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## Alana Mocerí

In addition to blogging for the U.S. and Spanish editions of *The Huffington Post*, Alana has written for various Spanish publications including daily *El País*, *FP en Español* and the magazine *Campaigns & Elections en Español*.



# WOMEN'S PROGRESS ON THE ROAD TO CONGRESS:

## A Comparative Look at Spain and the U.S.

Alana Mocerí

Over the years as I have appeared in the Spanish media, first as the President of Democrats Abroad, and later as a political analyst, I am typically the lone woman in a sea of grey-haired men. Sure, often the presenters are women—pretty women, clad in tiny dresses—but I am most often the only woman battling for the rhetorical upper hand. One of these men was outraged that I challenged his assertion that everything was perfectly under control and safe at the Fukushima nuclear plant the day after the earthquake and devastating tsunami in 2011. He followed me out of the studio, down the hall and into the TV station's lobby, yelling that I was wrong and had no idea what I was talking about.

At the time (and more than once since then) I have wondered if he would have been as outraged had I not been a woman. Would I be more respected as a political analyst if I had the look of a wise, white-haired and bearded man? This is a question that's easy to answer cynically but impossible to answer empirically. It's tempting for American women like me living in Spain to conclude that it's a sexist country based on anecdotal evidence.

I receive countless invitations to political roundtables and conferences and over and over, I've vowed to not attend anything that doesn't include at least one female protagonist. But if I stuck to this vow, I'd miss many events, including the all-important networking opportunities. I'm scandalized every time I walk by a news-stand only to be confronted with naked breasts staring at me. I blush in shame as I cross the Gran Vía to Calle Montera and see prostitutes out in plain view, musing that as long as there are prostitutes out there, we women are all prostitutes. It's easy to blame it all on "Spanish machismo."

Ex-pats tend to blame whichever country we happen to be living in for any perceived ill. This is a great mistake because it keeps us from recognizing that sexism and gender inequality is a worldwide phenomenon. Women aren't a minority, we are a gender that cuts across every country, race, culture and socio-economic level. We are part of it all everywhere but included and excluded in differing degrees. Like all social movements, women's pursuit of equality depends on collective action and

<sup>1</sup> "World Classification". Women in National Parliament. Website. 1st December 2013.



% WOMEN IN U.S. CONGRESS AND CONGRESS DEPUTIES			
US		SPAIN	
	Total%		Total%
113 <sup>th</sup> 2013-2015	18.50%	X 2011-2015	36.00%
112 <sup>th</sup> 2011-2013	16.82%		
111 <sup>th</sup> 2009-2011	16.82%	IX 2008-2011	36.29%
110 <sup>th</sup> 2007-2009	16.45%		
109 <sup>th</sup> 2005-2007	15.33%	VIII 2004-2008	36.00%
108 <sup>th</sup> 2003-2007	13.83%		
107 <sup>th</sup> 2001-2003	13.64%	VII 2000-2004	28.29%
106 <sup>th</sup> 1999-2001	12.15%		
105 <sup>th</sup> 1997-1999	11.78%	VI 1996-2000	22.00%
104 <sup>th</sup> 1995-1997	10.65%		
103 <sup>th</sup> 1993-1995	10.09%	V 1993-1996	15.71%
102 <sup>th</sup> 1991-1993	5.98%		
101 <sup>th</sup> 1989-1991	5.79%	IV 1989-1993	12.86%
100 <sup>th</sup> 1987-1989	4.67%	III 1986-1989	6.29%
99 <sup>th</sup> 1985-1987	4.67%		
98 <sup>th</sup> 1983-1985	4.49%	II 1982-1986	4.57%
97 <sup>th</sup> 1981-1983	4.30%		
96 <sup>th</sup> 1979-1981	3.24%	I 1979-1982	6.10%
95 <sup>th</sup> 1977-1979	3.74%	1977-1979	5.80%

Sources: Instituto de la Mujer<sup>2</sup>, INE<sup>3</sup>, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University<sup>4</sup> and The U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>5</sup>

because we make up roughly half the world, the potential power that women have through this is immense.

We must look to our sisters abroad not only for support but to share best practices in strategy and tactics in this ongoing quest. Consequently, this essay takes a comparative look at the representation of women in Spain's Congress of Deputies and the United States Congress.

## 1 Women's Entry into Politics

At its core, democracy means ruled by the people and therefore democracies have a moral obligation to inclusiveness and diversity in their structures of power so that the people can truly rule. Of all the advances that women have and continue to fight for, the battle

to be proportionally represented in our governments is not only highly symbolic but critical towards creating a more equal ecosystem in all other facets of public life.

It might surprise you that 36% of Spain's members of Parliament are women, placing it 20th in the world by the Inter-parliamentary Union<sup>1</sup> while American women make up just 18.5% of the U.S. Congress for a dismal ranking of 79th.

Yes, Spain, the country where the term "machismo" comes from (which has long been adopted into the English lexicon). But if that last figure didn't surprise you, this one just might do the trick: in 1977, the first elected Parliament of Spain after 36 years of dictatorship had slightly more women (5.8%) than the U.S. Congress at the time (3.74%) and from there it has comfortably outpaced women in the U.S. for the past 39 years.

This chart is remarkable considering that women were effectively put in a holding pattern during the 36-year reign of General Francisco Franco. Despite achieving the vote in the 1931 constitution of the 2nd Republic, it all went away in 1939: women couldn't open a bank account, apply for passports or sign contracts without their husbands' permission.

American women have had their own uphill battle for equality, but have had the right to vote without interruption since 1920. There were the cultural and political gains of the 1960s and 70s, because by that time, women had already entered the workplace and were fighting for equal rights there. This was the revolutionary time of the pill, the sexual revolution, the legalization of abortion and the raising of consciousnesses. But despite these advances several decades ago, American women hold a mere 18.5% of the seats on Congress.

This is a story about women and politics in two very different countries. The U.S. and Spain are both democracies, but with distinct systems of government and subsequent electoral and party organizations. This is also a story about divergent approaches towards equality from within the left and right political parties, the concept of quotas and support from outside organizations. Finally, this is a story about people: women who have and continue to fight for equal representation and enlightened men who recognize the value of gender parity in their parties and governments rather than seeing women as inferiors or simply more competition.

## 2 The Playing Field

Americans love to talk about a "level playing field." The idea being that an equal starting point ensures that all have an equal chance of success. Unfortunately, this very nice sentiment is in reality elusive. We may not ever get to an entirely level playing field in terms of gender but we can take a brief look at what history books largely leave to the more specialized "women's history" books and courses.

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<sup>2</sup> "Estadísticas. Poder y toma de decisiones". Instituto de la mujer. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08

<sup>3</sup> "Mujeres en el Congreso de los Diputados y en el Senado". Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>4</sup> The Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the Clerk. U.S. House of Representatives. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.





*America's first female congress-member, Jeannette Rankin of Montana was elected in 1916. It took nearly 70 years of fighting to win the right to vote, beginning with the Seneca Falls Convention, held July 19-20, 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York*

Both in Spain and the U.S., women's right to vote—one of the most basic forms of participating in our democracies—is relatively new. In 1920, on the heels of World War I and their new status as part of the workforce, American women finally won the right to vote. Eleven years later, Spain's women won this same right in the Spanish constitution of the Second Republic in 1931. This certainly isn't to say that women weren't participating in politics before those dates. Indeed, America's first female congress-member, Jeannette Rankin of Montana was elected in 1916. It took nearly 70 years of fighting to win the right to vote, beginning with the Seneca Falls Convention, held July 19-20, 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. They drafted the "Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances, and Resolutions," a document that echoed the preamble to the Declaration of Independence.

Spain is no different in that, women left their mark on politics long before winning the right to vote. Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent were key players in this struggle and also served in the Parliament of Spain's Second Republic. This period was critical in the development of women's participation in politics. Not only did they win the right to vote, but managed to elect three women to the congress in 1931, five in 1933 and another five



Jeannette Rankin was the first woman in the United States Congress, elected in Montana in 1916 and again in 1940.

in 1936 (during that same period, the U.S. Congress included eight women members). Female leaders such as journalist Dolores Ibárruri, known as "La Pasionaria" (the passionflower) who presided over the Communist Party from 1942 to 1960, left strong and lasting marks on Spanish history.

It's more than a little anti-intuitive that Spanish women have more than twice as much representation in their Congress than American women, given that their gains were officially brought to a halt during the 36-year dictatorship. A closer look at each country's system of government sheds light on how each women's movement has been able progress.

*Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent were key players in this struggle and also served in the Parliament of Spain's Second Republic*

through a mandate from their district but were placed on a list by party leadership. Spanish members of Parliament must vote with the party or face fines and eventual expulsion.

Because Spain's political parties present lists of parliamentary candidates, the struggle towards gender parity has mostly taken place within the political parties with a sharp focus on the leadership who decides on these lists of candidates. Because a well-defined group of people decide, feminists within a party can pressure these specific people. The United States is fairly similar in that many gains have been fought at the party level, but for a different reason. Political parties are traditionally where candidates are identified, recruited, trained and supported in the U.S. presidential system of government.

With a presidential system of government in which all elected officials—from the president to congress to state and local governments—are elected directly by their constituents, it's more difficult to legislate gender parity. This is because whether a given candidate is running for city mayor, state assembly, the U.S. congress or president, in most states, they will have to first win a primary election in order to become the candidate for their party, and then they will face the general election. A candidate

### 3 System of Government

**I**n Spain's current parliamentary system, citizens vote for a party which presents a "closed list" of candidates. These candidates are chosen by party leadership and then the election decides which percentage of candidates become members of Parliament, officially known as El Congreso de los Diputados or the Congress of Deputies. Deputies or members of Parliament are therefore subject to strict party discipline in their congressional voting because they didn't get there



may be wealthy and have the means and infrastructure to launch their candidacy on their own. Otherwise, it takes recruitment, training and a strong campaign and financial support system to get any candidate, let alone women into office. This can be done through the party or via outside groups.

*In Spain, one enters politics through service to one's party and in the U.S. through service to the community*

There are no lists of candidates like there are in Spain's parliamentary system. A Spanish friend once observed after a visit to the U.S. that "in Spain, one enters politics through service to one's party and in the U.S., through service to the community." Political parties tend to be less powerful in a presidential system of government where candidates are the protagonists. This means that the route to elected office is not always via the party structure but by taking the initiative to launch a campaign. In theory, this system allows for "outsider" candidates to go to congress by mounting a successful campaign, but in practice, it favors outsider candidates who are wealthy.

Which brings us to another major difference between the Spanish and American electoral systems, which is that each while American candidates must launch and run their own campaigns, they must also finance them

through private fundraising? Unlike Spain, where parties run the campaigns and are mostly financed through public money, in the U.S., the ability to raise money will make or break a campaign. It's not good enough to be smart, well-versed on the issues, a good public speaker or have the ability to connect with voters; successful candidates must have a "rolodex" of potential donors who in turn, are willing to open up their "rolodexes" and raise money. Fundraising can be a big obstacle for male and female candidates alike. It's not easy to develop a network of wealthy potential donors unless you yourself are part of that elite circle. Given the 17.8% pay gap in the U.S. it's all the more challenging for women to be part of this circle.

#### 4 *The Battle within the Political Parties*

The story of Spanish women winning more representation in Spain's Congress of Deputies than American women in the U.S. Congress over the past 39 years is compelling and on the surface, a bit perplexing. American women ask, "How did they do it?" In order to answer this question, it's necessary to further break down these figures and look at the numbers of women coming from each country's two dominant parties.

In the case of the U.S., that would be the right-of-center Republican Party and the left-of-center Democratic Party. In Spain, there are many more political parties with significant representation in Congress, but for purposes of this essay, we're going to narrow this to the right-of-center People's Party and the left-of-center Socialist Workers' Party. To be clear, this is not to suggest that these four parties line up as each other's equivalent on the left and right, which are very subjective terms that change meaning from country to country. Political parties respond to their given country's historical, social and cultural complexities making comparisons challenging. But from the data, we will see a very general left-right trend.

% WOMEN IN U.S. CONGRESS AND CONGRESS DEPUTIES							
US				SPAIN			
	Democrats	Republicans	Total%		PSOE	PP%	Total%
113 <sup>th</sup> 2013-2015	29.80%	8.24%	18.50%	X 2011-2015	39.09%	36.22%	36.00%
112 <sup>th</sup> 2011-2013	28.28%	7.27%	16.82%				
111 <sup>th</sup> 2009-2011	22.04%	9.59%	16.82%	IX 2008-2011	43.20%	29.87%	36.29%
110 <sup>th</sup> 2007-2009	24.47%	8.50%	16.45%				
109 <sup>th</sup> 2005-2007	21.14%	10.49%	15.33%	VIII 2004-2008	46.30%	28.38%	36.00%
108 <sup>th</sup> 2003-2007	18.97%	9.29%	13.83%				
107 <sup>th</sup> 2001-2003	19.47%	8.12%	13.64%	VII 2000-2004	36.80%	25.14%	28.29%
106 <sup>th</sup> 1999-2001	17.58%	7.19%	12.15%				
105 <sup>th</sup> 1997-1999	17.06%	7.12%	11.78%	VI 1996-2000	27.66%	14.29%	22.00%
104 <sup>th</sup> 1995-1997	14.29%	7.45%	10.65%				
103 <sup>th</sup> 1993-1995	12.70%	6.39%	10.09%	V 1993-1996	17.61%	14.29%	15.17%
102 <sup>th</sup> 1991-1993	6.81%	4.74%	5.98%				
101 <sup>th</sup> 1989-1991	5.40%	6.36%	5.79%	IV 1989-1993	17.14%	14.89%	12.86%
100 <sup>th</sup> 1987-1989	4.15%	5.41%	4.67%	III 1986-1989	7.07%	5.95%	6.29%
99 <sup>th</sup> 1985-1987	4.00%	5.53%	4.67%				
98 <sup>th</sup> 1983-1985	4.13%	5.00%	4.49%	II 1982-1986	6.93%	0.95%	4.57%
97 <sup>th</sup> 1981-1983	3.81%	4.90%	4.30%				
96 <sup>th</sup> 1979-1981	3.26%	3.05%	3.24%	I 1979-1982	5.00%	11.00%	6.10%
95 <sup>th</sup> 1977-1979	4.25%	2.76%	3.74%	1977-1979	9.30%	6.30%	5.80%

Sources: Instituto de la Mujer<sup>6</sup>, INE<sup>7</sup>, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University<sup>8</sup> and The U.S. House of Representatives<sup>9</sup>.

This chart reveals how the left and right parties of both countries—again, in a very general sense—have shown very different results in terms of women's advancement in politics as measured by their entry into the U.S. Congress or Spanish Congress of Deputies. The contrast is astounding considering that in 1977, Spanish women crawled out from under 36 years of political exclusion and immediately shot ahead of what American women had been able to achieve since 1920. Certainly the different governmental systems of the two countries have conditioned this, but dividing out the data by party shows that in both countries, the greatest leaps have happened on the left, with the most impressive belonging to Spain's PSOE.

As I've noted earlier, within the framework of Spain's parliamentary system with closed lists controlled by the political parties, the fight for equal representation, therefore, must necessarily take place within the parties. After some consolidation of political parties during the first two elections after the transition to democracy, there is a clear difference in women's numbers according to party, with the PSOE showing significantly stronger results.

In her paper, "Explaining Gender Parity Representation in Spain: An Internal Dynamics of Parties"<sup>9</sup>, Monica Threlfall delves into the internal party procedures within the PSOE to explain the relative success of the gender parity in Spanish politics. According to

<sup>6</sup> "Estadísticas. Poder y toma de decisiones". Instituto de la mujer. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08

<sup>7</sup> "Mujeres en el Congreso de los Diputados y en el Senado". Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>8</sup> The Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Clerk. U.S. House of Representatives. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>9</sup> Threlfall, M. "Explaining Gender Parity Representation in Spain: An Internal Dynamics of Parties". Quota Project. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.





Threlfall, "the origins of the rise of women in party politics in Spain can be directly linked to the impact of the feminist lobbies and to party decisions."

The first major decision that bolstered female representation in both internal and public posts was in 1988, when the PSOE instituted a 25% quota and with it came a 10% jump in women in their congressional delegation. This groundbreaking move was followed by the United Left Party (Izquierda Unida) in the 1990s, while the PP rejected quotas, calling them "discrimination." Despite that, their former leader ex-francoist Minister Manuel Fraga talked of the need for more women in the party, according to former President of the Congress of Deputies, Luisa Fernanda Rudi. The PP continues to reject quotas today and just this past International Women's Day, María Dolores de Cospedal, Secretary General of the PP, criticized party quotas as "very offensive" and "sexist." In the U.S., conservatives have long demonized the idea of quotas as "reverse racism" and have worked on confusing affirmative action programs with "quota systems."

Whether one agrees with them or not, these quotas have proven effective in bringing more women into the top echelons of Spanish politics for parties on the left and seem to have pushed the PP to bring these numbers up through party leadership decisions.

The 25% quota decision of 1988 brought more women into leadership and with the rise of the feminist movement both in Spain and abroad, feminists within the PSOE pushed on. In 1997, the party decided to opt for gender parity by guaranteeing a minimum of 40% and a maximum of 60% men and women in party-controlled elected positions. Both the quota decision of 1988 and the following adoption of gender parity in 1997 were both influenced in no small part by feminist movements in socialist parties abroad, especially France and the

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Socialist International. This isn't new, women's suffragist movements throughout the world inspired and influenced each other.

Threlfall notes that while Spanish socialist-feminists accepted an incremental approach, which proved successful, the openness of male party leaders towards these changes or as she puts it "elite willingness" also helped make them possible. Parity won after being endorsed by President Felipe González and his likely successor, Joaquín Almunia, also supported the measure. Later, President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero took parity to his government in 2004, appointing eight women ministers out of sixteen total, and became the first European government with more women than men in his second term beginning in 2008 with nine women ministers.

"I am not only an anti-machoist, I am a feminist," Mr Zapatero once said.<sup>10</sup> "The most unfair domination is that of one half of humanity over the other. The more equality women will have, the more civilized and tolerant

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society will be." This administration included the first female Minister of Defense, Carme Chacón, who famously inspected troops while she was about 8 months pregnant. It also included the youngest minister ever, 31 year-old Bibiana Aido who led the new Equality Ministry. Some backlash did ensue, most notably, Silvio Berlusconi who called it a "pink government" and quipped that "Zapatero will have difficulty governing so many female ministers."

Unfortunately, Zapatero's successor President Mariano Rajoy from the Popular Party didn't see the need to compete with him for a gender-balanced government and named only four women ministers out of a total of thirteen. Women on U.S. Presidential Cabinets have risen to a high of 41% during Bill Clinton's second term only to fall back to 19% during George W. Bush's first time. The eight women currently serving on Obama's current cabinet only make up 35%.

Zapatero also took the issue of gender parity to the entire government with the 2006 "equality law" that requires a minimum of 40% and maximum of 60% of each gender on all party lists in Spanish elections. Unfortunately, in practice, this hasn't amounted to any more overall representation of women in congress: in 2004 there were 125 women in congress, in 2008 there were 124 and in 2011 that number remained the same at 124 women making up 36% of congress. The main reason women aren't at least making up 40% of congress is that the order of the list is all important and the major political parties have put men at the top of these lists: out of 52 provinces, the Socialist Party put 19 women at the top of the list in 2011 and the Popular Party, just had 15.

While Spanish women have gained through an internal party politics, American women have advanced their numbers more effectively during this time through outside organizations. As noted earlier, fundraising is the key to electoral success in the United States. Fundraising reportedly takes up about 60% of any U.S. congressperson's time. That's not just while they are running for office, but every day

<sup>9</sup> "PP y PSOE se enfrentan el Día de la Mujer por la política de cuotas en puestos de responsabilidad". RTVE. 24 horas. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>10</sup> McSmith, A. "Closing the gender gap: Why women now reign in Spain". *The Independent*. Website. 16 April 2008. Last Access: 2013/11/08.



## The eight women serving on Obama's current cabinet only make up 35%

during their term in office. The average cost of winning a seat in the House of Representatives is \$1.6 million and a successful Senate campaign costs \$10.35 million. The ability to raise money equals the ability to win and for women, there has been both good and bad news.

EMILY's List is an organization that was formed to achieve results by going directly after this question of money: it was founded in 1985 with the mission of raising money for pro-choice Democratic women candidates. The organization's name is an acronym that stands for a truism in American politics: "Early Money Is Like Yeast" (it helps the dough rise). Meaning that the earlier campaigns get funded, the more likely they are to attract more funding and eventually win elections.

But it's not just funding, EMILY's List identifies and recruits women to run for office at all levels of government, including state and local office. This builds a critical pipeline of female leadership that can rise to the highest levels of government. They also provide training and ongoing advising for the entire campaign team. In short, the organization does what political parties do, except that they do this to promote and encourage a specific group of candidates. And EMILY's List has proven successful, with a track record of having "helped elect 86 pro-choice Democratic women members of Congress, 16 senators, 9 governors, and hundreds of women to state and local office."<sup>11</sup>

The Susan B. Anthony List was founded in 1992 in response to and as the Republican pro-life alternative to EMILY's List. They also raise early money for candidates and offer training as well as pro-life media responses

and advocacy in Congress. But what really differentiates the Susan B. Anthony List from EMILY's List is that in addition to pro-life women, they support pro-life men running who are running against pro-choice women. (The Susan B. Anthony List prefers to label these women as "anti-life.") That is, they are willing to support having less women overall in congress in order to have more pro-life congresspeople. In June of 2013 in a press release they announced their commitment to electing women after several elections where they have mostly worked to elect men.

## While Spanish women have gained through an internal party politics, American women have advanced their numbers more effectively during this time through outside organizations

According to a *The New York Times* report<sup>12</sup> based on figures from The Center for Responsive Politics, women running for congress have raised more money on average than men. Among the difficulties for women in raising money has been convincing potential donors of their ability to win. Also, women, who are a female candidate's critical donor base, are traditionally more interested in giving money to causes rather than candidates. But Democratic fundraising powerhouses such as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Nancy Pelosi and Elizabeth Warren have changed this during the past decade. So has the proliferation of smaller donations. Big credit also goes to EMILY's List.

Despite gains made in campaign fundraising for women, the 2010 "Citizens United" Supreme Court decision and the

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## Women running for congress have raised more money on average than men

subsequent the rise of the SuperPacs and astronomical outside spending is changing the entire landscape in a way that may work against these gains. The report "Money in Politics with a Gender Lens"<sup>13</sup> by The National Council for Research on Women, Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics and The Center

for Responsive Politics looks at this changing post-Citizens United landscape has affected women.

On the donor side, the men still dominate, especially among "mega donors" who give over \$95,000, mostly to super-PACs: in 2012 men gave 78% of all donations totaling over \$95,000 and women, just 20%. On the receiving end, however, this report shows no significant difference between genders.

But despite the fact that outside groups are doing the work of the parties in terms of recruiting and supporting women candidates and despite the fact that women in congress are the better fundraisers, as of the 2012 election, women are still only 18.5% of the U.S. Congress. What gives?

According to American University professor Jennifer Lawless, the decision to run for office doesn't tend to come out of the blue but rather from "the evolution of a very long, politically engaged process."<sup>14</sup> Her research has concluded that men are far more likely to run for office than women. In the study "Girls just wanna not run" released in March of 2013,<sup>15</sup> she and Richard Fox analyze the 20% gender gap in young American's political ambition and find it to be consistent with the 16% gender gap they found in previous studies among potential men and women candidates:

## 5 Have You Ever Considered Running for Office?

	2001 potential candidates	2011 potential candidates	2012 college students
Women	43%	46%	37%
Men	59%	62%	57%

Source: "Girls just wanna not run" the gender gap in young American's political ambition, J. Lawless and R. Fox.

<sup>13</sup> "Money in Politics with a Gender Lens". The National Council for Research on Women. Website. Last Access: 2013/12/08.

<sup>14</sup> "Book Discussion on Becoming a Candidate". C-Span. Website. February 8, 2013. Last Access: 2014/02/10

<sup>15</sup> Lawless, J. and R. Fox. Girls Just Wanna Not Run The Gender Gap in Young Americans' Political Ambition. School of Public Affairs. American University. Washington DC. Pdf. Last Access: 2014/02/10.

<sup>11</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions". Emily's List. Website. Last Access: 2013/11/08.

<sup>12</sup> Steinhauer, J. "As Fund-Raisers in Congress, Women Break the Cash Ceiling". *The New York Times*. Website. November 29, 2013. Last Access: 2013/11/08.





### The study identifies five factors that affect young women's political ambition:

1. Young men are more likely than young women to be socialized by their parents to think about politics as a career path.
2. From their school experiences to their peer associations to their media habits, young women tend to be exposed to less political information and discussion than do young men.
3. Young men are more likely than young women to have played organized sports and care about winning.
4. Young women are less likely than young men to receive encouragement to run for office – from anyone.
5. Young women are less likely than young men to think they will be qualified to run for office, even once they are established in their careers.

Source: "Girls just wanna not run" the gender gap in young American's political ambition, J. Lawless and R. Fox.

These factors quantify the cultural and sociological bias that is not so easily changed from generation to generation. Even after the women's movement of the 1960s and early 1970s in the U.S., we find a persistent gender gap among their daughters (the 2011 potential candidates) and their granddaughters (2012 college students). This type of bias cannot be legislated away, it takes long term efforts to persuade changes in attitudes. The study suggests that those who wish to increase the number of young women with political aspirations urge parents to encourage their daughters to consider a political career, encourage young women to play sports from an early age and make more organizational efforts to help politically engage young women.

## 6 Democracy, Inclusivity, Diversity

**S**tory telling is critical to social movements because we connect through common experiences and hardships which, in turn, allow us to come together to work towards our common interests. Because we are half of humanity, national women's movements are not enough, we must support and learn from each other all over the world. This comparison between Spain and the U.S. is just one small contribution.

Looking towards the near future, there are potential female presidential candidates on the horizon in both countries. In the U.S. a



Carme Chacón, the first female Minister of Defence.

campaign is already mounting on behalf of Hillary Clinton, who is widely seen as a shoe-in for the Democratic nomination and a favorite to make it to the White House, should she choose to run. The PSOE is going ahead with their first-ever primary for their prime minister candidate and former Defense Minister Carme Chacón is the current frontrunner. The PSOE has also doubled-down on their bet on equality by moving to a "zipper list" for upcoming elections in which men and women will alternate every other candidate on the list to ensure absolute 50/50 gender parity.

Not everyone agrees that it matters that women are represented in our governments. An ABC/Fusion<sup>16</sup> poll from October 2013 showed that just forty-three percent of Americans say it would be a good thing if more women were elected to Congress. Like most issues, this

*Just forty-three percent of Americans say it would be a good thing if more women were elected to Congress*

changes according to party: 60% of Democrats would like to see more women in Congress as opposed to 23% of Republicans. One conservative friend recently told me: "Many more men run for congress than women. It's just stats. Nothing that people have against women. Nothing to do with race or gender. Just the way the system works."

This laissez faire attitude on the right is not surprising, considering that their ideology rejects quotas and affirmative action in both countries. But regardless of where this attitude comes from, it shows why women will only achieve more representation in our governments by keeping up the fight on our own behalf. We know that political systems influence what can and can't be done; we know that quotas work; and we know that targeted strategic campaign support works. More powerfully, we know that victories and progress abroad can be empowering for women's movements.

American women could benefit by pressuring their political parties to commit to adding concrete percentages of women to their ranks of elected officials. On the other hand, Spanish women who have greatly benefited from quotas, could reinforce this with more work encouraging women to enter politics and supporting their ambitions. The most difficult and elusive challenge for women in both countries is to continue working to change the cultural attitudes that permeate our societies. It's critical work, aimed at nothing less than improving the quality of our democracies, because more inclusive power structures are the only way of guaranteeing that the people truly rule.

<sup>16</sup> "Poll Finds Vast Gaps in Basic Views On Gender, Race, Religion and Politics". ABC NEWS/FUSION POLL. Langerresearch. Website. Pdf. Last Access: 2014/02/10.