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TERM LIMITS AND THEIR EFFECT ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN STATE LEGISLATURES: A CASE STUDY

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The use of term limits in state legislatures has been an increasingly popular trend over the last two decades. Many advocates suggest that term limits will increase the opportunities available for women in gaining seats and leadership positions within legislatures. Using a case-study methodology involving six pairs of similar term-limited and non-term-limited states, the author finds that term limits have had little effect on women's progress in state leadership. The author recommends further study in this area, as most term-limit laws are in their relative infancy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1990 a new movement began to sweep across the nation that carried the promise of changing the political face of many state governments forever; term limits. In that year, the citizens in three states – California, Colorado, and Oklahoma – passed initiatives that limited the number of terms their state legislators could serve. These states led the way in what would become a rapidly growing movement whose momentum only increased over the next six years. By 1996, a total of twenty-one states had adopted term limits, all but two by citizen initiatives. While five of these states have since repealed them,¹ there are currently sixteen that still impose them.²

A great debate has surrounded what the consequences of term limits will be for state legislatures. Despite voters' intentions to limit legislators' length of service, the changes to the political landscape in many states have gone far beyond merely limiting the years any individual legislator may hold office. The cumulative effects may be far-reaching over time and will be, no doubt, studied extensively. There is speculation that besides limiting political careerism, term limits will have other effects, such as producing declines in legislative expertise and rises in individualism (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2000). In addition, they may help create more diverse legislatures with increased opportunities for minorities and women (Thompson and Moncrief 1993; Carroll and Jenkins, 2001). The latter assertion presents an intriguing area of study.

Although research has and will continue to focus on how term limits affect the number of women legislators, this paper will explore the less-considered possibility that term limits make leadership positions more accessible to women within state legislatures. While considering overall numbers of female legislators is important, exploring the possibility that term limits might help women capture positions of power deserves more attention from scholars. This paper will address whether the decreased reliance on seniority and legislative experience inherent with term limits actually increases women's chances to assume leadership posts and committee chairmanships in their respective chambers. Through a comparison of six term-limited states with six similar nonterm-limited states, this study will

¹ Idaho, Massachusetts, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

² Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

explore the hypothesis that – over time – these limits permit women greater opportunities to acquire legislative leadership positions.

II. TERM LIMIT LEGISLATION: BACKGROUND

The idea of limiting the number of terms a legislator serves is not new in the United States. In fact, the Articles of Confederation restricted representatives to serving only three years in office.³ In their early history, many states initially limited the terms of their executives as well (Straayer 2003).

How the recent term limit movement gathered such impressive momentum has been the subject of much analysis. During the 1980s and 1990s, big government was seen as suspect and many advocated that more power should be returned to the people. Direct democracy mechanisms such as the term limit initiative became increasingly popular to accomplish these ideals. Twenty-four states have an initiative process permitting amendments to state constitutions to be placed on election ballots. The citizens then vote on each initiative to establish it as law. Enacting term limits became an exciting exercise of popular governance around the nation. In fact, in the sixteen states that currently have term limit laws, all of the measures were enacted by citizen initiatives except one.⁴

The recent trend of establishing term limits came at a period of heightened government mistrust culminating in an anti-incumbent public sentiment (Straayer 2003). High reelection rates helped fuel the movement and raised hopes that term limits would increase electoral competition and help level the playing field. Proponents advocated term limits to contain professional politicians' accumulation of a greater power base and encourage an increase in citizen legislators. However, many supporters also promoted term limits as a useful tool for increasing electoral opportunities for women and minority candidates. By creating more open seats, term limits might allow underrepresented groups such as women to capture more legislative offices.

Although the term limit movement has produced dramatic results in state legislatures, it was originally aimed at the United States Congress. Twenty-three states had approved term

³ Articles of Confederation, Article IV. March 1, 1781.

⁴ In Louisiana there is no citizen initiative process. In 1995, the Legislature put a term limits measure on the ballot which the public approved in a referendum.

limits for their members of Congress when the United States Supreme Court decision, *U.S. Term Limits, Inc. v. Thornton*, 514 U.S. 779 (1995), invalidated these measures. Two years later, the U.S. House of Representatives attempted to pass a constitutional amendment that limited terms to twelve years for both the House and the Senate (Kennedy and Rusesky 1997). Receiving only a simple majority, however, the measure failed to garner the necessary two-thirds vote. When this vote failed, the term limit movement for state legislatures was still alive and well, but in Congress it had effectively become a dead issue.

The state-level term limit movement has had a history of great momentum. In a period of ten years, twenty-three states enacted such restrictions, five of which have since been repealed. This dramatic change began with California, Colorado, and Oklahoma in 1990. Two years later, term-limit ballot initiatives passed in eleven additional states.⁵ Over the next four years, six more states followed suit.⁶ While judiciaries and legislatures have repealed these measures in five states, the transformation of the political landscape has still been remarkable. Today nearly a third of the nation's state legislators serve under term limits.

III. TERM LIMITS IN THE UNITED STATES: CURRENT STATUS

The specific provisions regarding term limits vary from state to state. Table 1 presents information on the sixteen states with term limits, including the year the restrictions were enacted, when they began impacting elections, and what type of limit has been mandated. Six of these states have lifetime bans for service while ten merely have restrictions on serving consecutive terms. Three states limit House members to six years and Senators to eight. A limit of eight years in both houses has been imposed in nine states including the unicameral legislature of Nebraska. Finally, four states have mandated twelve year restrictions for each house. With each election year, term limits impact more states and more legislators. In 1996, only 52 legislators were ineligible to run for office. In 1998, there were 201. However, two years later in the 2000 election year, that number jumped to 373 officeholders in twelve states (Peery 2000). There are still five states that have enacted measures whose electoral impact will not be felt for several years.

⁵ Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.

⁶ Maine, Idaho, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Utah, and Nevada.

Table 1. Term Limited States and Year of Impact

(The year of impact represents the first year in which incumbents serving when the term limits measure passed will no longer be eligible for reelection.)

State	Year Enacted	House		Senate	
		Limit	Year of Impact	Limit	Year of Impact
MAINE	1993	8	1996	8	1996
CALIFORNIA	1990	6	1996	8	
COLORADO	1990	8	1998	8	1998
ARKANSAS	1992	6	1998	8	2000
MICHIGAN	1992	6	1998	8	2002
FLORIDA	1992	8	2000	8	2000
OHIO	1992	8	2000	8	2000
SOUTH DAKOTA	1992	8	2000	8	2000
MONTANA	1992	8	2000	8	2000
ARIZONA	1992	8	2000	8	2000
* MISSOURI	1992	8	2002	8	2002
OKLAHOMA	1990	12	2004	12	2004
WYOMING	1992	12	2006	12	2006
NEBRASKA	2000	n/a	n/a	8	2006
LOUISIANA	1995	12	2007	12	2007
**NEVADA	1996	12	2010	12	2010

* Because of special elections, term limits were effective in 2000 for eight current members of the House and one Senator in 1998.

**The Nevada Legislative Council and Attorney General have ruled that Nevada's term limits cannot be applied to those legislators elected in the same year term limits were passed (1996). They first apply to persons elected in 1998.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

Term limits were instituted in five additional states, but their measures were judicially or legislatively repealed (these states are listed in Table 2). The legislature repealed the measures in two states while the others were invalidated by the respective State Supreme Courts. These cases reveal the volatility associated with the issue of term limits. While in many states, such as California, term limits are still enjoying great popular support, there is movement in other states to try to challenge them. In fact, bills are currently pending in five

states to either increase the number of years a legislator may serve under term limits⁷ or repeal them altogether.⁸

Table 2. States with Repealed Term Limit Laws

State	Year Repealed	Year Enacted	Repealed By
MASSACHUSETTS	1997	1994	State Supreme Court
WASHINGTON	1998	1992	State Supreme Court
OREGON	2002	1992	State Supreme Court
IDAHO	2002	1994	Legislature
UTAH	2003	1994	Legislature

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

Notably, recent research reveals that the public popularity term limits enjoy is not reflected among state legislators. According to a recent 2003 Pew Center on the States Survey, term limits are currently highly unpopular with legislators (Princeton Survey Research Associates, Inc. 2003). That research found that 79% of legislators do not believe term limits promote healthy change in the legislature, nor do they think term limits work as they were intended. Interestingly, there does not seem to be a difference in sentiment between legislators who serve under term limits and those who do not. State legislators in states with limits view them as negatively as those in states without, 77% vs. 80% (Princeton 2003).

IV. PAST STUDIES OF TERM LIMITS AND THE EFFECTS ON WOMEN

The focus of this paper is to determine how these new legislative restrictions affect women, especially in the area of leadership roles. Most research has focused on the changes in the number of women elected in term-limited states. Carroll and Jenkins (2001) have conducted one of the most comprehensive studies in this area. They analyzed the 1998 and 2000 state legislative elections in term-limited states and found that the existence of greater

⁷ Arizona (SCR 1004), Arkansas (HJR 1001), Montana (SB 204), and South Dakota (SJR 1). Source: National Conference of State Legislatures.

⁸ Montana (SB 1) and Wyoming (HB 157). Source: National Conference of State Legislatures.

opportunity offered by term limitations did not necessarily lead to an increase in women officeholders. Despite optimistic expectations, their work revealed that the number of women in term-limited house seats actually declined following the 1998 and 2000 elections. More women were forced out of office by term limits than were re-elected to the seats being vacated because of limits. In the six states that had term limits in 1998,⁹ 47 female incumbents were term-limited out while only 43 were elected to those seats that were open as a result of term limits. The 2000 state house elections produced a similar result in the then eleven states¹⁰ with legislation affecting reelection: 70 women were termed out whereas only 65 women won election to seats that opened up because of term limits (Carroll and Jenkins 2001).

While these statistics show what happened to the legislative seats affected by term limits, women in the term-limited states were able to offset these results by winning races in which they defeated incumbents or earned seats otherwise vacated. Thus, after the 1998 elections, women still held the same number of house seats, 145, which they held earlier in the six states affected by term limits. In the following state house elections in 2000, women increased their representation in the eleven term-limited states from 265 seats to 271. The senate races produced different results in these same two election years. In 1998, the number of women winning term-limited senate seats increased, whereas the number remained the same in 2000. Carroll and Jenkins (2001) argue that women fared better in these senate races because of a “pipeline” effect in which the house created a strong candidate pool and subsequently channeled them into senate races.

While term limits may be opening up new opportunities in state legislatures, Carroll and Jenkins’ research reveals that they are also removing many currently established female officeholders. The election of new female legislators to these term-limited seats is failing to – or barely keeping pace with – the number of those leaving because of term limitations. This paper attempts to complement current research by investigating another area in which term limits might affect women legislators’ leadership opportunities. By removing the disproportionately male long-term incumbents who have historically held these positions, it seems logical that women would now have greater access to these leadership roles. This

⁹ Arkansas, California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, and Oregon.

¹⁰ Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, and South Dakota.

paper investigates the question of whether term limits enable women legislators to hold more leadership positions in their respective chambers.

V. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study examines the effects of term limits on female legislative leadership roles in six of the earliest states affected by term limits compared to six similar states without term limits. It is only recently, as more states' term limits have gone into effect, that sufficient data has become available to enable analysis of the effect they have on women's opportunities in state legislatures. Although passed in 1990, the first forced legislative retirements did not happen until 1996 – and only in the states of California and Maine. Thus, 1998 offers the first chance to analyze the impact of term limits across multiple states in more than one election. Of the current term-limited states, by 1998 there were only five that had impacted the election of state legislators. Five more states experienced term limit effects in the 2000 elections. All six states used in this study had elections impacted by term limit provisions in the 2000 elections.

The project's design is a case study of six term-limited states and six similarly matched nonterm-limited states. Six of the earliest states to enact term limits were selected to allow the greatest amount of observable effects over time. In addition, these states were chosen in an attempt to represent diverse geographical regions. The term-limited states included in this study are: California, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Michigan, and Ohio. All major regions of the country are represented except the Northwest. The difficulty including this region, however, stems from the fact that four of the six states there that had established term limits have since repealed them¹¹ (See Table 2). Another state, Wyoming, enacted term limits in 1992, but these measures will not have an impact until the elections of 2006. The final northwestern term limited state of Montana was not selected because of the absence of a complementary nonterm-limited northwestern state and the fact that the legislature meets biennially.

¹¹Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

The states were matched based on various attributes such as geographical location, type of legislature, and population.¹² A complete description of similar characteristics is detailed in Appendix A. The paired states were then compared on two different dimensions: the difference in the percentage of women holding legislative leadership positions and committee chairmanships. The analysis reveals how many of these positions of leadership are held by women as compared to men in each state. This research investigates how the introduction of term limits in a state affects women's leadership opportunities over time by comparing them to the number of women holding those positions in nonterm-limited states over the same time period.

The second dimension takes the first comparison's percentages of women in these leadership positions and weights them by how many women legislators serve in each individual state. Investigating the number of women in leadership positions in comparison to how many women actually serve in that state's legislature enhances our understanding of the term limits' effects. Taking into account the actual number of women legislators in a state helps reveal whether women are overrepresented or underrepresented in leadership roles compared to their numbers in the state legislature. Thus, the final analysis examines the changes in the number of women legislators holding leadership positions in these paired states in relation to the number of women serving in the respective legislatures.

VI. STATE DESCRIPTIONS

One of the main considerations in the selection of states is geographical location. Another important criterion was the extent of the state legislature's professionalization. Political scientists have operationalized this concept by examining features such as the size of legislative staff employed, the salary of legislators and the length of the legislative session. Legislatures range from highly professionalized to hybrids to citizen legislatures depending on the values these factors hold within the state. Roughly half of the fifty states can be classified in the middle as hybrids with the trend leaning towards greater professionalization (Rosenthal and Jones 2002). Median household income was also considered an important factor for the final pairings.

¹² Paired states are: California and Texas, Colorado and New Mexico, Florida and North Carolina, Maine and Vermont, Michigan and Illinois, Ohio and Pennsylvania (term limited states are listed first).

California enacted term limits in 1990 that began to impact house elections in 1996 and the senate in 1998. As one of the most populous states, it was paired with Texas, the only other western state that rivaled its population size and diversity. Both states have large urban centers with significant minority populations. There is a difference in the professionalization of their legislatures since California is highly professionalized and Texas a hybrid; however, they both have a similar number of legislative staff – over 2,400 each. Their sheer size and population similarities made them a logical choice for this comparison.

Colorado also enacted term limits in 1990 that affected elections in both chambers in 1998. It is paired with New Mexico because the latter is one of the few western states that has not imposed term limits. These states are in close proximity and have similar population size. Colorado's legislature is classified as a hybrid while New Mexico's is considered a citizen legislature. However, one of the main reasons for New Mexico's "citizen legislature" classification is because it is one of five states that use a constitutionally-set legislative salary of \$136 per diem.

Term limits were established in Florida in 1992 but did not impact elections until 2000. While Florida is much more populous, North Carolina was chosen as a southern comparison state because its metropolitan areas parallel Florida's more diverse urban population. Both states have hybrid legislatures with extremely close household incomes.

Maine instituted legislative term limits in 1993 that affected the elections in both houses three years later. Vermont was selected for comparison because both states have citizen legislatures with extremely similar characteristics. They are also among the states with the smallest populations in the nation and have comparable household incomes.

Michigan instituted term limits in 1992 which began affecting elections in 1998. It is paired with Illinois because of similar population size and analogous large metropolitan urban areas containing diverse minority and ethnic populations. In addition, these states have comparable household incomes and professionalized legislatures.

Ohio enacted term limit legislation in 1992, but they did not begin affecting elections until 2000. It is compared with Pennsylvania because of comparable population size and close proximity. Both states have professionalized legislatures and extremely close household income levels.

VII. DATA AND METHODS

Information crucial to this study was acquired from several sources. The current status of term limits and their state-by-state provisions was secured from the National Council of State Legislatures (“Term Limited States” 2003). The classification of legislatures including professionalization, salaries, and staffing levels came from the work of Hamm and Moncrief (1999). The U.S. Census Bureau provided the demographic data used such as population and median income for state comparisons.

An invaluable source of data concerning information on women state legislators was the Center for American Women and Politics (“CAWP”). When requested, CAWP made available their biannual reports entitled: “Women State Legislators: Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs.” From these documents, the number of women holding legislative positions of leadership could be computed for the first stage of this analysis. One problem with this data, however, is that CAWP no longer has 1995 results available, creating a gap in the data because that year’s statistics are not represented.

The CAWP data lists separately the number of women leaders and committee chairs by year. Leadership positions included in the CAWP data are: senate presidents and presidents pro tempore; house speakers and speakers pro tempore; and majority and minority leaders of each chamber as stated in *State Legislative Leadership, Committees & Staff* (CAWP 1991-2003). Included in the figures of committee chairs are: chairs and co-chairs of all senate, house, and joint standing committees, as well as the chairs and co-chairs of joint statutory committees and commissions that are listed in *State Legislative Leadership, Committees & Staff*. Legislators chairing joint committees were counted as committee chairs for their respective chamber.

For this analysis, the number of available legislative leadership positions and committee chairs of both chambers in each state were added together to arrive at one number that accounted for both dimensions in each state. The number of women legislators holding those positions was then divided by that greater number to calculate the percentage of women in that state holding leadership positions ($\% \text{ women in leadership divided by } \% \text{ women in legislature} = \text{weighted measure of women in leadership}$). These computations were performed for each of the twelve states for each year of the study. The percentages of the

term-limited states were then compared individually to the percentages of the nonterm-limited comparison state. Figures 1 through 6 represent these comparisons.

In a second analytical step, the percentages of women in leadership positions were weighted by the number of women that served in the entire legislature. The first percentage was divided by the actual number of women legislators serving in that state ($\% \text{ women in leadership} \div \% \text{ women in legislature} = \text{weighted measure of women in leadership}$). This calculation provides a measure to evaluate the amount of women holding leadership roles. The resulting number would be greater than one if women were overrepresented in these leadership positions in comparison to their numerical presence within the legislature, and it would be less than one if they were underrepresented. These calculations were also performed for all twelve states for each year with the results of each pair of states compared to the other. The results of these calculations can be found in figures 7 through 12.

VIII. FINDINGS: TERM LIMITS AND THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN POSITIONS OF POWER

The focus of this research has been to gauge the impact of term limits on women's opportunities to obtain legislative positions of leadership. The results suggest that the impact of term limits is quite limited. Overall, women legislators gained more leadership positions and committee chairmanships in only half of the six term-limited states when compared to the paired nonterm-limited states. In other words, women in states with term limits increased more in leadership numbers than nonterm-limited states in only half of the states, while women in states without term limits gained more than the term-limited states in the other half. The results reveal fairly equal outcomes for women gaining leadership positions in both term-limited and nonterm-limited states. In general, term limits did not seem to help in the creation of greater leadership opportunities for women.

The detailed comparisons between paired states are presented in Figures 1 through 6 in Appendix B. The graphs show the term-limited states' percentages of women in leadership (these percentages are represented by broken lines). The lines are bolded for the year immediately preceding the first election impacted by term limits through 2003 to help visualize the time period of the analysis. The electoral years affected by term limits are

Table 3.

STATES	% CHANGE IN WOMEN LEGISLATORS FROM PRETERM LIMIT YEAR TO 2003
California*	+27.8
Texas	+ 7.6
Colorado*	+ 7.7
New Mexico	+17.7
Florida*	+ 4.3
North Carolina	+ 2.0
Maine*	- 13.1
Vermont	+11.7
Michigan*	+ 1.2
Illinois	- 0.5
Ohio*	- 7.7
Pennsylvania	- 2.0
<i>*States with term limits.</i>	

represented by larger circular symbols.

These highlighted years represent the time span immediately before term limits impacted a state and the time following when any numerical change might have been related to term limits.

Table 3 at the left presents the change in percentages of women legislators in leadership positions in the paired states. Only in California, Florida, and Michigan did women gain a greater percentage of leadership positions and committee chairs in a term-limited state compared to one without such limits. In the term-limited states of Colorado, Maine and Ohio, women in the paired nonterm-limited states fared better.

Women legislators in the latter states made greater gains or fewer losses in these time periods.

In this analysis, there are two noteworthy states with gains or losses. The first is the significant gain in the percentage of women legislators achieved in California – a gain of more than 20% in ten years. After testing the percentage change in women holding legislative leadership positions for all six term-limited states between 1991 and 2003, California is the only one whose gain was statistically significant (the results of these tests can be found in Appendix B). California's term limits began impacting elections in 1996 and women's gains in leadership positions have steadily risen ever since.

In 1993, the first pre-term-limit year contained in the data, women held 13.2% of these positions. However, in 2003, women held 41%. This is an even more remarkable gain considering that 32% of Californian legislators were women in 1993 compared to 27% women in 2003. Thus, while the quantity of female legislators has decreased over this time

period, the number of leadership positions they hold has tripled. Term limits may well have helped influence such an outcome, especially considering that in Texas, California's comparison state, women achieved less than an 8% gain in this same period.

Maine also presents a distinctive case because in 1993, at the beginning of this analysis, women held almost 42% of the legislative leadership positions even though they only constituted 32% of legislature. This high starting point may have made it more difficult for women to continually gain new leadership positions because they had secured so many already. In addition, if the data from two years earlier were included in the analysis (when women held only 28% of leadership positions), then Maine would have shown almost no change in this area instead of revealing a loss.

The second dimension in the analysis involved measuring the percentage change of women legislators by state, and then weighting those percentages by the number of women serving in each legislature. These calculations produced interesting results. Figures 7 through 12 in Appendix C present the comparison data between paired states. In 2003, all of the term-limited states except Ohio have women represented proportionately in leadership to their legislative presence in those chambers. However, of the nonterm-limited states, women are only proportionately represented in Texas.

Table 4.

California, Florida, and Michigan are the term-limited states in which women showed a gain in leadership positions. Again, women only gained in half of the term-limited states. Thus, results similar to the first analysis were achieved and term limits do not appear to enhance women's chances of gaining leadership positions. However, these results do reveal that the gains women made were greater when one takes into consideration how many women were actually holding office.

The above table shows the leadership gains or losses made by women officeholders in each of the paired states divided by the

STATES	CHANGE IN RATIO OF % WOMEN LEADERS / % IN LEGISLATURE FROM PRETERM LIMIT YEAR TO 2003
California*	+ .79
Texas	+ .26
Colorado*	+ .02
New Mexico	+ .39
Florida*	+ .16
North Carolina	- .02
Maine*	- .42
Vermont	+ .04
Michigan*	+ .04
Illinois	- .16
Ohio*	- .30
Pennsylvania	- .18
<i>*States with term limits.</i>	

percentage of women in each state's legislature. The gains made in California, Florida, and New Mexico are seen to be much greater in this calculation when compared to how many women were serving in these chambers. This additional analysis offers greater understanding regarding the changes that have occurred in these legislatures and how they should be viewed.

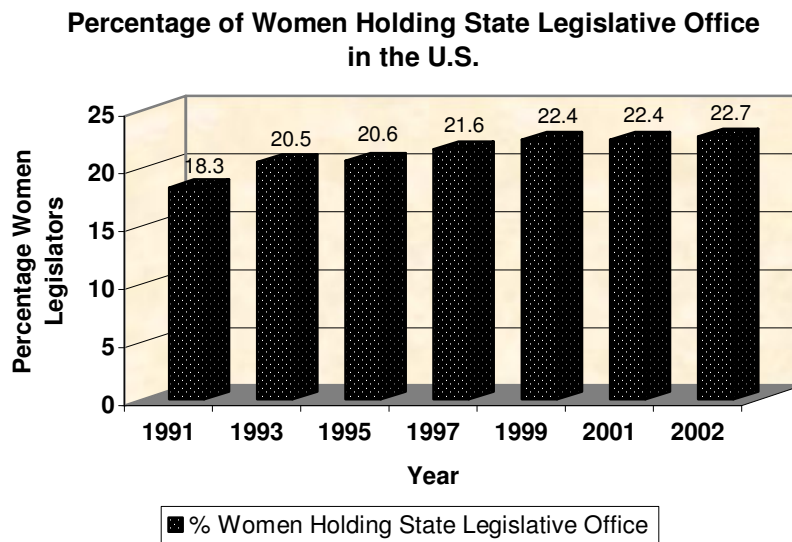
IX. WOMEN IN THE LEGISLATURE: WHAT DIFFERENCES DO THEY BRING TO GOVERNANCE?

An interesting question to consider is why it matters if women are elected as legislators in the first place. Does having women officeholders actually make a difference in policy-making, types of issues championed, or the representation of the female electorate? What dimension, if any, do female policymakers add to legislative decision-making? To take

this analysis further is to consider what difference having women in legislative leadership positions might make in the policy-making process.

The first three women to serve in a state legislature were elected to the Colorado House of Representatives in 1894 (Hamm and Moncrief 1999). Over the last century, the number of women legislators has slowly grown to almost one fourth of all state legislators. In fact, women currently hold only 22.7 percent of state legislative seats.¹³ The growth in the percentage of female legislators in the past decade is shown in Figure A below.

Figure A.



Source: From data from the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP).

Recent research has revealed that women in public office generally take a more active role in advancing legislation that furthers the interests of women (Carroll, 2001). In her comprehensive study of male and female legislators at the federal level, Michele Swers (2002) demonstrates that gender is politically significant and influences legislator's decision-making. Sue Thomas (How Women, 1994) argues that women legislators make a greater difference in policy when their numbers in the chamber reach a certain threshold placing emphasis on women's issues and interests to a greater degree. The research suggests that the presence of

¹³ There are currently 7,382 state legislators, of which 1,641 are women. Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2003.

women legislators may well increase the legislative support and activity on legislation of interest to women.

In her research, Sue Thomas (Women in State, 1994) also found a difference in the conviction held by men and female legislators of the importance of representing women's views in their decision-making. Her research revealed that 57% of the female legislators thought it was important to represent their views, while only 33% of the men thought so. Thomas also suggests that having female legislators helps bring legitimacy to government by not precluding such an important group from seats of power. She asserts that electing women helps broaden the government's agenda and expand the types of new policies that will be considered. Therefore, if female legislators are more active in advocating measures that advance women's issues, then having women in legislative leadership roles will only enhance their capability to do so.

X. CONCLUSION

The goal of this paper is to complement current research concerning the impact of term limits on women state legislators. The results of this analysis *do not* support the hypothesis that term limits enable women legislators to hold more leadership positions in their respective chambers. While it appears that in some states and political climates, such as California, term limits may prove to be very beneficial to women's success and help them capture these positions, in the overall analysis of these states, women seemed to be as successful gaining legislative leadership positions in nonterm-limited states as those with limits.

Although these research findings may not provide strong support for the original hypothesis, it is important to explore what the research can support. This study does not suggest that term limits hinder women legislators from gaining positions of leadership. Women do not appear to be disadvantaged by limits. The fact that these 12 states were evenly divided on whether women were more successful in gaining leadership roles helps demonstrates this.

While the discussion in this paper explores the possible effects term limits may have on women gaining leadership positions, it is also necessary to consider other possible factors that may be at play in the political process. The results varied across these similarly-matched

pairs of states, suggesting that other factors may also be affecting women's opportunities. Aspects of the political system such as a state's political environment, political party structure and the role of state party leaders may have varying levels of influence on women legislators in different states. In addition, the existence and difference between women's organizations and networks in a state may also be an important factor. Even whether or not there is a women's caucus in the legislative chambers might impact the ability and confidence of women to achieve leadership positions.

As term limits take effect in more states over the next few years, the ensuing electoral results will provide abundant suggestions for future research. With each election year, more legislative seats in more states will fall under the restrictions of term limitations. How these measures affect women and other groups deserves more careful academic consideration.

Term limits have brought enormous changes in the political landscape of many states. While they may not always provide greater leadership opportunities for women, they do provide for more frequent turnover of legislative officeholders. Term limits have changed the rules of the game in many ways. Greater research is needed to determine the extent of these changes and their impact on gender representation in legislative leadership positions. With all the political promises, raised expectations, and grassroots enthusiasm connected to the passage of these measures, it is important to discover their true effects and how they may influence state governments and their policymaking in the future.

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Appendix A: Chosen Variables for State Comparison

STATES	Have Term Limits	Type of Legislature*	Ave Annual Salary 97-98*	Annual Session Days (1996)*	Total Staff (1996)*	Total Population**	Households Median household income in 1999**
California	YES	Professional	\$75,600	264	2,610	33,871,648	47,493
Texas	No	Hybrid	\$7,200	70	2,420	20,851,820	39,927
Colorado	YES	Hybrid	\$17,500	119	260	4,301,261	47,203
New Mexico	No	Citizen	\$5,580	45	94	1,819,046	34,133
Florida	YES	Hybrid	\$24,912	66	2,173	15,982,378	38,819
North Carolina	No	Hybrid	\$13,951	125	464	8,049,313	39,184
Maine	YES	Citizen	\$9,000	152	180	1,274,923	37,240
Vermont	No	Citizen	\$8,186	139	58	608,827	40,856
Michigan	YES	Professional	\$51,895	351	1,357	9,938,444	44,667
Illinois	No	Professional	\$47,039	133	1,057	12,419,293	46,590
Ohio	YES	Professional	\$42,427	360	552	11,353,140	40,956
Pennsylvania	No	Professional	\$57,367	347	2,702	12,281,054	40,106

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** U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Appendix B: Significance Tests of Percentage Change of Women in Leadership Positions

STATES	Ratio of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs (1991)	Ratio of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs (2003)	T Statistic	Significant or Not Significant at 5%
California	10/81	25/61	3.932	Significant
Texas	5/51	11/54	0.261	Not Significant
Colorado	9/38	11/30	1.162	Not Significant
New Mexico	2/39	7/28	2.229	Significant
Florida	16/80	8/43	-0.188	Not Significant
N. Carolina	13/77	16/78	0.244	Not Significant
Maine	17/60	12/42	0.026	Not Significant
Vermont	11/45	9/33	0.281	Not Significant
Michigan	22/124	11/48	0.743	Not Significant
Illinois	16/97	11/72	-0.213	Not Significant
Ohio	5/60	5/44	0.508	Not Significant
Pennsylvania	1/60	2/54	0.664	Not Significant

Appendix C: State Comparison Charts of Women Holding Leadership Positions

Figure 1. California and Texas: Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs: 1991-2003

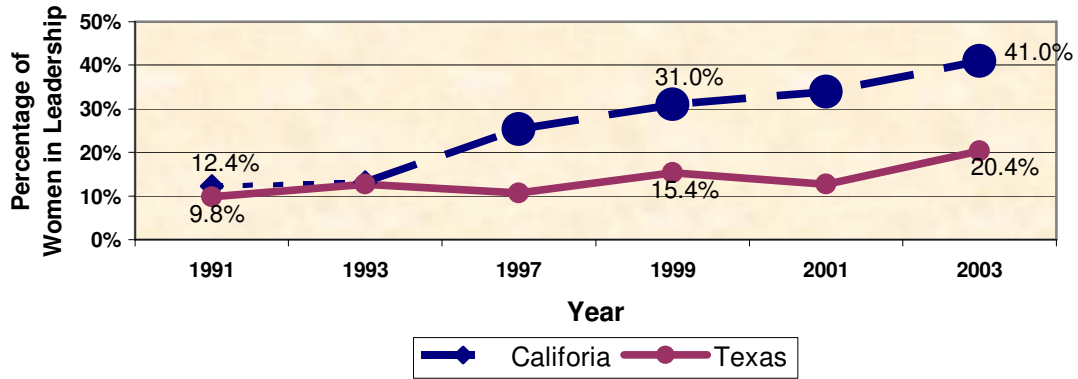


Figure 2. Colorado and New Mexico: Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs: 1991-2003

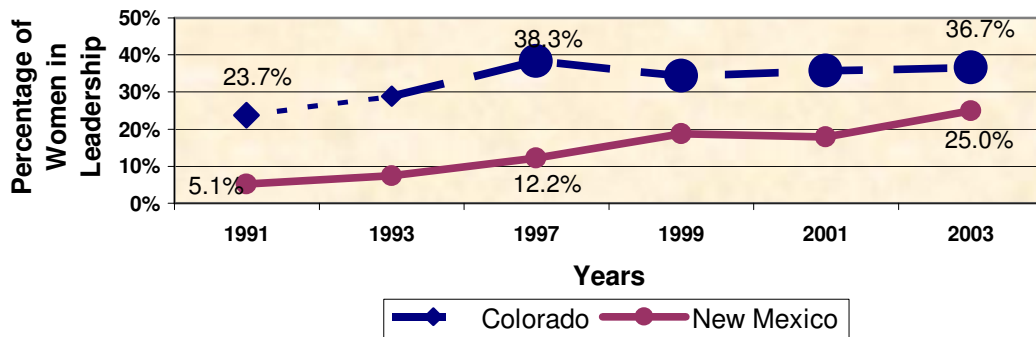
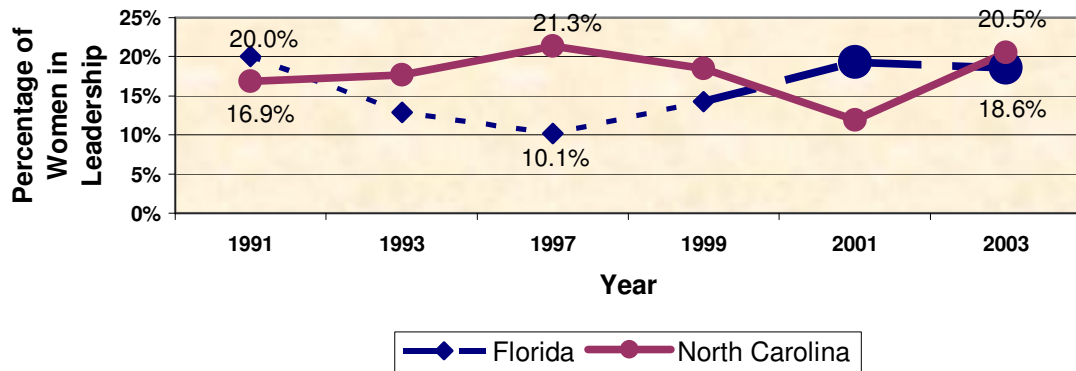


Figure 3. Florida and North Carolina: Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs: 1991-2003



Appendix C (continued)

Figure 4. Maine and Vermont: Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs: 1991-2003

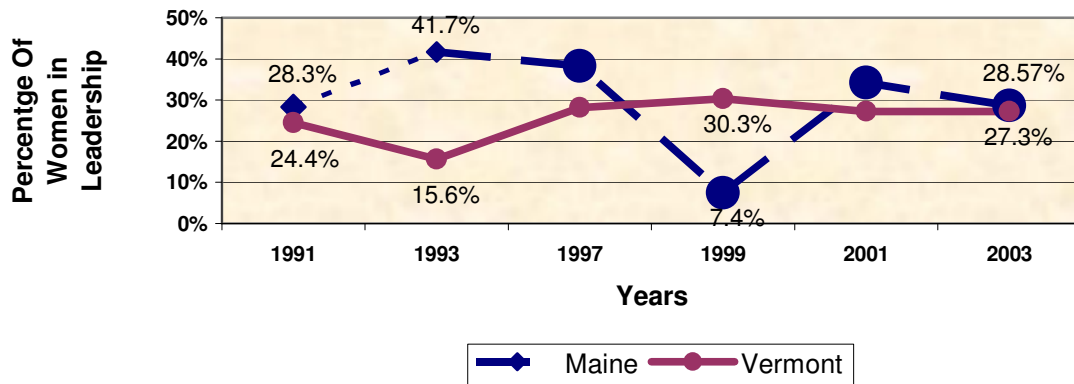


Figure 5. Michigan and Illinois: Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs: 1991-2003

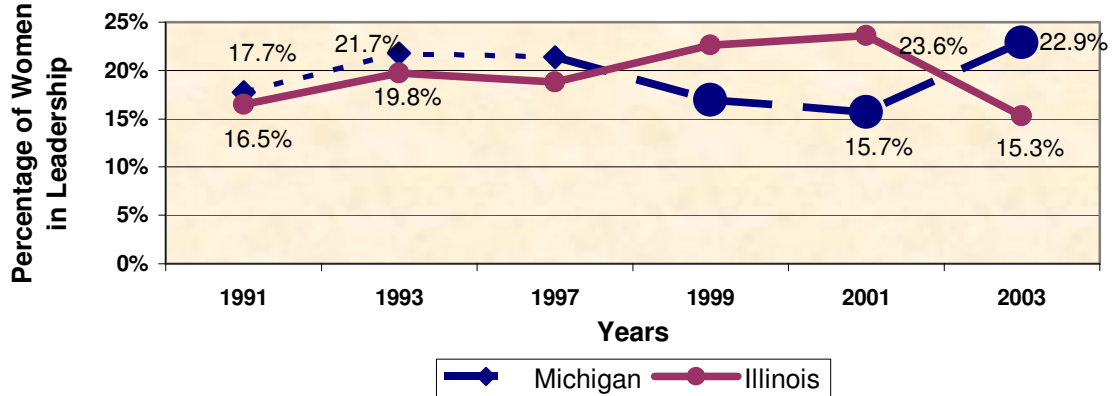
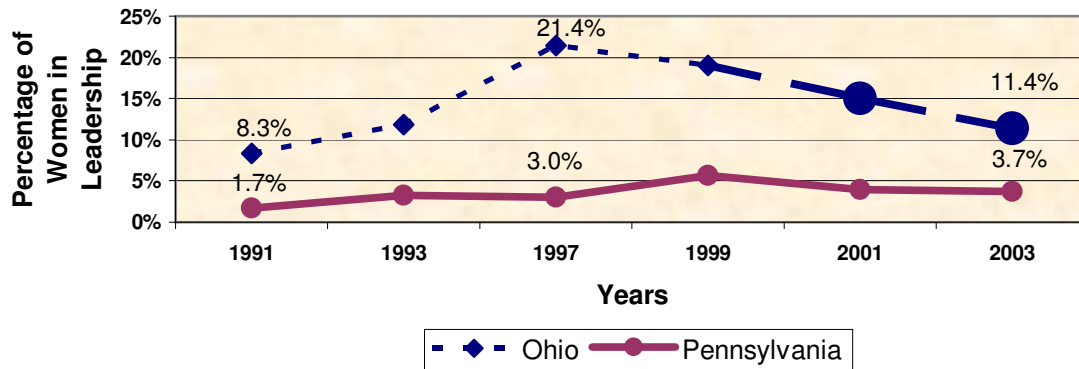
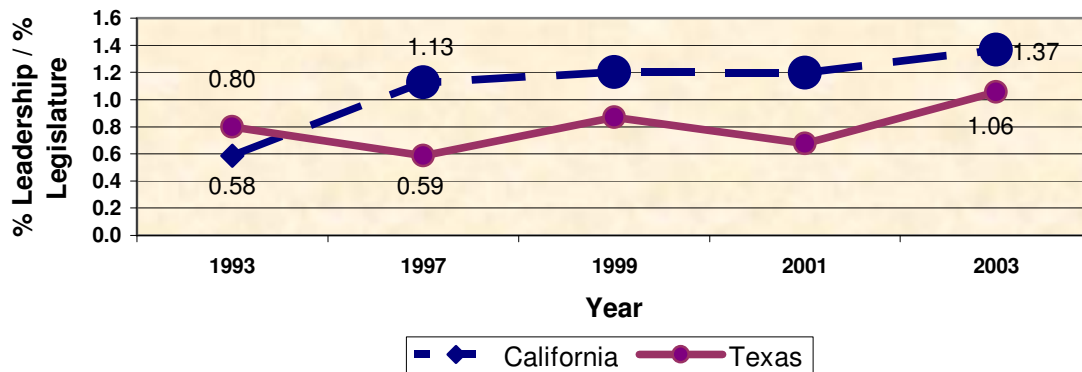


Figure 6. Ohio and Pennsylvania: Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions and Committee Chairs: 1991-2003

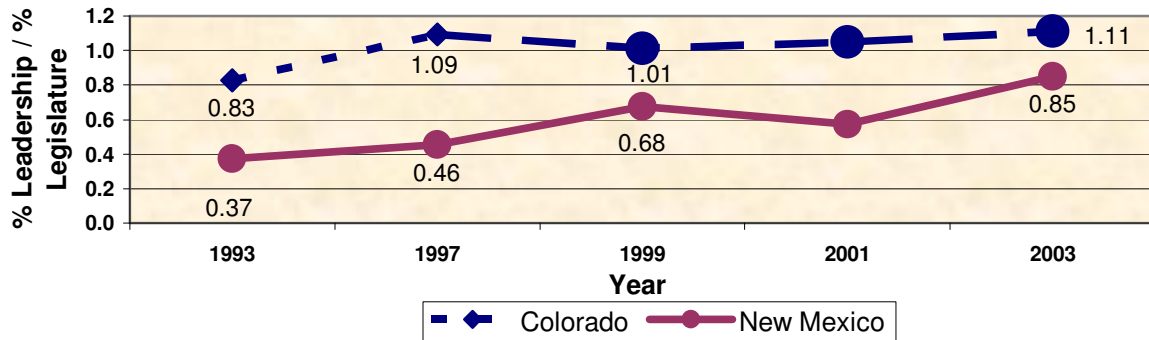


Appendix D: State Comparison Charts of Women Holding Leadership Positions Weighted by the Number of Women Serving in the Legislature

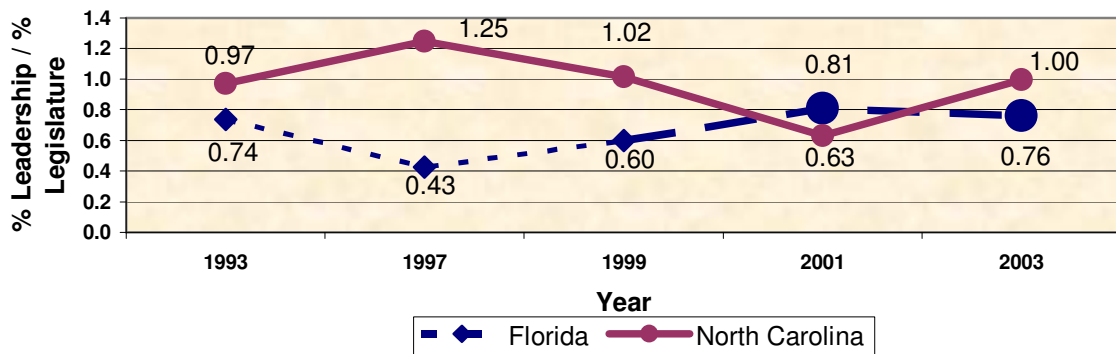
Figure 7. California and Texas: Percentage of Women in Leadership Divided by Percentage of Women in Legislature - 1993-2003



**Figure 8. Colorado and New Mexico: Percentage of Women in Leadership
Divided by Percentage of Women in Legislature - 1993-2003**

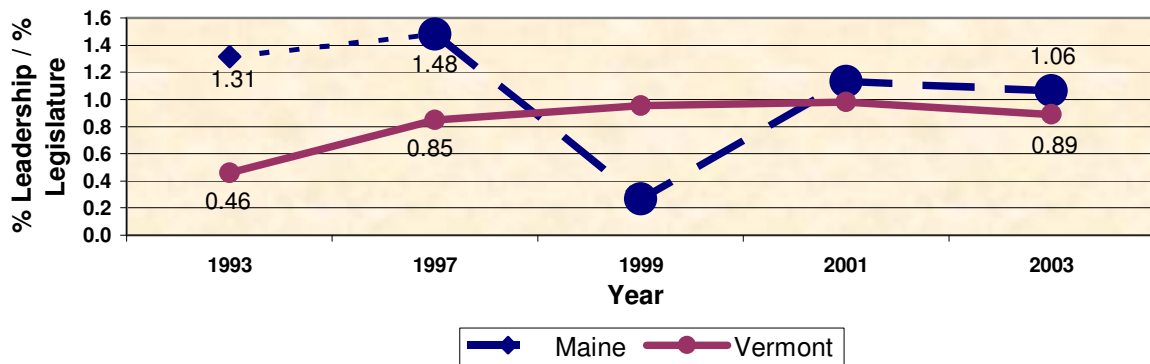


**Figure 9. Florida and North Carolina: Percentage of Women in Leadership
Divided by Percentage of Women in Legislature - 1993-2003**

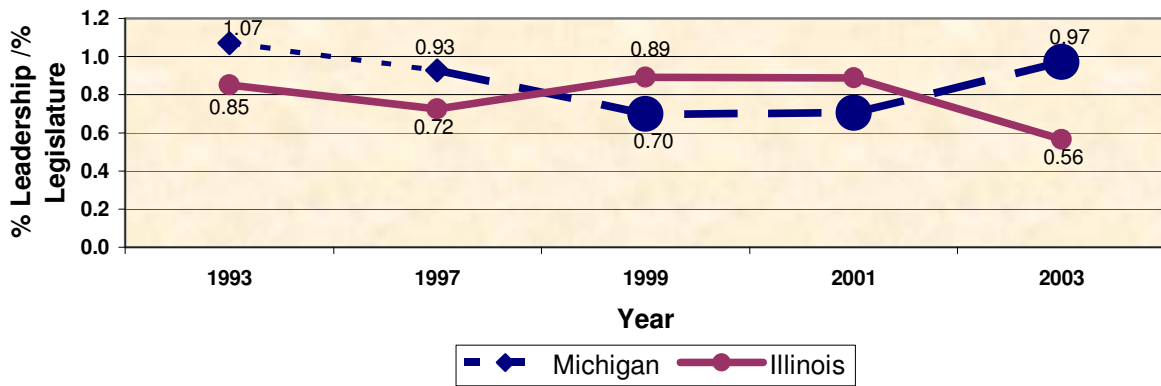


Appendix D: (continued)

**Figure 10. Maine and Vermont: Percentage of Women in Leadership
Divided by Percentage of Women in Legislature - 1993-2003**



**Figure 11. Michigan and Illinois: Percentage of Women in Leadership
Divided by Percentage of Women in Legislature - 1993-2003**



**Figure 12. Ohio and Pennsylvania: Percentage of Women in Leadership
Divided by Percentage of Women in Legislature - 1993-2003**

