates that between 1992 and 1998, candidates in open seats (with no incumbent) spent an average of just over US\$160,000.⁴² While spending in Canadian nomination contests is regulated as of 2004, there are no limits on spending in US primary elections. As of 2004, Canada joined the United States in imposing limits on the size and source of contributions to nomination campaigns.

If there are consistent gender differences in the ability to raise campaign funds, we would expect to find these differences at the nomination/primary election stage rather than in the general election. In nomination contests and primary elections, individuals are generally running without the endorsement of their political party. This forces them to rely more heavily on personal networks for soliciting campaign support, rather than drawing on their party's financial backers. If, in fact, women are disadvantaged in some way in their ability to raise funds, it would consequently be more likely to be evident at this stage than in the general election.

In Canada, discussions of the role of money in limiting the ability of women to run for office have tended to focus on the nomination contest as the stage at which ability to raise money acts

⁴¹ Thomas Patterson reports that "turnout in congressional primaries has also been on a downward trajectory. It fell from 30% in 1970 to 20% in 1986. Since then the average has been closer to 15%." In Thomas E. Patterson, *The Vanishing Voter: Public Involvement in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002) 10.

⁴² Calculated from Jay Goodliffe and David B. Magleby, "Campaign Spending in Primary Elections in the US House" (Paper presented to the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting) April 27-30, 2000, Chicago, IL), Table 8.

as an impediment to women's candidacies. In its 1991 Report, the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing suggested that "the financial obstacles to candidacy prevent many from seeking nomination. As a result, the principle of fairness is compromised."⁴³ Following from this, the RCERPF recommended that federal elections legislation impose spending limits on nomination contests and make the Political Contribution Tax Credit available to candidates for party nominations in order to increase their ability to raise funds. These recommendations were championed by a number of female MPs, and resulted in legislation in 2003 that imposes limits on spending in nomination contests.

In addition to this, one political party – the left-of-center New Democratic Party – has implemented a program of financial assistance in which women and minority candidates are eligible for reimbursement of up to C\$500 for child care expenses incurred in seeking a nomination, C\$500 for travel costs in geographically large ridings, and an additional C\$500 for costs incurred in seeking nomination in ridings where the NDP incumbent is retiring. The party also allows female and minority candidates to receipt three times as many funds as other candidates through the party for the purposes of allowing their contributors to take advantage of the generous tax credit afforded to parties.⁴⁴

While inconclusive, the limited Canadian evidence suggests that women do not experience substantial difficulties in fundraising for nomination bids. In her 1993 survey of candidates, Erickson found that female candidates reported outspending their male counterparts. On average, a female candidate reported spending C\$2425 to secure her nomination, while an average male candidate reported spending \$2210. Of these candidates, 55 percent of women and 55 percent of men reported that their nomination contest was contested. On average, a female candidate whose nomination was contested spent C\$3494 and a male candidate spent C\$3117. While this demonstrates that successful female candidates equal or surpass their male counterparts in ability to raise funds for nomination contests, it does not tell us whether unsuccessful female candidates were outspent by their male rivals.⁴⁵

Barbara Burrell reports similar findings in the United States. Examining primaries in which there was no incumbent running (known as "open seat" primaries) in 1988 and 1990, she found that female contenders on average surpassed male candidates in fundraising. More specifically, she found that in both years female candidates were slightly more likely than male candidates to report having raised funds in the first reporting period. This is a crucial period, because ability to raise early money affects the candidate's ability to raise more significant sums later in the campaign. In addition to this, female candidates had, on average, raised larger campaign treasuries in these early stages. Burrell concludes that "for the most part women began the elections in a stronger position than their male counterparts."⁴⁶ According to Burrell's research, these gender differences persisted through the primary election. In the second reporting period, female candidates in open seat primaries raised 7 percent more than their male counterparts in 1988, 68 percent more in 1990, and 33 percent more in 1992.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, Report* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1991), 117.

⁴⁴ William Cross, *Political Parties: A Democratic Audit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ It should also be noted that these figures do not represent audited or otherwise verified spending reports. They are merely reports of what candidates indicated on an academic survey that they spent.

⁴⁶ Burrell, 121.

⁴⁷ Calculated from Burrell, 121, table 6.8.

One of the factors that has helped female candidates, particularly in the Democratic Party, raise money is the emergence of a network of women's Political Action Committees, most notably an organization named EMILY's List. Political Action Committees are organizations that solicit contributions from individuals and make contributions to candidates. Many PACs are affiliated with businesses, unions or other organizations, but some – known as non-affiliated PACs – have been formed independent of any association with another organization. One distinct sub-category of political action committees are women's PACs, which contribute money only to female candidates.⁴⁸ There are several women's PACs currently active, including the National Women's Political Caucus's PAC, the Women's Campaign Fund, WISH List and EMILY's List. Of these, by far the most significant is EMILY's List.

Formed in 1985 by an independently wealthy feminist, EMILY's List solicits contributions for female Democrats who take a pro-choice stance on the abortion issue. The organization specializes in giving early money to competitive female candidates well in advance of the primary election, thereby making the candidate appear more viable in the eyes of other potential contributors. This practice is reflected in the organization's full name – Early Money is Like Yeast (it makes the bread rise). While many other PACs will endorse or give token contributions to female candidates who have little chance of winning, EMILY's List screens candidates carefully to determine the viability of their candidacies. Once a candidate has received the organization's endorsement, she is assured of early money to start her campaign and a continuous flow of contributions.

EMILY's List's effectiveness has been enhanced by its use of a practice known as “bundling.” Its members write cheques not to the PAC, but rather to one of the candidates endorsed by the organization. The cheque is mailed to EMILY's List, which bundles it together with other cheques, and then passes it on to the candidate. This allows EMILY's List to circumvent rules limiting the amount that a PAC can contribute to a candidate. The organization claims to have raised \$9.3 million dollars for pro-choice Democratic women candidates in the 1999-2000 election cycle. This makes it one of the largest PACs operating in the United States and a very influential player in Democratic party politics. The organization is also active in seeking out potential female candidates and mentoring them on their path to national-level office.

Although there is an expectation that women will face difficulties raising funds in order to secure their party's nomination, the evidence reviewed here suggests that there is no such systematic pattern. In part, efforts such as the development of women's PACs in the US or the assistance provided by the New Democratic Party in Canada may be addressing difficulties women have historically experienced in this regard. Insofar as we are able to measure candidate spending in nomination contests and primary elections, however, there appears to be no reason to believe that women have difficulty raising the necessary funds.

III. Winning the Election

Just as the contest to win a party's nomination varies tremendously between the United States and Canada, the fight to win an election is also very different in the two countries. In the United States, elections are contests built on the “ascendant importance of individual candidates

⁴⁸ See Lisa Young, *Feminists and Party Politics*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000, 41.

and campaigns".⁴⁹ In Canada, in contrast, the academic literature suggests that elections are fought between competing political parties, with individual candidates acting as standard-bearers for their party.⁵⁰ Reflecting this, candidates for Congress and the Senate in the United States effectively run their own campaigns, including purchasing television and radio advertising,⁵¹ while candidates in Canadian elections tend to run much more modest campaigns, relying on their national party's advertising campaign.

The regulation of campaign finance in the two countries is also substantially different. Until 2004, regulation of election campaign in Canada relied on disclosure of the size and source of contributions, but placed no restrictions on the size or source of contributions beyond banning contributions from foreign sources. The regulatory emphasis in Canada was on limiting spending by both candidates and political parties. As of 2004, the Canadian spending limits is coupled with limits on both the size and source of contributions. Only individuals will be permitted to make contributions to political parties, and the global maximum for any individual in any one year will be C\$5000. Corporations, unions and other entities will be limited to a global maximum of C\$1000 in any one year, and will only be permitted to contribute to candidates, not to political parties. Considerable public funds are available to candidates in Canadian elections. Candidates for a registered political party are able to issue tax receipts to their contributors. For small contributions (previously C\$200 and less, now C\$400 and less), a 75 percent tax credit is available for contributions to political parties and candidates. This is, in effect, a 75 percent state subsidy for small campaign contributions. In addition, all candidates who won 15 percent of the vote in their electoral district, and as of 2004 only 10 percent of the vote, are eligible for a reimbursement of 50 percent (now 60 percent) of their total campaign expenditures. Arguably, the use of spending limits for candidates in Canadian campaigns, when coupled with public funds available for candidates, has had the effect of limiting candidates' demand for money and leveling the playing field for candidates with less ability to access wealthy sources.⁵² The new restrictions on the size and source of contributions should further level this playing field to a perfect plane.

In the United States, the regulatory emphasis is on restricting the size and source of contributions. In the absence of public funding (except for presidential campaigns) and restrictions on spending, American candidates' demand for campaign funds is voracious. In the 1999/2000 election cycle, candidates for the House of Representatives spent on average about \$275,000 in their campaigns, and candidates for the Senate approximately \$1.3 million. These figures are dwarfed by the amounts spent in the most expensive races: in a tightly fought contest for a North Carolina Senate seat in 2002, for instance, Elizabeth Dole spent \$13.7 million, which was almost matched by her opponent, Erskine Bowles, who spent \$13.2 million.⁵³

If we do not find persistent evidence of gender differences in ability to raise funds at the nomination/primary stage, then it is even less likely that we would find evidence of gender differences in raising funds for general elections. In the general election campaign, the candidate

⁴⁹ Gary C. Jacobsen, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992) 7.

⁵⁰ Throughout the academic literature the failure to examine the effect of local constituency on national elections suggests a lack of candidate influence. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in the last two major books on Canadian elections: Neil Nevitte et al., *Unsteady State: the 1997 Canadian Federal Election* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Andre Blais et al., *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory*

⁵¹ Gary C. Jacobsen, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* 7.

⁵² Lisa Young, "Strengths and Weaknesses in the Regulation of Campaign Finance in Canada" *Election Law Journal* July 2004 (forthcoming).

⁵³ <http://www.opensecrets.com>

is the standard bearer for their political party. To the extent that support for a political party motivates the decision to make a contribution, women would only be disadvantaged if donors overtly discriminated against them. Moreover, to the extent that political contributions are motivated by a desire to influence or have access to an elected official, we would expect that the candidate's gender would affect contributions only if it affected potential donor's assessment of the candidate's ability to win the election.

It is not surprising, then, to find that there are no consistent gender differences in campaign spending or fundraising in either country. Analysis of candidates' receipts in the 2000 Canadian General Election shows that in every party except the governing Liberals, total contributions to female candidates were lower than total contributions to male candidates (see Table 1). These differences were, however, fairly modest in scope. They were largest in the right of center Progressive Conservative party, with a gender difference of some C\$3400. Similarly, in all the parties except the Liberals and the left of center NDP, female candidates spent less, as a percentage of the spending limit in their electoral district, than did their male counterparts. The magnitude of these gender gaps was five to six percentage points.

Table 1:

Contributions received and funds spent by candidates in the 2000 Canadian General Election⁵⁴

Party	Total Contributions to Candidate (Means in Cdn\$)		Percent of Limit Spent (Mean Percentages)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Liberal	\$58,085	\$58,606	72%	74%
Cdn Alliance	\$36,767	\$32,465	48%	42%
BQ	\$61,198	\$57,775	83%	78%
PC	\$17,833	\$13,471	27%	22%
NDP	\$17,827	\$15,927	24%	24%

While these findings suggest the existence of some modest gender-based differences in the ability to raise funds, these differences may well be a product of women being disproportionately represented among "sacrificial lamb" candidates in electoral districts their party is unlikely to win. To account for this, a regression analysis of the same data was conducted, employing the following independent variables: the candidate's gender, incumbency, the candidate's party's percentage of valid votes in that electoral district in the 1997 general election, and the average employment income in the electoral district.

⁵⁴ Calculated from 2000 General Election Candidate Dataset, Principal Investigator, Munroe Eagles.

Based on this analysis, Table 2 reports the effect that running a female candidate had on both campaign contributions and spending as a percent of the limit, holding these other factors constant. The findings are broken down by party. The analysis suggests that candidate gender has only a minimal effect on ability to raise funds and rates of campaign spending. The only exception to this is in the PC party, which has subsequently merged with the Canadian Alliance to form a new political party. In the PC party in 2000, the effect of a female candidate on total funds contributed was a reduction of some \$5500, and spending was seven percentage points lower. In the other parties, however, the effect of the candidate's gender was minimal, once the competitiveness of the riding was taken into account.

Table 2:

Effect of Female Candidate (Regression) ⁵⁵		
Party	Total Contributions to Candidate	Percent of Limit Spent
Liberal	-\$806	2%
Cdn Alliance	\$199	-1%
BQ	\$1132	1%
PC	-\$5546*	-7%
NDP	-\$1831	-1%

**Statistically significant at p=0.05*

In her analysis of US Congressional candidates' fundraising and expenditures between 1972 and 1992, Barbara Burrell finds that through the 1970s, women were less able than men to raise campaign funds. By the 1980s, however, this pattern had reversed "hitting a peak in 1988 when women raised on average nearly \$100,000 more than male candidates, controlling for party and candidate status."⁵⁶ Burrell, 107. Burrell concludes that her "analysis of the size, structure and source of money has shown that the idea that female congressional nominees have been disadvantaged in the financing of their campaigns has been a myth, unsupported by empirical evidence."⁵⁷ This finding echoes that of an earlier study which concluded that "although a candidate's gender affects the likelihood that he or she will have the attributes that contributors reward, it does not have an independent effect on a candidate's ability to raise money. ... Our results show that neither voters nor contributors discriminate on the basis of gender once other politically relevant factors have been taken into account."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Calculated from 2000 General Election Candidate Dataset, Principal Investigator, Munroe Eagles.

⁵⁶ Burrell, 107.

⁵⁷ Burrell, 116-7.

⁵⁸ "Carole Jean Uhlaner, Kay Lehman Scholzman, *The Journal of Politics* 48:1 (Feb 1986), 30-50: 46.

In short, we have not found evidence of persistent differences in the ability of men and women to raise campaign funds once they have secured their party's nomination. Perceptions that women are not able to solicit the same magnitude of contributions as their male counterparts are simply unfounded, according to the research results presented here. While there remain barriers to the election of women embedded in both the Canadian and American political systems, the ability of women to raise campaign funds is not one of them.

IV. The Impact of Regulatory Instruments on the Election of Women

The focus of this chapter has been predominantly on the election of women to the national legislatures of Canada and the United States. Because both countries are federal in structure, their sub-national units set the rules governing campaign finance for elections to provincial (Canada) and state (US) legislatures. Provinces and states are free to take any approach they see fit to the regulation of campaign finance, as long as it remains within the boundaries established by relevant judicial decisions. As a consequence, we find considerable variation in the approaches to the regulation of campaign finance in the Canadian provinces and US states. This allows us to draw some very tentative conclusions regarding the effect of different regulatory practices on women's access to elected office.

Because information regarding regulatory practices in the Canadian provinces is centrally available,⁵⁹ and there is some substantial variation in the regulatory approach taken by the ten provinces, the Canadian case lends itself to analysis. For this analysis, the ten Canadian provinces, the three northern territories and the federal government were included, yielding a total of fourteen cases.

Table 3 below breaks down the mean proportion of women in legislatures according to three regulatory instruments. It would be reasonable to expect that public funding for candidates would have a positive effect on the proportion of women elected, assuming that fundraising posed a barrier of some sort to women. As Table 3 shows, the average proportion of women in legislatures where candidates' expenses are partially reimbursed is in fact higher than those where there is no direct public funding for candidates. It should, however, be noted that three of the five jurisdictions that do not offer public funding are the northern territories, where social and cultural factors may independently depress the rate of women's election. In the two provinces that do not offer reimbursements to candidates (Alberta and BC), the average proportion of women is almost 22 percent.

Neither limiting the size of contributions nor limiting the amounts candidates can spend appears to have any positive impact on the proportion of women elected. In fact, in both instances the proportion of women is slightly higher in jurisdictions that do not employ these regulatory instruments.

Where we find an apparently substantial impact on the proportion of women elected, however, is in jurisdictions that permit only eligible electors to make contributions to parties or candidates. In the two Canadian provinces that have adopted such legislation – Quebec and Manitoba – the mean proportion of women in the legislature is just under 26 percent, while the mean proportion for the remaining jurisdictions is only 17 percent. Although this suggests that such a measure

⁵⁹ *Elections Canada. "Compendium of Election Administration in Canada" 2003. Available at <http://www.elections.ca>.*

somehow encourages the representation of women, the finding must be interpreted with some caution. This difference is driven in large part by the substantial number of women in Quebec politics: after the 2003 provincial election, women comprised just over 30 percent of the members of the Quebec legislature. This may well be a partial product of the regulatory regime governing political finance in Quebec for over twenty-five years, but it may also reflect social and cultural differences. Moreover, it must be noted that Manitoba adopted the practice of restricting contributions to eligible electors in 2001. In the one election fought since the rule was brought in, the proportion of women in the legislature dropped by 3.5 percentage points. In short, these findings are suggestive, but not conclusive.

Table 3:

Women as Proportion of Legislators, by Regulatory Instrument ⁶⁰

<i>Regulatory Instrument (number of cases)</i>	<i>Proportion of women in legislature: means</i>
<i>Reimbursement of Candidate Expenses</i>	
Yes (n=9)	19.6%
No (n=5)	15.2%
<i>Limits on Size of Contributions</i>	
Yes (n=6)	16.6%
No (n=8)	19.1%
<i>Spending Limits for Candidates</i>	
Yes (n=2)	17.9%
No (n=12)	18.6%
<i>Limits on Source of Contributions</i>	
Yes (n=2)	25.8%
No (n=12)	16.7%

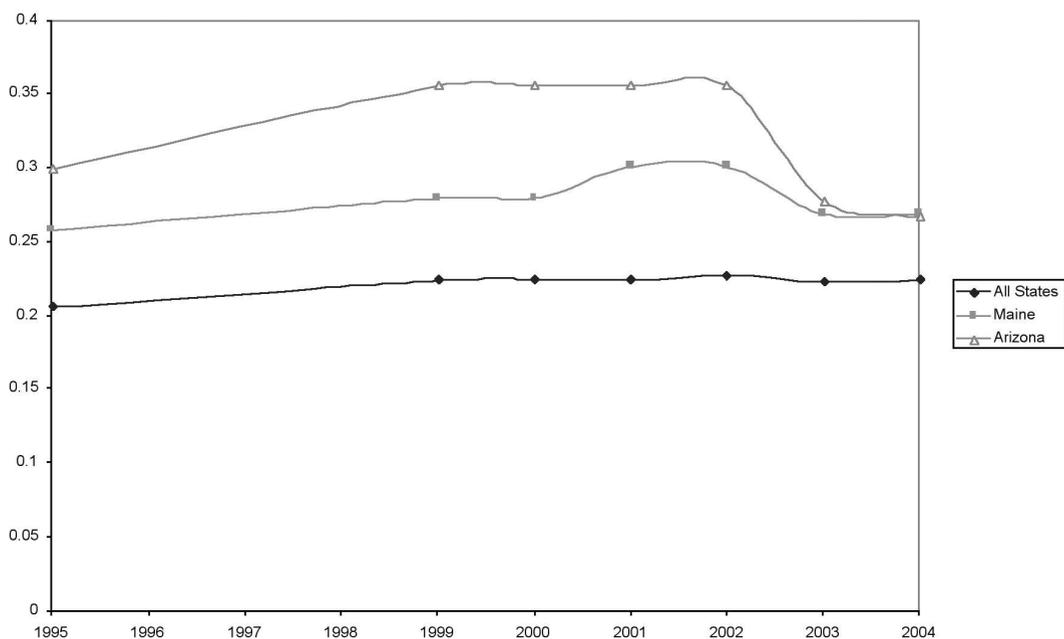
*Source: Calculated from data from compendium, and still counting website.
<http://stillcounting.athabascau.ca/>*

⁶⁰ Calculated from Elections Canada, Compendium and <http://www.stillcounting.athabascau.ca>.

At the state level in the United States, one innovation in electoral finance that has been touted as having the potential to increase the number of female candidates and women elected has been the innovation of providing total public funding for candidates that opt into a program of public funding. The states of Maine and Arizona adopted legislation providing this public funding. In both cases, it first came into effect for elections in 2000. Eligible candidates who opt into this public funding do not need to raise funds on their own, as they are restricted in their spending to the amount given to them through the public funding program. If one assumes that women have more difficulty raising funds than men, then the availability of public funding programs should increase the number of women candidates. Although the US General Accounting Office has undertaken an extensive analysis of the impact of these programs in Maine and Arizona, it did not study the effect on the numbers of female candidates or women elected.⁶¹

A cursory examination of the proportion of women in the Maine and Arizona legislatures over the past decade suggests that the impact of such a program on women’s representation is not immediately evident. As Figure 1 below shows, both Maine and Arizona were well above the national average in terms of the representation of women in their state legislatures prior to adopting this legislation. In the first election in which public funds were available, the proportion of women in the Maine legislature increased somewhat, while the proportion of women in the Arizona legislature did not change. In the 2002 elections, the number of women elected in Maine dropped back to prior levels, while the proportion of women in the Arizona legislature plummeted to pre-1995 levels. Although not conclusive, this suggests that public funding does not directly encourage the candidacies or election of women in the US context.

Figure 1: Women in State Legislatures, 1995-2004



Source: Calculated from Center for American Women in Politics, Fact Sheets on State Legislatures.

⁶¹ Ref of GAO study.

This examination of innovations at the provincial and state level suggests that the regulatory regimes governing political finance have a minimal impact on women's representation. Given our earlier findings that demonstrate that access to money does not pose a substantial barrier to women's candidacies, this is not terribly surprising. Nonetheless, innovations such as the public funding initiative in Maine and Arizona should be monitored, as they may have the potential for encouraging female candidates concerned about their ability to raise campaign funds to come forward.

V. Conclusion

This review of women's ability to raise funds to secure their party's nomination and to contest general elections suggests that, all other things being equal, women are just as able to raise political funds as are men. These findings should put to rest any notion that women are not predisposed toward this sort of activity. It should also serve to bolster the confidence of potential female candidates who are concerned about their capacity for fundraising.

A second lesson that can be drawn from this account is the tremendous potential for women's collective action. The experience of women's political action committees in the United States – and particularly the experience of EMILY's List – shows that women can use campaign finance as a tool to further the project of electing more women. The tremendous success of EMILY's List is a model for other jurisdictions insofar as it demonstrates the potential clout of female donors who band together, plot their strategy wisely and exploit the rules governing money in politics to their advantage.

