

Leaks, Clogs, and Bursts: Assessing the Political Pipeline for Higher Office

H. Abbie Erler
Kenyon College

While various explanations have been proposed for the dearth of women in Congress and state governorships, many political scientists have focused their attention on the supply, or “pipeline”, of potential candidates. In this view, the key to increasing the number of women in Congress and executive office is to increase their representation in less prestigious offices, such as state legislatures. In these lower offices, women can acquire the skills and resources that will make them strong contenders for higher office. While the metaphor of a pipeline for political office is almost universally accepted, there is little research to confirm if increasing the number of women in lower office has a trickle-up effect. This paper aims to increase our knowledge of how the political pipeline works and add to our understanding of women and progressive ambition by examining the career moves of state legislators in 41 states from 2002 to 2008. It assesses the health of each state’s pipeline for higher office for both men and women and explores the factors that promote or hinder progressive ambition in state legislators.

With her 2008 presidential run, Hilary Rodham Clinton made history by being the first competitive woman candidate for the nomination. While not the first woman to run for the presidency, she was the first to have widespread success. Her campaign brought her wins in 21 state primaries and garnered over 1900 delegates (46% of the total needed for the nomination). In her concession speech she acknowledged the difficulty of her task: “Although we weren’t able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you it’s got about 18 million cracks in it.” Yet, it is not just the office of the presidency that is blocked by a glass ceiling. Women have had little success in winning election to the highest office in state government: the governorship. Since the country’s founding, 24 states have never elected a female governor and in 10 states a woman have never run for the governorship (O’Regan and Stambough 2011). Currently, only 6 states have female governors. This paper investigates why women have had so little success achieving the governorship and other top executive positions by examining the gendered differences in pathways to higher office that exist in the states.

The dearth of women in top executive positions is surprising given their success at other levels of national and state governments. The number of women elected to state legislatures has been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s, reaching a peak of 1809 legislators in 2010, representing 24.5% of all state legislators. In addition, women state legislators have been gaining institutional power within their chambers. During the 2015-2016 legislative session, 6 women served as Speaker of the House and 10 served as president or president pro tem of the state senate. Likewise, in Congress the number of women who hold seats has been on the rise following the 1992 election, dubbed the “Year of the Woman”, which saw the number of women double in the Senate and

increase from 28 to 47 in the House. Currently, women make up just less than 20% of all members of Congress, with 84 women serving in the House of Representatives and 20 serving in the Senate.

Groups that promote the election of women often claim that the best way to increase the number of women elected to higher levels of office, such as governor and other statewide executive positions, is to increase the number of women in lower levels of office, like the state legislature. Known as the “pipeline theory”, this view argues that it is necessary to increase the pool or supply of qualified women if women are to reach the highest levels of politics. Just as women’s entrance into state legislatures was predicated on their presence in feeder professions such as law and business, the pipeline theory states that increasing the number of women at the lower levels of politics is a necessary condition for pushing them up the political pipeline to higher office.

Thinking of women’s representation in terms of a pipeline has led many researchers to focus their attention on candidate emergence. Numerous studies have explored the factors that increase the likelihood that women will enter the electoral fray and have produced valuable insights into the nature of women’s political ambition (see e.g. Fox and Lawless 2011; Lawless and Fox 2010; Palmer and Simon 2003, 2006; Sanbonmatsu 2006). However, this focus on women’s entrance into the political pipeline has left opaque the actual workings of the pipeline. For example, we know little about the career patterns of women state legislators, including if they move through the pipeline to higher elective offices. While getting more women into the pipeline is a worthy goal, if the pipeline is clogged or has sprung a leak, few women will advance to higher statewide positions. Left unanswered in this literature are central questions related to

gendered differences in the career patterns of male and female state legislators, such as: Do female state legislators run for higher office at the same rates as their male counterparts? Do they run for the same higher offices? What factors, both institutional and cultural, facilitate the development of healthy political pipelines in the U.S. states? Are these factors the same for men and women? For Democrats and Republicans? By overlooking women who already hold office and focusing largely on potential candidates for office, previous studies of political ambition and gender only present part of the story.

This paper begins to fill this gap by testing to what extent states have gendered pipelines for statewide elective executive offices. It focuses on two questions. First, do women state legislators tend to run for higher offices, particularly higher statewide offices, with the same frequency as male state legislators? And secondly, do women and men who hold top statewide positions follow similar career paths to reach those positions? Focusing explicitly on the pipeline for higher office that exists in the U.S. states gives us a broader account of gender and progressive ambition.

The development of a political pipeline for higher office requires incumbents with progressive ambition who are also high-quality candidates able to win election to higher office (Schlesinger 1966; Black 1972; Rohde 1979). Several state-level factors help facilitate these conditions such as term limits, legislative professionalization, and party strength, yet their effects on the career decisions of male and female incumbents may not be the same. The literature on career patterns of state legislators has often treated men and women as if they are identical. It has assumed that men and women respond in a similar manner to the same electoral conditions and to the same opportunity structure. As Mariani notes, in his discussion of progressive ambition and women legislators, “the

pipeline theory assumes that state legislatures provide men and women with the same opportunities” for advancement (2008, 296). Yet there are several reasons for thinking that men and women incumbents even within the same state legislature face different incentives when considering a run for higher office. For example, while several studies have found that incumbents in highly professionalized legislatures are strong candidates for higher office given the greater resources that these types of legislatures provide (Berkman 1994; Berkman and Eisenstein 1999), other research has found that women are less likely to win seats in highly professionalized legislatures due to the increased competition for these seats (Squire 1988). Thus legislative professionalization is a variable that while increasing the likelihood that male incumbents win higher office may actually disadvantage women incumbents in their quest for higher office. In addition, studies of legislative careers and the pipeline theory assumes that Republican women and Democratic women incumbents face a similar decision calculus when deciding whether or not to run for higher office, to seek reelection, or to retire from the legislature. Yet previous research has found that Republican and Democratic women face very different electoral environments (Elder 2012; Sanbonmatsu 2006).

To begin exploring these differences in career paths, this paper uses a dataset comprised of the career moves of state legislatures in the lower and upper houses of 41 states from 2002 to 2008. In total, 21,610 career moves are examined. This dataset is the largest of its kind and excludes only states with 4-year terms for members of the lower house and New Hampshire and Vermont.¹ I coded the career move of each state legislator for each election year: whether he or she retired, won reelection, lost reelection,

¹ These two states are excluded due to the difficulty of obtaining information about membership exits.

was forced out of office by term limits, died, or ran for higher office such as Congress or statewide office. In addition, I examined the career paths of 75 men and women who have been elected either governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, or state treasurer. From these two datasets, I explore the career moves of male and female state legislatures, focusing in particular on runs for statewide elective office. I also evaluate the extent to which a political pipeline exists for men and women state legislators.

Women and the Political Pipeline

Many studies of women and politics have focused on the eligibility pool as an important part of the puzzle to explain the underrepresentation of women in political office (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Kirkpatrick 1974; Lawless and Fox 2005). As Darcy, Welch and Clark (1994) state: “The gender composition of the eligible pool of candidates will eventually determine the gender composition of elected bodies” (119). As women began to increase their numbers in state legislatures in the early 1990s, some predicted that these gains would reverberate to higher levels of office, as these lower offices would create a pipeline, funneling women into higher office. These lower offices may “serve as a spring board into higher office” (Palmer and Simon 2003) in that they provide women with the credentials and skills they need to make a credible run for higher office (Duerst-Lahti 1998; Carroll 1994). Women can leverage valuable resources that they gain in lower office, such as policy expertise, campaign experience, and political connections to launch successful runs for state senate, Congress, or other statewide office (Fowler and McClure 1998; Maestas, Maisel, and

Stone 2006). As Stambough and O'Regan (2007) explain: "Success breed success. In politics, success at one level often breeds success at the next levels." The existence of a functioning political pipeline can help women both individually and as a group. At the individual level, the pipeline can help funnel women through the hierarchy of available offices. At the aggregate level, a well-developed pipeline can help pave the way for successful female candidates by building networks among women across different levels of office and convincing party leaders and voters that women can run and win these offices.

A functioning political pipeline is particularly important if women are going to have success in winning the governorship. Windett's (2014) interviews with female candidates for governor reveal that most of them "followed the traditional path of climbing the political career ladder". They were more likely than the men in his sample to have served at the local level in a city or county office before moving to the state legislature and then on to statewide office before running for the governor's office. In addition, he finds that none of the women he interviewed entered politics with the goal of running for governor; instead, they formed this ambition after being elected to statewide office. These lower levels of office were key to helping form progressive ambition. Likewise, Windett (2011) finds that states with a progressive "female sociopolitical subculture" produce more women candidates for governor largely because their political culture encourages the development of a qualified candidate pool. Stambough and O'Regan's (2007) study of female nominees for governor finds that a pipeline model is important for understanding why Democratic women win their party's nomination for governor. Within in a state, the number of women holding statewide elective office and

the percentage of state legislators who are women are significant predictors of the nomination of a Democratic woman for governor. However, this is not the case for Republican women, who are more likely to be nominated by their party to act as sacrificial lambs, running in gubernatorial races that they have no chance of winning.

The rational entry model of candidate decisionmaking can help to explain when state legislators will abandon their current seat to run for higher office (Black 1972; Rohde 1979). According to this model, the expected utility derived from a run for higher office is a function of the benefits of holding that office and the probability that the candidate will win office. Only if this expected utility outweighs the costs of running for office will the candidate choose to enter the race. For a functioning political pipeline to exist within a state, the expected utility from running for higher office must regularly outweigh the costs of running. If, for most incumbents, this expected utility is less than the costs, few incumbents will run for higher office and lower offices will not act as a pipeline to higher offices. Similarly, if the expected utility of running for higher office for one group of incumbents outweighs the costs but this is not the case for another group (say, male incumbents compared to female incumbents) a political pipeline will exist for one group but not the other. From this decision calculus we can identify two factors that are necessary conditions for the establishment of a functioning political pipeline for higher office: progressive ambition and a supply of high-quality candidates. These two conditions, the factors that influence them, and how they may differ for men and women incumbents are discussed below.

Progressive Ambition

A functioning political pipeline depends on the presence of ambitious politicians. Ambition is a crucial ingredient for a healthy political system as it helps ensure a steady supply of candidates for elective office and fosters accountability and responsiveness between politicians and their constituents. While ambition is important for explaining legislative behavior and institutional choice, not all legislators manifest the same type of ambition (Schlesinger 1966) nor is ambition static over a person's political career (Fox and Lawless 2011). Schlesinger (1966) identifies three types of political ambition: static, discreet, and progressive. Legislators with static ambition have no desire for higher office, preferring to stay in their current office indefinitely. In contrast, legislators with discreet ambition tend to serve only a short time in the legislature before returning to private life. Finally, legislators with progressive ambition seek to move up the career ladder or hierarchy of offices in their state, running for offices that are deemed more prestigious than the one they currently hold. Studies of political ambition often assume that all politicians have progressive ambition and would prefer higher office if that office could be obtained without cost (Black 1972; Rohde 1979). As Rohde explains: "We assume that if a member of the House, on his first day of service, were offered a Senate seat or a governorship without cost or risk, he would take it" (3, 1979).

The type of ambition that a legislator displays, and thus her career path, is shaped in part by the institutional context in which she serves and vice versa, as state legislators structure institutions to help foster their future career goals. As Hibbing (1991) explains: "Careers are shaped by the institutional context just as they in turn feed back into that context." One factor that influences the type of ambition that a legislator displays is a state's opportunity structure. The opportunity structure is the hierarchy of offices found

in each state or “the proliferation of outlets for political ambition” (Schlesinger 1966, 16). According to Schlesinger these “opportunities arouse expectations and, in turn, give direction to personal ambition” (15). A state’s opportunity structure helps explain why state legislatures come to be populated by members that display similar types of ambition (Squire 1988, 1992). Squire classifies state legislatures into three types, roughly corresponding to Schlesinger’s types of ambition: career, dead-end, and springboard. In Squire’s account, the type of ambition that is most prominent in a legislature depends on the financial incentives to stay in the legislature and the prospects of using that office as a means to achieve other elective positions (1988). In states that have dead-end or citizen legislatures, characterized by low pay for their state legislators and few higher offices to run for, most legislators will exhibit discreet ambition. Legislatures that are classified as springboard legislatures feature high pay, resources for members to perform constituency service and formulate policy, and a hierarchy of offices that members can run for. In this type of legislature, most members will exhibit progressive ambition.

Term limits for state legislators also impact a state’s opportunity structure and, as a result, facilitate progressive ambition in state legislators. Since 1990, 15 states have imposed legislative term limits on members of the house and state senate. Term limits decrease the costs of running for higher office by eliminating the opportunity costs associated with the possibility of retaining one’s former seat (Lazarus 2006; Powell 2000). As Steen (2006) writes: “Forfeiting one’s office is not a sacrifice when one is legally prohibited from doing otherwise” (432). Previous research has found that term limits have not dampened progressive ambition (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2004; Carey, Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell 2006; Heberlig and Leland 2004; Herrick and Thomas

2005) but instead have increased the number of house members running for the state senate (Francis and Kenny 1997, 2000; Lazarus 2006; Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell 2004) and the number of state legislators running for Congress (Powell 2000; Steen 2006).

Despite the long history of research on political ambition, it is only recently that political scientists have begun to investigate the impact of gender on progressive ambition. In an early study, Carroll (1985) refutes the view that men are more ambitious for higher office than women. Looking at survey data from a sample of men and women officeholders, she finds that “women and men were about equally likely to want another term in the office in which they were serving in 1981, to aspire to some other elective or appointive position, and to desire ultimately to serve in a national or state gubernatorial office, thereby reflecting a ‘high’ level of aspiration” (1235). However, more recent studies cast doubt on this finding (Fox and Lawless 2004; Fulton et al. 2006; Maestas et al. 2006; Mariani 2008; Palmer and Simon 2003, 2006). In their study of runs for Congress by state legislators, Maestas et al (2006) find that female state legislators are less likely to run for Congress than male state legislators. They conclude that “female state legislators often face higher family and personal costs associated with moving up and are less likely to be ambitious for a U.S. House seat” (202). This finding is supported by Palmer and Simon’s work on women in Congress (2006, 2003), which finds that women members of the House often do not run for the Senate even when a favorable opportunity presents itself. They report that women run in only 8.5% of the cases where an open Senate seat is available in their state (2003). Similarly, Mariani’s study (2008) of the political pipeline in 5 states finds that male state legislators were more than twice

as likely to run for Congress than female state legislators, although men and women state legislators were equally likely to win their races for Congress. Mariani attributes this disparity in political ambition to individual-level characteristics. The female state legislators in his sample were significantly older, had fewer years of legislative service, and were less likely to be in feeder professions than male state legislators. Likewise, Fulton et al. (2006) report that female state legislators tend to be older than male state legislators, having delayed their entry into state politics until “such a time when their private and public responsibilities were less contradictory” (239). They also report that female state legislators are less likely to view a seat in Congress as desirable, often rating a seat in the state legislature as a more preferable position. This preference for state politics, combined with their age, leads female state legislators to report lower levels of progressive ambition.

Candidate Quality

The second condition necessary for a functioning political pipeline is high-quality candidates that can win their bids for higher offices. Candidate quality refers to those features of a candidate that make him or her attractive to voters. Chief among these features are prior political experience (Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Bond, Fleisher, Talbert 1997; Cox and Katz 1996; Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 2004; Krasno and Green 1988). Candidates who have previously held elective office are more likely to raise campaign money and win seats in the U.S. House and statewide elective office than candidates who lack such experience (Abromowitz 1991; Jacobson 1990; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Krasno and Green 1988; Krasno, Green, and Cowden 1994; Robeck 1982). Researchers see prior political experience as particularly important to

women candidates who might not otherwise appear to voters to be credible candidates. As Duerst-Lahti explains: “Experience in one elected office is seen as providing credentials for other offices. Serving in elected or appointed office at a local level creates credentials for county or state office. For this reason, the number of women who serve in local office is a critical indicator of the number of women who will be seen as credible candidates for higher office” (1998, 15). Yet service in prior political office, particular state legislatures is an asset to all candidates looking to run for higher office. The number of members of Congress who have previously served in their state legislatures has increased over time (Berkman 1993, 1994) making state legislatures “the dominant pathway to the U.S. House” (Maestas et al 2006). This trend is borne out in the recent 2014 election cycle: of the incoming members to the House of Representatives just over half are former state legislators. Numerous studies have noted the importance of service in the state legislature in developing the skills and resources that can be capitalized on when candidates attempt to move to higher office. These include fundraising and campaign experience, cultivating political connections with party leaders, gaining name recognition, performing constituency service, and developing a legislative record (Berkman 1993; Fowler 1993; Francis 1993; Herrnson 1992; Maddox 2003; Maestas 2003; Maestas, Maisel, and Stone 1999, 2005; Squire 1992; Squire and Wright 1990).

While state legislators are generally considered high-quality candidates, it may be the case that men and women state legislators are not viewed as equal in their ability to win higher office by those whose support is necessary for moving up the political pipeline, such as party leaders and voters. Recruitment by party leaders is crucial for encouraging women initially to enter politics (Fox and Lawless 2005; Sanbonmatsu 2002,

2006) as well as for encouraging current legislators to run for higher office (Maestas et al 2006). Studies of candidate recruitment have found that men are more likely than women to be contacted by party leaders about running for office. Despite their success in winning office, party leaders still do not consider women candidates as electorally viable as men candidates. In surveys of party leaders, Niven (1998, 2006) and Sanbonmatsu (2006) find that women are still subject to bias in recruitment. Sanbonmatsu (2006) reports that party leaders are more likely to think that women's electoral success depends on the characteristics of the district she is running in and to think that there are districts that a woman candidate simply cannot win. In contrast, these same party leaders did not believe that there were some districts that men could not win. Similarly, Niven (1998) finds that male party leaders ranked the electoral chances of female candidates lower than female party leaders and preferred male candidates even in states where women have shown that they can win office. He concludes that, "male party chairs will continue to express reluctance to support women regardless of the amount of success women candidates achieve" (73).

Perceptions of electability of male and female candidates are a particular concern in races for statewide office. While women have been successful in increasing their presence in most political offices in the United States, top executive offices such as the presidency or governorship still elude them (Fowler and Lawless 2009; O'Regan and Stambough 2011; Windett 2011). Many scholars have argued that gender stereotyping still plays a detrimental role to women's hopes of being elected to executive office (Duerst-Lahti 2005, 2006). Studies have found that women are thought to be better suited to handle certain policy issues than men and to display character traits that make

them less suitable for some offices (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Falk and Kenski 2006; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993, 1993b; Kahn 1994; Lawless 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Policy issues such as education, poverty, the environment, and health care are frequently viewed as “feminized”, while issues such as the economy, crime, foreign affairs, and business and trade issues are seen as “masculine”. These gender stereotypes about the competencies of men and women lead voters to favor them for different types of offices. Women are seen as better suited for legislative positions while men are favored for executive positions (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b). Surveys have found that voters view men as possessing more of those qualities that are thought necessary for executive office such as being decisive, tough, and able to handle a crisis. These gender stereotypes still exert an influence on women’s likelihood of running for and winning election to state executive office. Fox and Oxley (2003) report that women tend to run for those executive offices that are considered “feminized”, such as Superintendent of Education or State University Regent; 60% of the races in their sample for these types of office had a female candidate. Women are less likely to run for those offices that are considered masculine, such as Governor, Attorney General, and State Auditor, appearing in less than 25% of these races. They also find that variation in the number of “masculine” executive offices in a state accounts for the variation in the number of women who run for executive office across states. States with “more masculine policy-focused offices” tend to have fewer women running for executive office (Oxley and Fox 2004). The rarity of female governors can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy. O’Regan and Stambough (2011) find that being considered a politically

novelty reduces the two-party vote share of female candidates and decreases their likelihood of being elected in gubernatorial elections.

Given the above discussion, I expect the career trajectories of male and female officeholders in the state legislature to be substantially different. Given previous findings that women have lower levels of progressive ambition, I expect women to run for higher office less frequently than men. When women do run for higher office, I expect them to run for different types of offices than men. However when women state legislators do run for higher office I expect them to win at similar rates as men state legislators. I also predict that states will have gendered pipelines for higher office in both the state house and the state senate. Despite facing a similar opportunity structure, I expect men and women in the same state legislature to run for higher office with differing frequencies. Term limits should mitigate this expectation to some extent by encouraging progressive ambition in members regardless of their gender.

Career Moves of Men and Women State Legislators

To collect data on career moves and membership exits, I used information from membership rosters obtained from the Council of State Governments *State Directory—Elective Officials*. This information allowed me to identify those members who were successfully reelected to office and those who had exited their current office. For each member who left office the reason for their exit was coded: retired, defeated in the primary, defeated in the general election, resigned, ran for higher office, died in office, appointed to higher office, ran for lower office, or term-limited. Information on a legislator's reason for leaving office was obtained from state election results and newspaper archives. This paper focuses its attention on runs for Congress and statewide

office by members of the state house and state senate.² It looks at three types of evidence to evaluate whether or not the career patterns of male and female state legislators differ: the individual career moves of members of the lower and upper house, state level measures of progressive ambition (pipeline measures), and the career paths of elected statewide executive offices.

Table 1 displays summary statistics on career exits by members of the house and state senate between 2002 and 2008. In the lower house, 3847 legislators left office during this time; 22.6% of men and 23.1% of women incumbents left the state house for some reason. The most frequent reason for leaving an office in the state house was to run for a higher office. During this time, 29.9% of legislators who left the state house did so in order to run for higher office, while 27.3% of those leaving retired from politics. A slightly larger percentage of women left the lower house to run for higher office compared to men (31.1% of women and 29.9% of men). As a percentage of total lower house membership, 7.2% of all women incumbents and 6.7% of all men incumbents ran for higher office. In the state senates, fewer members left office during this time. Between 2004 and 2008, 824 incumbents left the state senate; 17.2% of men and 17.4% of women serving in the state senate exited the upper house during these three election cycles. Unlike members in the lower house, of those who left the state senate more retired from politics than ran for higher office. 26% of women state senators and 29.2% of men state senators who left the state senate retire from politics. Far fewer members of the upper house manifest progressive ambition than those in the lower house: 16.6% of women state senators and 14% of men state senators who left the upper house entered a

² See Erler (2014) for an analysis of the state-level factors that facilitate progressive ambition in members of the lower house.

race for higher office. This represents only 2.9% of all male state senators and 2.4% of all female state senators. A fair number of state senators exhibit regressive ambition, running for a county-level office or a seat in the lower house of the state legislature. Between 2004 and 2008, 14.3% of men and 7.7% of women who left office do so in order to run for a lower office. Many of these state senators are facing term limits and run for lower office in order to remain in politics.

Progressive Ambition and State Representatives

State representatives are very successful at moving up the career ladder from the state house to the state senate. As Table 2 shows, most members of the lower house who ran for higher office ran for a seat in the state senate. 66.8% of higher office runs by women and 64% of higher office runs by men in the lower house were for the state senate. The success rate of house members running for the state senate is also very high, with 70.6% of all state representatives winning their contest for the state senate. Democratic women performed the best, with a win rate of 72.5% while Republican women performed the worst with a win rate of 67.6%. Republican and Democratic men won at similar rates.

As shown in Table 2, members of the lower house also ran for seats in Congress and statewide executive offices, although with less success. Between 2002 and 2008, 53 women and 183 men ran for these types of positions. Interesting differences emerge in the types of statewide executive office that men and women ran for. Men were more likely to run for governor than women; 18 male incumbents (17% of those who ran for statewide executive office) from the lower house ran for governor compared to just 1 female incumbent. Men were also more likely to run for executive offices that deal with

budget or economic issues. A total of 19 men (17.9%) ran for State Treasurer, State Auditor, or Controller. Only 3 women (10.3%) ran for State Auditor and no woman ran for State Treasurer or Controller. Similarly, men were more likely to run for Attorney General, a position that deals with crime and law and order issues. Only two women (6.9%) ran for Attorney General whereas 15 men (14.2%) ran for this position. Examining runs for Congress, men and women in the lower house ran for a seat in the House of Representatives at similar rates. Of the members of the lower house who ran for statewide executive office and Congress, 45.2% of women and 42.1% of men run for a seat in the House. For women, Republicans were much more likely to run for Congress than Democrats. Of the 24 women lower house members who run for Congress, 15 are Republicans (62.5%) and only 9 (37.5%) are Democrats. Despite these similarities between men and women in running for Congress, men were much more likely to run for a seat in the United States Senate than women, with 11 men running for U.S. Senator and no woman entering a U.S. Senate race. Surprisingly, women lower house incumbents are much more likely to win statewide executive offices than men lower house incumbents but they are less likely than men to win a seat in Congress. Women who ran for statewide elective office from the lower house won in 31% of their races. Men running for these offices from the lower house only won in 19.8% of races. However, this pattern is reversed when we look at runs for the House of Representatives. Only two female lower house incumbents won election to Congress, a mere 8.3% of those who ran. Both of these female winners were Republicans: Thelma Drake (Virginia) and Cathy McMorris (Washington). For male lower house incumbents, however, 37.7% won

election to the House. Contrary to expectations, when women state legislators run for Congress they do not win as frequently as men state legislators.

Similar to other studies, this paper finds that house members in states with term limits display greater levels of progressive ambition than members in states without term limits. Of those lower house incumbents termed out of office, 31.7% decided to pursue another office rather than retire from politics altogether. This rate is similar for men and women, with slightly more term-limited women running for higher office than men (33.3% compared to 31.2%). Of those term-limited house members who ran for higher office, 46.9% won their race. There are differences in the win rates of term-limited men and women. Half of all term-limited women but only 45.0% of term-limited men won their race for higher office. Term-limited legislators who wait at least one election cycle before running for higher office have a greater likelihood of winning. For term-limited women, 58.9% who waited an election cycle before running for higher office won. For term-limited men who waited to run for higher office, 60.5% won. The greater success of former state legislators may signal that these legislators are waiting for favorable electoral conditions before running; for example, delaying a run for state senate until the incumbent state senator is termed out of office.

Progressive Ambition and State Senators

Table 3 provides information on which offices state senators run for and their success in obtaining these positions. Of those state senators who leave office to run for a different office, equal percentages of men and women ran for a seat in the House of Representatives (29.3% of men and 31.1% for women). More women state senators left to run for statewide office; 40% of women compared to 32.7% of men. However, as

expected, men and women state senators ran for different statewide executive positions, although the small numbers in each category make meaningful comparisons difficult. For example, no male state senator ran for Secretary of State, although 2 female state senators do. Similarly, no woman state senator ran for state Attorney General, State Auditor, or Director or Commissioner of a statewide agency during the 3 elections examined here. In contrast, 6 men state senators ran for these positions. Looking at the most prestigious statewide positions reveals that 7 men but only 2 women ran for governor while 4 men and 2 women ran for U.S. Senator.

Not surprisingly, given their experience, state senators are high-quality candidates, who tend to win higher office when they run. In races for statewide executive office, men and women state senators fare similarly. Men won their contests in 40.9% of races, while women won in 42.9% of their races. However, in examining races for the House of Representatives differences in the success rates of men and women emerge. For women state senators who ran for the House, 57% won their race. For men state senators, the rate is only 46.5%. It is unclear what accounts for this difference; it may be the case that women are more strategic in their choice of when to run for higher office, running when they know their chances of winning are greatest. Turning to runs for the U.S. Senate, however, we find that men fare better, although the number of cases is small. Of the four male state senators who ran for U.S. Senate, three win. Of the two women state senators who ran for U.S. Senate, only one wins. No state senator in the sample was successful in his or her bid for the governorship.

While term limits encourage progressive ambition among members of the lower house, they do so in the state senate to a lesser extent. In states with term limits,

interesting gender differences emerge in the success of term-limited men and women state senators at moving to a new office. Both men and women incumbent state senators facing term limits exhibit either progressive or regressive ambition. Of the 155 men who were forced out by term limits, 24.5% sought to run for a new office, with 11.6% running for higher office. Of the 47 term-limited women state senators leaving office, 25.5% sought election to another office, with 14% running for higher office. However, while women facing term limits run for higher office more frequently than men, they have less success in moving up the career ladder. Of the term-limited men seeking higher office, 44.4% won compared with 14.3% of the term-limited women. It is unclear what accounts for this large discrepancy, especially given that women state senators in general were more successful at winning higher office than their male counterparts. However, unlike with members of the House, when we compare the rates of running for higher office between states with and without term limits we do not find evidence that term limits encourage progressive ambition in women state senators. Of those men state senators who left office in states with term limits, whether or not they had served the maximum amount of terms, 15.8% ran for higher office. In states without term limits, 12.9% of men ran for higher office. For women state senators, a higher percentage run for Congress or statewide office from states without term limits than from states with term limits. Of those women who leave office in term-limited states for any reason, only 13% run for higher office. In states without term limits, 17.3% of those who leave the state senate do so to run for higher office.

Not surprisingly, given the greater number of Democratic women compared to Republican women who serve in state legislatures, more Democratic women state

senators ran for higher office than Republican women state senators. But when Republican women run, they tend to be more successful than Democratic women. However, they run for higher office less frequently. Of the 30 female state senators who ran for higher office, more than three-quarters belonged to the Democratic Party. Of these, 43% won election to higher office compared with 57.1% of Republican women state senators. Despite their greater success at winning higher office, Republican women state senators are more electorally vulnerable than Democratic women state senators. Republican women state senate incumbents in this sample won reelection at lower rates than their Democratic counterparts. Republican women running for reelection lost their bids in 56% of cases compared with 44% of cases for Democratic women. Of the 15 women who lose their seats in the primary election, 53% are Republicans and 46% are Democrats. Of the 26 women state senate incumbents who lose in the general election, 58% are Republicans and only 42% are Democrats.

Evaluating the Political Pipeline for Members of the House

The pipeline measures developed here measure the level of progressive ambition manifested by both male and female members of the state legislature. In order to calculate a pipeline measure for women in the lower house, I computed the number of women who ran for higher office each election year over the total number of women in the lower house. This was done for both men and women in every state in the upper and lower house for each election in the sample. The average for the three Senate elections and the four House elections is presented in the Appendix and analyzed here. Choosing the number of women (or men) in the lower house (or state senate) as the denominator for this measure allows us to see how ambitious women (or men) are as a group within that

state. This most closely captures the idea of a pipeline. Looking simply at the number of women who run for higher office fails to control for the number of women in the legislature. Using as the denominator the total number of seats in the house also presents problems. Doing this artificially caps the pipeline measure for women. For example, in a lower house with 100 seats comprised of 10 women and 90 men, if all 10 women ran for higher office along with 10 men both groups would have pipeline measure of 10%. This fails to give an accurate representation of the level of progressive ambition among women in this legislature and does not capture the differences in progressive ambition between men and women. Although both groups have the same pipeline measure, the women in this imaginary lower house exhibit greater ambition for higher office. Calculating the pipeline measures by using the number of women (or men) in the body as the denominator captures this disparity. It would give a pipeline measure of 100% for the women in this state and only 11.1% for the men

There is considerable variation among states in whether or not a pipeline for higher office exists for members of the lower house and whether that pipeline is gendered. In the lower house, there are no states that have an average pipeline measure of 0% for their male incumbents. In every state in the sample, at least one male legislator ran for state senate between 2002 and 2008. This is not the case for women. Two states—New Mexico and South Carolina—do not have a single woman legislator run for state senate during this time. Neither of these states have high pipeline measures for their male legislators either, but at least male legislators have used service in the lower house as a steppingstone to higher office. Secondly, if we disaggregate pipeline measures by party, some states clearly have functioning pipelines for women in one party but not for

women in the other party. While it is typically the Democratic Party that has a functioning pipeline for women, this is not always the case. Of the states in the sample, 5 have an average pipeline measure of 0% for Democratic women and 10 have an average pipeline measure of 0% for Republican women. This indicates that 17 states, or 41.5% of the states in the sample, have nonfunctioning political pipelines for women of at least one party. In contrast, no state had an average pipeline measure of 0% for Democratic men and only 3 states had a pipeline measure of 0% for Republican men (7.3% of the sample). If we look at states that have highly functioning pipelines, defined as having a pipeline value for women in every election, we see that no state meets this definition for both Republican and Democratic women and only four states have a highly functioning pipeline for Democratic women (California, Missouri, Montana, and Oregon). These states had average pipeline measures ranging from 5.4 to 18.1% for their Democratic women. Three of these states also have term limits. For men, 4 states have functioning pipelines for Democratic men while 9 states had functioning pipelines for Republican men. A total of 5 states had functioning pipelines for both Democratic men and Republican men. Again, term limits makes a difference for progressive ambition; all five states with functioning pipelines for men of both parties are states with term limits (California, Maine, Missouri, Montana, South Dakota).

Figures 1 and 2 present a typology of state legislatures based on their pipeline measures and level of turnover for both men and women in the lower house. States with high progressive ambition and high turnover correspond to Squire's springboard states. States with low progressive ambition and low turnover are akin to career legislatures. Finally, citizen legislatures are characterized by low levels of progressive ambition and

high levels of turnover. First, these figures show that men and women legislators do not have the same career paths within states. Some states that would be classified as career legislatures if we focused solely on the behavior of male legislators are classified as citizen legislatures if we look at the career paths of women in the lower chamber. For example, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin are all states that are classified as citizen legislatures for women but career legislatures for men. Similarly, Washington and Ohio are counted as springboard legislatures for male incumbents but only citizen legislatures for female incumbents. Secondly, these figures demonstrate the importance of term limits in promoting progressive ambition among members of the lower house. Almost every state with term limits is classified as a springboard state for both men and women.

Evaluating the Political Pipeline for State Senators

Unlike members of the state lower house, state senators are less likely to run for higher office. Consequently, a greater number of states lack political pipelines for members of the state senate. This is not surprising given that the pool of higher offices available for state senators to run for is substantially smaller than it is for members of the lower house. However, as Figures 3 and 4 show, more states have functioning political pipelines for male state senators than for female state senators. Of the states in the sample, 35 have at least one male state senator run for higher office between 2004 and 2008. Only 15 states had at least one female state senator run for higher office during this time. Very few states have healthy pipelines for their state senators. For men, only three states have a state senator run for higher office every election cycle (California, Georgia, and Ohio). For women, only one state can make this claim: Georgia. If we

relax the standard for a healthy pipeline and include states that have one member running for higher office in two out of the three elections examined here, we see more qualify. For men, 12 states have a healthy pipeline under this definition. For women, only 2 states meet these criteria (Colorado and North Carolina). Overall, only two states have healthy pipelines for both men and women state senators: Georgia and North Carolina. Comparing the states with the highest pipeline measures for men and women in the senate reveals little overlap. For women, the states with the highest measure are California, Georgia, Missouri, Nevada, and North Carolina. For men the top states are Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Oregon, and Ohio.

The average senate pipeline measure for men and women are identical: 2.5%. This, however, masks substantial variation between the pipelines for men and women within a state. The average difference between the pipeline measures for men and women within the states is 3.7%. For some states, the difference is quite large. For example, in Ohio the average pipeline measure for men is 8.4%; for women it is 0. This is clearly a state that has different career patterns for its male and female state legislators. However, in some states the women state senators display more progressive ambition than their male counterparts. For example, in North Carolina the average pipeline measure for women was 19% compared with only 3.1% for men. In this state, women see the state senate as a springboard for running for higher office whereas the men do not. In most states, though, neither men nor women are using the state senate to launch future political careers. Pipeline measures for both genders are low. In four states, no men or women state senator ran for higher office during this time: Alaska, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Utah. In an additional 19 states, no women state senator ran for higher

office during these three election cycles. There are only 2 states where women state senators run for higher office but men state senators do not: Indiana and Nevada. As a whole, states with term limits do not seem to have higher pipeline measures for women than states without term limits. In some states, term limits do seem to promote progressive ambition among women state senators. In California, for example, 11.1% of women, on average, run for higher office each election. Missouri's pipeline measure for women is similarly high at 9.5%. However, in other states with term limits few women state senators run for higher office. In five states with term limits--Arkansas, Maine, Ohio, Oklahoma, and South Dakota—the average pipeline measure for women is 0%.

Career Paths of State Executive Officials

The final piece of data this paper examines to assess the differences in career patterns between men and women is the paths to office taken by those individuals who currently hold top elective executive positions in the states. If state legislatures truly act as pipelines funneling women and men to higher statewide executive offices, we would expect to find that many of these officeholders had previously served in the state legislature. The sample examined here consists of all female executives who held the position of governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, or state treasurer in 2015. There were a total of 46 women in these positions. To compile a set of comparable male office holders, I compared these women to the previous holder of their office if that individual were male. This yielded a sample of 29 men as a comparison group. This approach holds state-level factors constant, including a state's opportunity structure. The data compiled here reveal that women take a different route to executive office than men. Women elected to executive office were much more likely to have

served in the state legislature than men. Of the women officeholders in this sample, 45.7% had served either in the state house or the state senate sometime during their political career. Of the men officeholders, only 24.1% had served in the state legislature before being elected to executive office. Women are also more likely to hold statewide office before being elected governor. Of the 6 female governors in the sample, 3 had held statewide office previously and one had been a member of Congress. Of the 6 men who preceded these women as governor, none had held statewide executive office and only 2 had been in Congress, one as a member of the House of Representatives (Mark Sanford, South Carolina) and the other as a U.S. Senator (Lincoln Chaffee, Rhode Island). Men were also more likely to be mayors before being elected to statewide executive office. In the sample, 17.2% of male officeholders had been elected mayor previously while none of the women had ever held that position.

Conclusion

This paper has presented data on the different routes that men and women take to statewide executive office. It has also evaluated the extent to which a political pipeline for higher office exists in the states for both men and women. It finds that there are distinct career paths for male and female legislators. For the majority of the states, service in the state assembly or state senate provides a springboard for higher office for male legislators but not female legislators. Overall, there are very few states that can be characterized as having functioning pipelines for both male and female legislators. Further research is needed to explain why variations exist among the states and why some consistently funnel women to higher office while others do not. In looking at the move

from the state assembly to the state senate, the presence of legislative term limits is a large part of the explanation. However, when focusing on the state senate, legislative term limits do little to account for whether or not women state senators run for higher office. This paper also finds that women state legislators run for higher office at rates similar to men. While previous studies have argued that female politicians exhibit lower levels of ambition than male politicians, this study finds the opposite. However, men and women state legislators run for different statewide executive offices. Consistent with prior research, this paper finds that women are more likely to run for those offices that are “feminized”. It also finds that men and women do not win office at similar rates. Women in the state lower house win their races for Congress less frequently than men in the state lower house; while women state senators win their races for Congress more frequently than men in the state senate. However, they are more likely than men to lose their race for statewide executive office. Further research is needed to explain what accounts for these differences.

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Table 1: Exits from the State House and State Senate, 2002 to 2008

	State House		State Senate	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Primary loss	8.0	6.8	7.2	8.3
General loss	14.1	15.6	12.1	14.4
Term-Limited	21.1	22.6	24.1	26
Higher Office	29.5	31.2	14	16.6
Appointed Office	2.4	2.2	4.5	4.4
Retired	27.5	26.6	29.2	26
Resigned	2.5	1.1	5.0	2.2
Died	2.3	2.1	3.4	2.8

Notes: Numbers in cells are percentages.

Senate data is from 2004 to 2008

Table 2: Runs for Higher Office by Members of the House, 2002 to 2008

Office	Men		Women	
	Run	Win	Run	Win
State Senate	64% (557)	69.5% (387)	66.8% (185)	69.7% (129)
House of Reprs	8.9% (77)	37.7% (29)	8.7% (24)	8.3% (2)
Statewide	12.2% (106)	19.8% (21)	10.5% (29)	31% (9)

Statistics on runs for county, judicial, and other lower offices are not included

Table 3: Runs for Office by State Senators, 2004 to 2008

Office	Men		Women	
	Run	Win	Run	Win
House of Reprs	29.3 % (43)	46.5% (20)	31.1% (14)	57% (8)
Statewide	32.7% (48)	37.5% (18)	40% (18)	27.8% (5)
Lower House	14.3% (21)	76.2% (16)	8.9% (4)	75% (1)

Statistics on runs for county, judicial, and other lower offices are not included

Figure 1: Typology of States by Pipeline Measures (Women)

High Progressive Ambition, Low Turnover		High Progressive Ambition, High Turnover	
Tennessee*		Alaska Arizona Arkansas California Colorado Florida Maine Michigan	Missouri Montana New Jersey Oregon South Dakota Utah* West Virginia*
Low Progressive Ambition, Low Turnover		Low Progressive Ambition, High Turnover	
Connecticut Delaware Hawaii* Illinois Indiana Iowa*	Kentucky Massachusetts New Mexico New York North Carolina* Texas*	Georgia Idaho Kansas Minnesota Nevada Ohio* Oklahoma	Pennsylvania* Rhode Island South Carolina* Virginia* Washington* Wisconsin*

* indicates differences between men and women legislators

Figure 2: Typology of States by Pipeline Measures (Men)

High Progressive Ambition, Low Turnover		High Progressive Ambition, High Turnover	
		Alaska Arizona Arkansas California Colorado Florida Maine Michigan	Missouri Montana New Jersey Ohio Oregon South Dakota Washington
Low Progressive Ambition, Low Turnover		Low Progressive Ambition, High Turnover	
Connecticut Delaware Illinois Indiana Kentucky Massachusetts New Mexico	New York Pennsylvania South Carolina Virginia Wisconsin	Georgia Hawaii Idaho Iowa Kansas Minnesota Nevada	North Carolina Oklahoma Rhode Island Tennessee Texas Utah West Virginia

Figure 3: State Pipelines Measures for Men State Senators, 2002 to 2008

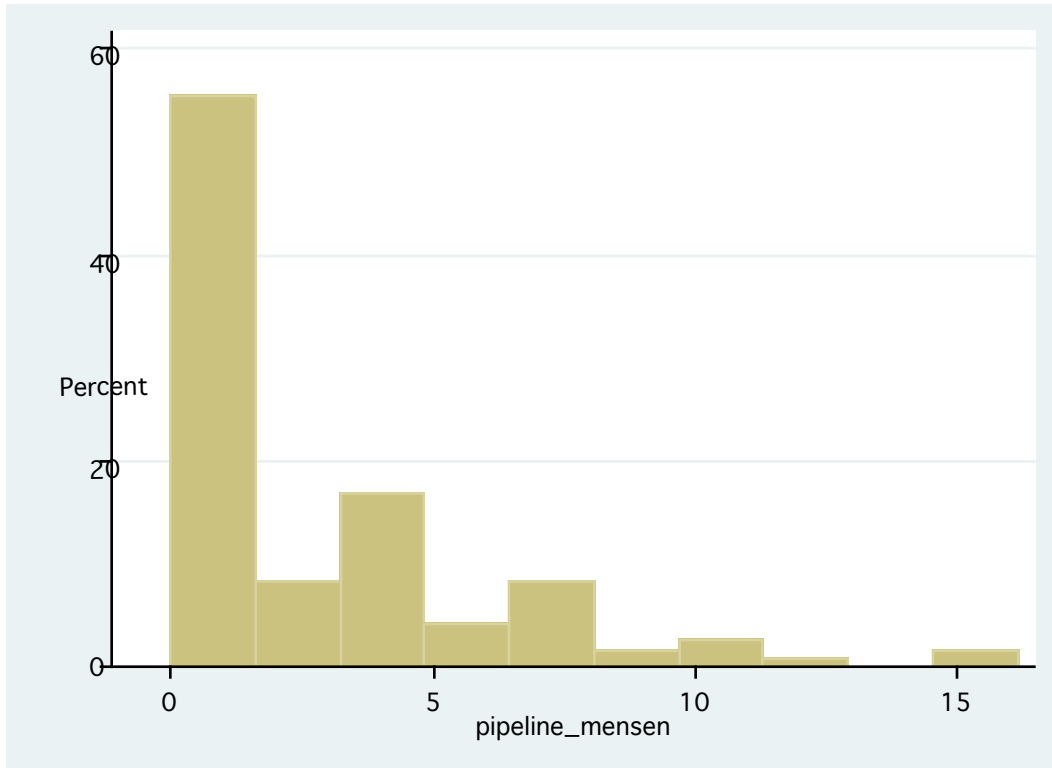


Figure 4: State Pipeline Measures for Women State Senators, 2002 to 2008

