



**ADVANCING WOMEN  
POWERING THE ECONOMY**



2017 Status Report:  
**Vermont  
Women  
and  
Leadership**





ADVANCING WOMEN  
POWERING THE ECONOMY

This report was developed by Change The Story VT, a multi-year initiative aligning philanthropy, policy, and program to significantly improve women's economic status in Vermont. Change The Story is fueled by three statewide organizations: Vermont Women's Fund, Vermont Commission on Women, and Vermont Works for Women.

This is the **fourth in a series of reports**<sup>1</sup> published by Change The Story on topics related to women's economic status. There are a number of important connections between women's leadership in political, civic and professional spheres and women's economic security. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that leadership positions are generally rewarded with higher pay and better benefits. Beyond individual finances, research clearly demonstrates that gender balance in leadership— and indeed diversity in its many forms—contributes to better decision-making and improves the overall bottom line.

As all of these reports seek to establish a baseline against which we can measure progress in future years, this one focuses on leadership roles that can be identified and counted in spheres where access to such data is possible. Accordingly, we have focused our attention on elected or appointed public servants at the state and municipal levels, on leaders of critical community institutions, and on leaders of organizations in the private and non-profit sectors.

That said, it is important that we acknowledge the myriad other ways in which Vermont women and men serve as leaders, many of them unrecognized by traditional measures but nonetheless critically important.

Most of the data in this report is either new or not regularly collected or published. All of it is specific to Vermont and is vitally important—not just in terms of what it reflects about women, but because of its implications for the state as a whole.

#### Among our findings:

✓ **By some measures Vermont is a national pacesetter in its share of women in public leadership.**

- Women are 39.4% of those serving in Vermont's General Assembly, 60% of the state's Supreme Court Justices, 43% of Executive Cabinet members and 50% of its public university and college presidents.

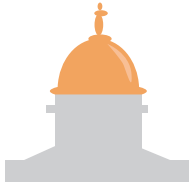
✓ **However, Vermont's progress in achieving gender parity in leadership arenas has been uneven, slow-going or in some cases nonexistent.**

- Just one of Vermont's six statewide officials is a woman, trailing the national average by 7 percentage points. Indeed, of the 296 individuals ever elected to statewide office, only 11 have been women.
- Vermont and Mississippi are the only two states that have never sent a woman to Congress.
- While women's participation in Vermont's General Assembly is the second highest in the country, the pace of change has essentially leveled off since 1993; in 24 years, women's share of legislative seats has increased by just four percentage points.

✓ **When only 8% of Vermont's highest grossing companies and 3 of its 15 hospitals are led by women, we can be certain that we are not making full use of all our state's talent.**

*The data in this report was collected and analyzed by the Change The Story team and volunteers, among them Dylan Cullen, Kamli Faour, Riley Janeway, Rachel Jolly, Carrie Williams Howe, and Dawn Moskowitz. Sources include state archives, online resources available through national research centers or state websites, and publicly available professional or governmental databases. As is noted and described in the endnotes, data has also been culled or confirmed via surveys, telephone interviews, and email correspondence. Finally, the report draws on research conducted by **Common Good Vermont** as well as detailed municipal data compiled and analyzed by **Emerge VT** and **The Vermont Higher Education Council**.*

# BY SOME MEASURES VERMONT IS A NATIONAL PACESETTER IN ITS SHARE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LEADERSHIP.



## IN THE LEGISLATURE

In 1953, Vermont elected 52 women to the General Assembly—more than any state in the nation.<sup>2</sup> In the ensuing sixty years Vermont’s position relative to other states has fluctuated, but in **2017 the General Assembly weighed in at 39.4% women<sup>3</sup>, second only to Nevada at 39.7%.<sup>4</sup>**

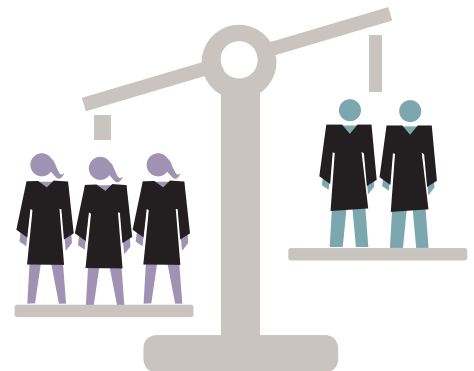
### Women as % of 2017 General Assembly and Legislative Leadership<sup>5</sup>

2017 General Assembly	Total #	# Women	% Women
<b>General Assembly</b>	180	71	<b>39.4%</b>
• House	150	60	40.0 %
• Senate	30	11	36.7%
<b>Assembly Leadership (President Pro Tempore, Speaker of the House, Majority and Minority Leaders)</b>	6	3	<b>50%</b>
• House	3	2	66.7%
• Senate	3	1	33.3%
<b>Assembly Committee Leaders</b>			
<b>House</b>			
Committee Chairs	15	8	<b>53.3%</b>
Committee Vice Chairs	15	3	20%
Chairs + Vice Chairs	30	11	36.7%
<b>Senate</b>			
Committee Chairs	14	5	<b>35.7%</b>
Committee Vice Chairs	14	4	28.6%
Chairs + Vice Chairs	28	9	32.1%

**Assembly leadership is currently balanced between 3 men and 3 women**, and women chair 53% of House and 36% of Senate committees.

## ON THE SUPREME COURT

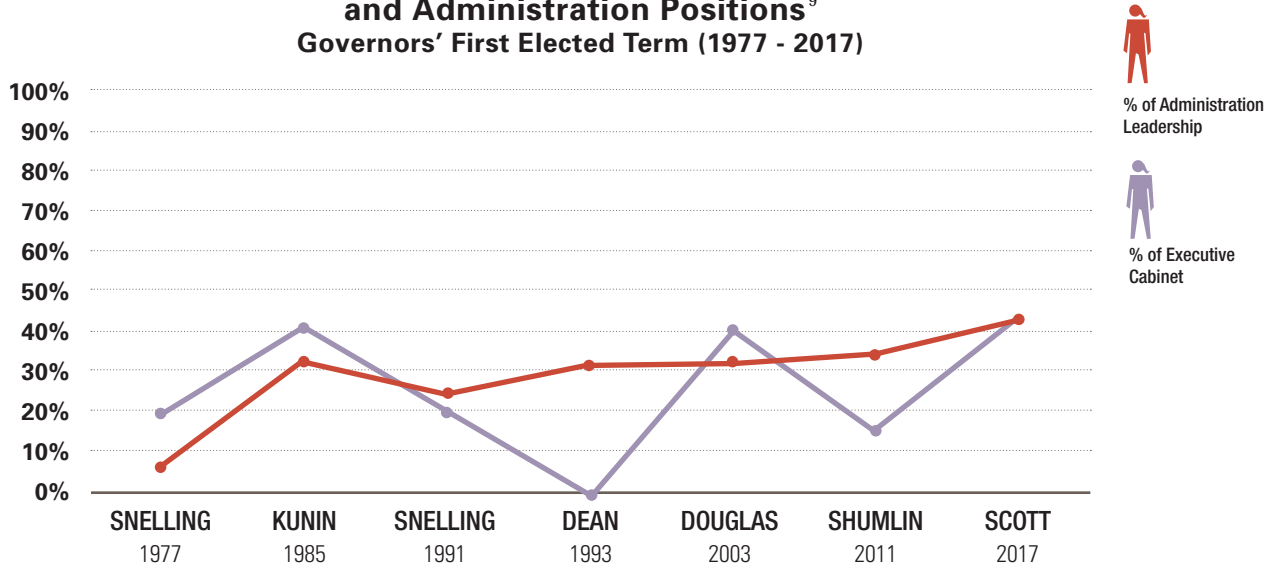
**Three of Vermont’s five Supreme Court Justices are women.**<sup>6</sup> At 60%, the gender balance of Vermont’s highest court is 25 percentage points above the national average of 35%.<sup>7</sup> It is the first time in state history that the Court has been predominantly female.



## AS HEADS OF STATE AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS

As of March 2017, Vermont's new Governor had appointed women to **a record 43%** of both top Administrative positions and Executive Cabinet posts.<sup>8</sup>

**Women as % of those Appointed to VT Executive Cabinet and Administration Positions<sup>9</sup>**  
Governors' First Elected Term (1977 - 2017)

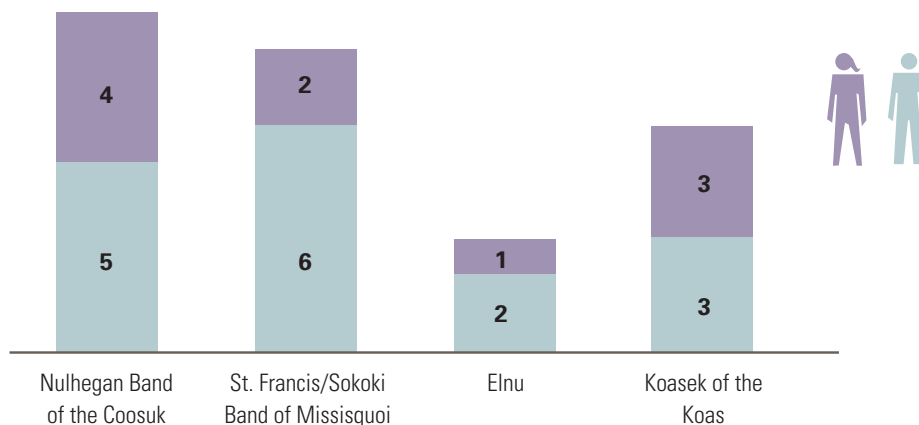


	Snelling '77	Kunin '85	Snelling '91	Dean '93	Douglas '03	Shumlin '11	Scott '17
<b>Executive Cabinet</b>							
# Women	1	2	1	0	2	1	3
<b>Administrative Leadership</b>							
Total Number	32	37	36	38	43	38	37
Total # Women	2	12	9	12	14	13	16

## AS ABENAKI CHIEFS AND TRIBAL LEADERS

Women constitute **38%** of Tribal Council members in the four Abenaki bands officially recognized by the state of Vermont. A look at the makeup of the individual Tribal Councils reveals that **three of the four** Councils are gender-balanced.<sup>10</sup>

**Members of Abenaki Tribal Councils, by Gender**

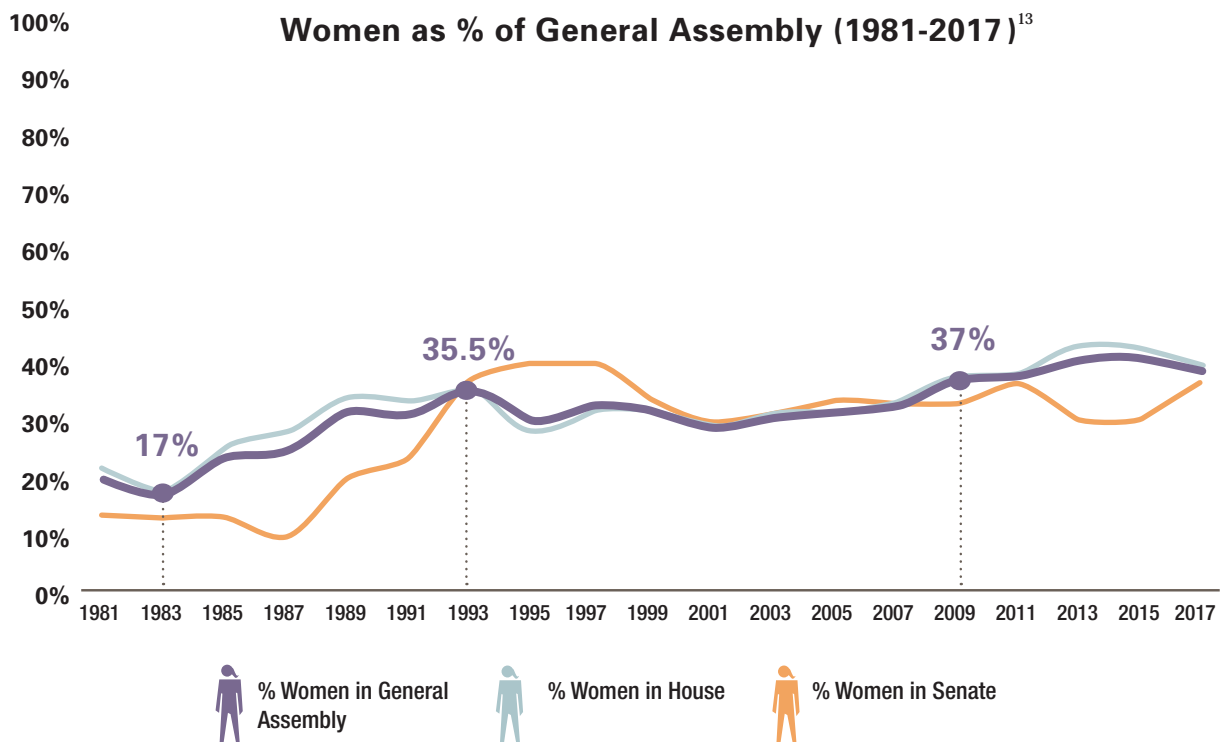


Currently **three of seven Abenaki Chiefs are women**; all are Chiefs of a single band (Koasek of the Koas).<sup>11</sup>

# HOWEVER, PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING GENDER PARITY IN LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN UNEVEN, SLOW-GOING OR IN SOME CASES NONEXISTENT.

## IN THE LEGISLATURE

While the current percentage of women in Vermont’s legislature is—at 39.4%—significantly higher than the US average (25%)<sup>12</sup>, overall gains in gender parity since 1993 have been modest. Between 1983 and 1993 (an era in which Vermont elected its first and only female Governor) women’s share of legislative seats more than doubled—from 17% to 35.5%—but leveled off after 1993. **It took an additional 16 years for that figure to increase—and even then by just 1½%.**



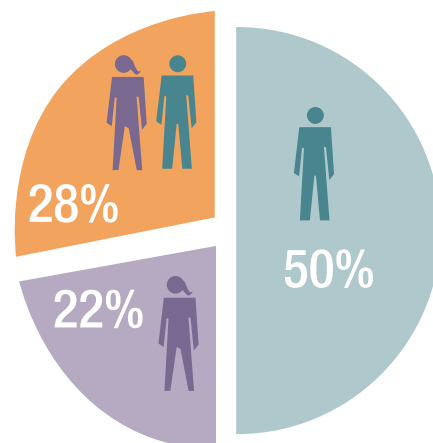
## ON STATE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Vermonters fill over 1,600 seats on 167 state boards and commissions that advise state agencies or regulate specific professions—42% of the seats are held by women, 56% of them by men (approximately 2% of all seats are currently vacant).<sup>14</sup>

In 1983, none of these bodies were gender-balanced. Indeed, most had no women at all.<sup>15</sup>

In 2017, 28% of state boards and commissions are gender balanced and 22% are female dominated. Yet half of all boards and commissions continue to be male-dominated. **11% have no female members at all**, as compared to just 2% that have no men.<sup>16</sup>

## % State Boards and Commissions, by Gender Composition (2017)



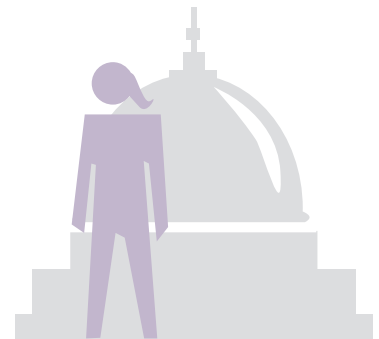
# OVERALL, VERMONT WOMEN ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN STATE-WIDE PUBLIC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.



In 1993, Vermont was ranked 7th in the country by Representation 20/20, a national advocacy organization focused on women’s parity in political representation.<sup>17</sup> **In 2017, Vermont’s standing has plummeted to 33rd.**

## AS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

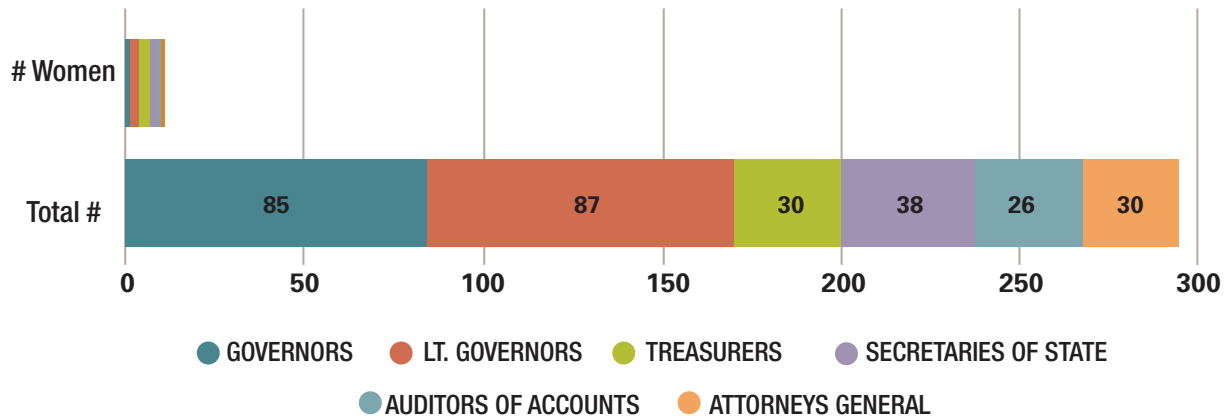
**Vermont and Mississippi are now the only two states that have never sent a woman to Congress.** Vermont’s record cannot be explained simply by the size of its delegation, as it is the lone holdout among the seven states that send just three members to Congress: Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming.<sup>18</sup> Currently, all but two states in New England - Vermont and Rhode Island - are represented by at least one woman in the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. Women are half of Maine’s four-person delegation and 100% of New Hampshire’s delegation.<sup>19</sup>



## IN STATEWIDE OFFICE

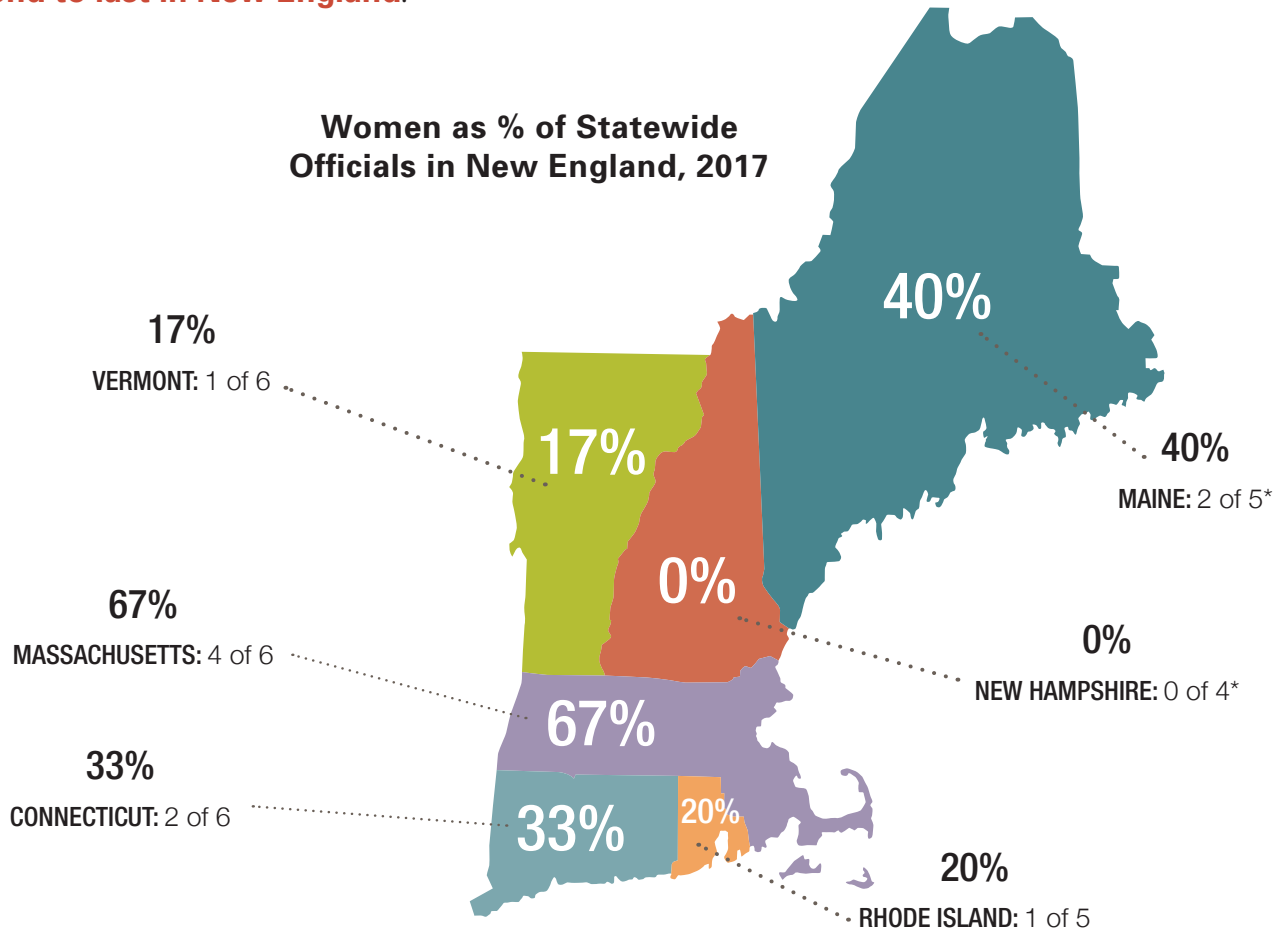
In 1954, Vermont elected the nation’s first female Lieutenant Governor, Consuelo N. Bailey.<sup>20</sup> Of the six statewide officials who took office in 2017, only one—the State Treasurer—is a woman. This isn’t an historical aberration but a longstanding pattern in the Green Mountain State. **Of the 296 statewide officers elected since 1778, only 11 have been women.**<sup>21</sup>

Women Elected to VT Statewide Office (1778 - 2016)



# Women: Governors (1) Lt. Governors (3) Treasurers (3) Secretaries of State (2) Auditor of Accounts (1) Attorney General (1)

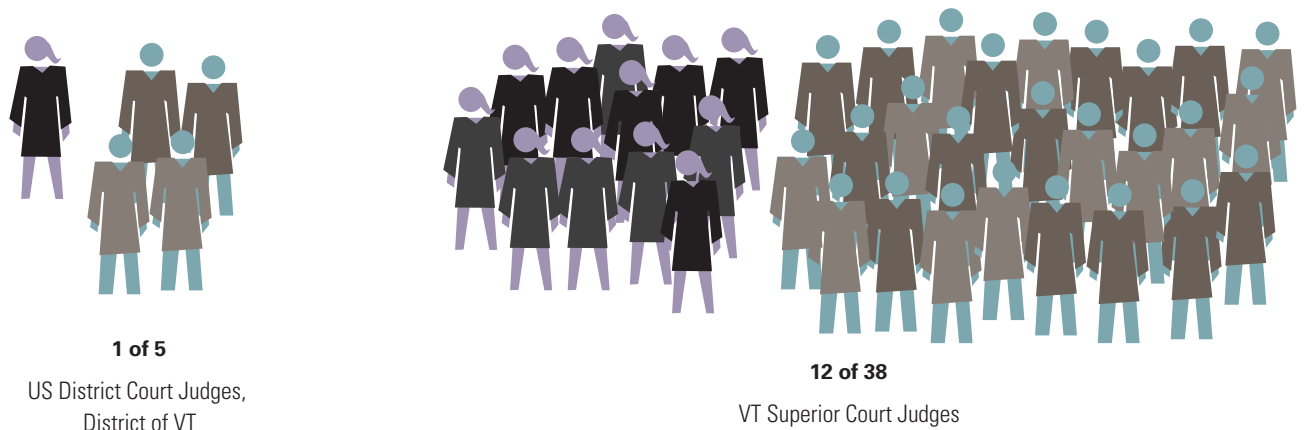
Nationally, women hold an average of 24% of all statewide offices. **At 17%, Vermont currently comes in second to last in New England.** <sup>22</sup>



\* With the exception of the office of Governor, statewide officeholders in New Hampshire and Maine are appointed, not elected. <sup>23</sup>

## AS FEDERAL DISTRICT AND STATE SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES

As previously noted, the balance of women on Vermont’s Supreme Court is among the nation’s highest. On other courts with jurisdiction in Vermont, **a significant majority of those adjudicating cases are male.** One of five judges serving on the US District Court of Vermont is a woman (the court’s chief judge). Women are less than a third of Vermont’s 38 appointed Superior Court judges (one seat is currently vacant).<sup>24</sup>



# THE PATTERN IS SIMILAR AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS.

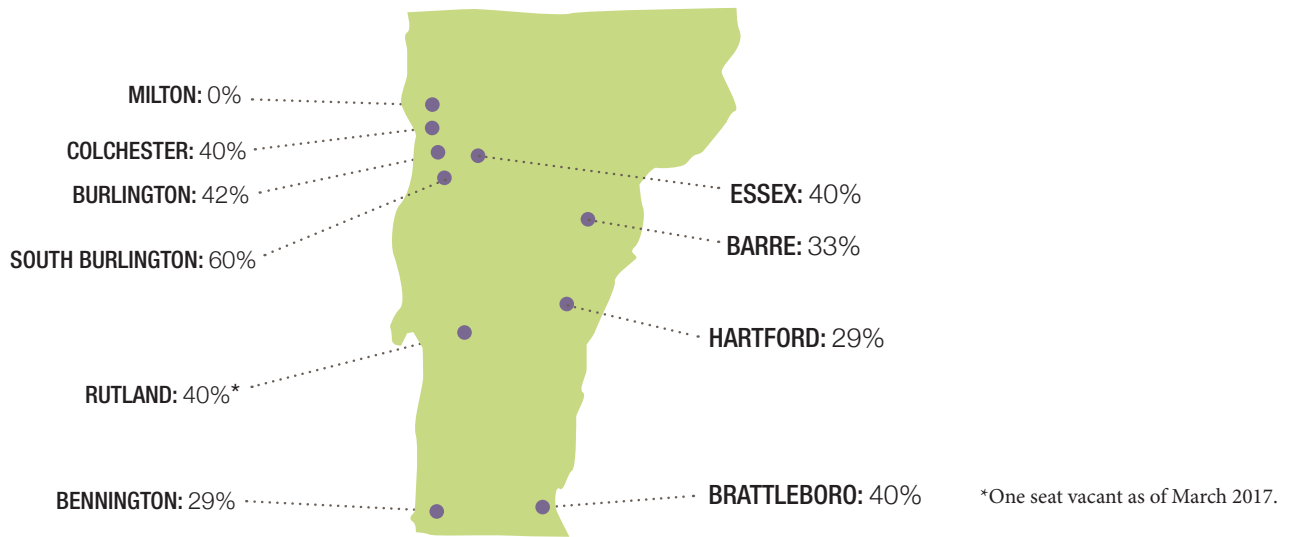
Vermont women play a significant and in some cases dominant role in local governance. They are:

- **90%** of municipal clerks <sup>25</sup>
- **51%** of school board members <sup>26</sup>
- **40%** of Vermont K-12 school district superintendents.<sup>27</sup>

## ON SELECT BOARDS AND SCHOOL BOARDS

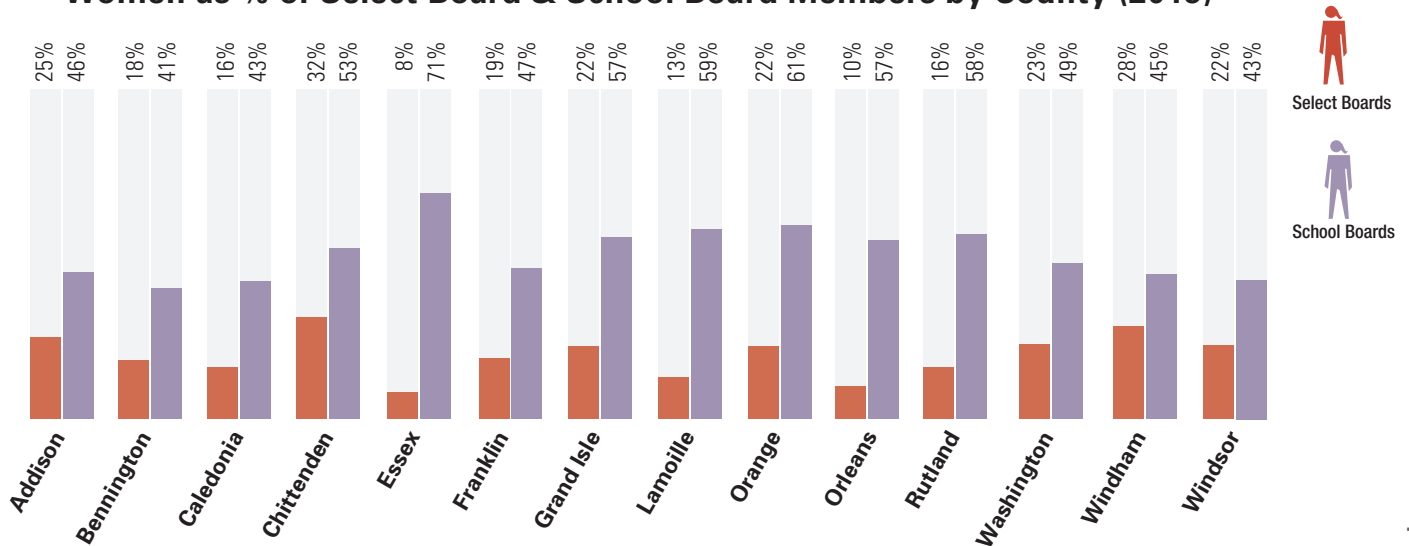
In six of Vermont's ten most populous cities and towns, women make up **40% or more of select board members** and city councilors.<sup>28</sup>

**Women as % of Major Municipal Select Board Members (March 10, 2017)**



Statewide, however, women comprise only **21% of select board members**.<sup>29</sup>

**Women as % of Select Board & School Board Members by County (2015)**<sup>30</sup>

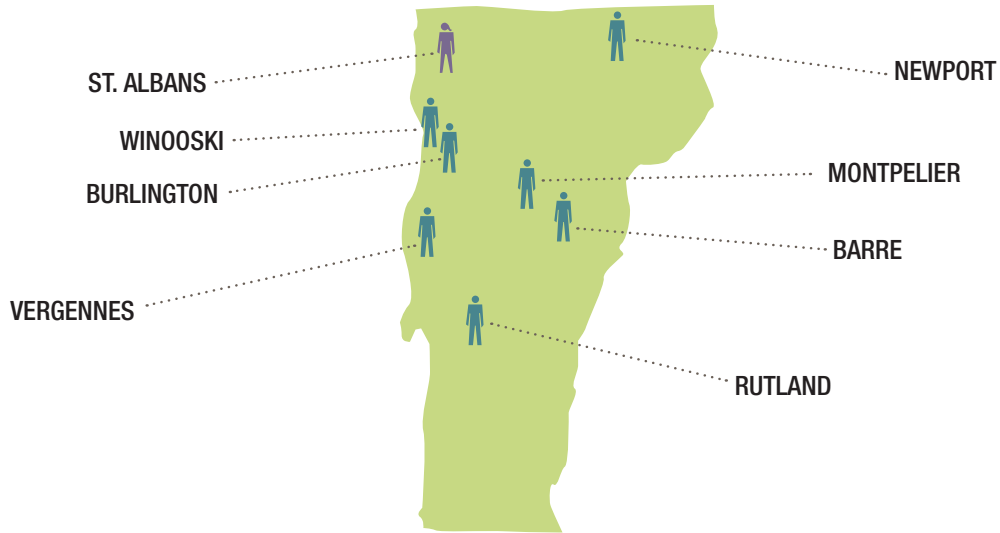




## AS TOP MUNICIPAL LEADERS

**Women are a minority of Vermont's top municipal leaders.** They are just 34% of municipal managers<sup>31</sup> and 16% of select board chairs.<sup>32</sup>

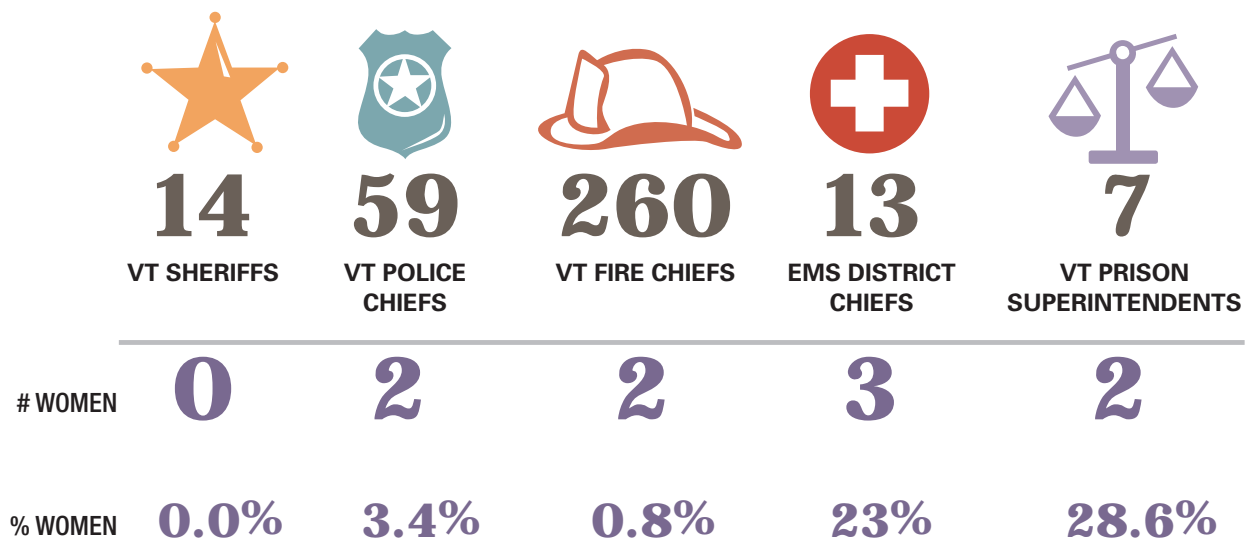
Only one of Vermont's **8 mayors** is a woman.<sup>33</sup>



## IN PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Perhaps because they are such a small percentage of those who fight fires or police the streets, women are a tiny fraction of those heading local or regional protective service agencies in Vermont.

Indeed, **women are just 2 of the state's 59 police chiefs, 2 of its 260 fire chiefs, and none of its 14 sheriffs.** Women are a larger share, however, of EMS district chiefs and prison superintendents.<sup>34</sup>



# WOMEN ARE A HANDFUL OF TOP LEADERS IN OTHER PROFESSIONAL ARENAS.

## IN TOP CORPORATIONS

Much has been written about the national absence of women as corporate executives and board members. The most recent national research on Fortune 500 companies indicates that women are just 4.2% of CEOs, and hold only 20% of board seats.<sup>35</sup>

**Of Vermont's 100 highest grossing corporations, just nine are led by women.**<sup>36</sup> If we exclude hospitals, colleges, and universities—which are not among those listed in the Fortune 500—that number falls to 4.

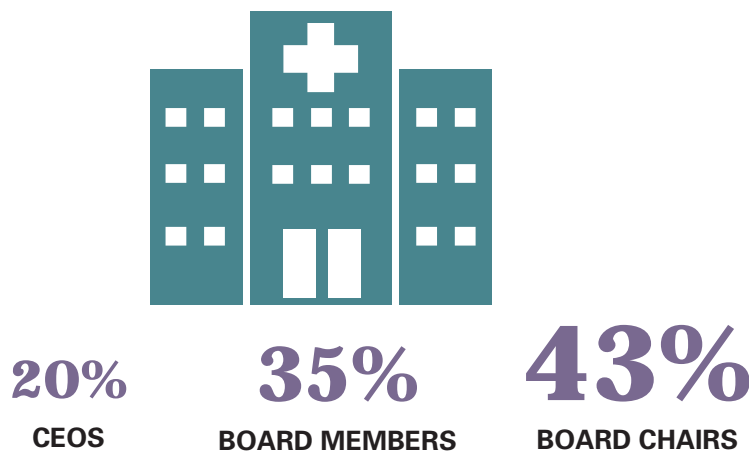


Women are **32% of those serving on the boards of Vermont corporations** with annual revenues of over \$100 million. Their share shrinks to 24% of board seats when one omits hospitals, colleges and universities.<sup>37</sup>

## IN HOSPITALS

While women chair 43% of the region's\* hospital boards and are 35% of those who serve as hospital trustees, they **serve as only 20%—or three—of the region's fifteen hospital CEOs.**

**Women as % of Hospital CEOs, Board Chairs, and Board Members**<sup>38</sup>

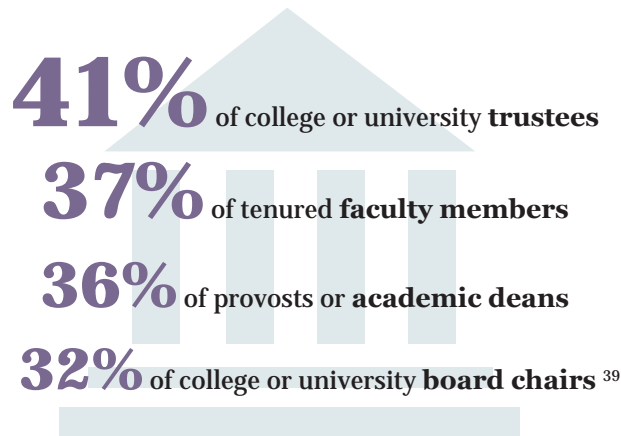


\*Because of its proximity to Vermont, this includes Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center.

## ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Women in higher education hold **over a third** of leadership roles as board members, provosts or academic deans, and tenured faculty members.

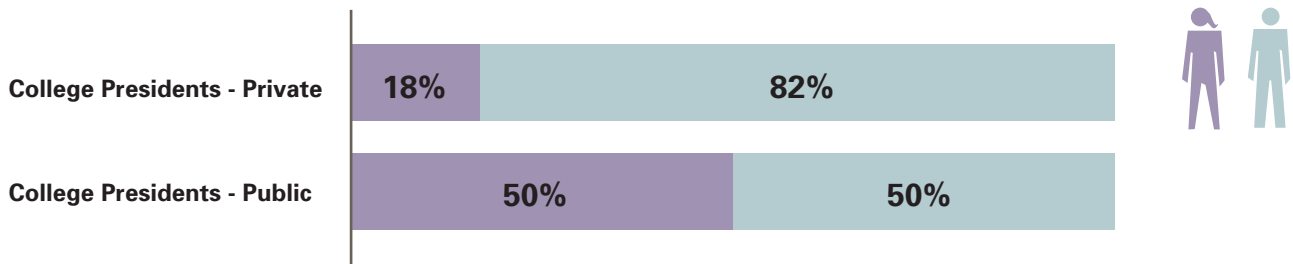
They are:



**Yet women are only 26% of those at the helm of Vermont's 23 colleges and universities.**<sup>40</sup>

The balance is different when one separates public from private institutions. Women are a **full 50% of presidents at public colleges and universities** but head just 18% of private institutions.

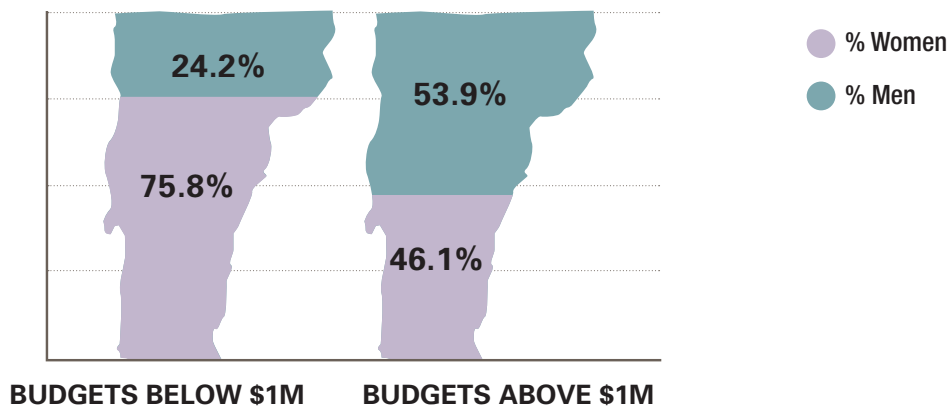
### Women as % of Presidents, VT Colleges and Universities



## IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

One notable exception to this pattern is in the non-profit sector, **where women head 71% of all reporting organizations** (which excludes hospitals).<sup>41</sup> The gender balance in non-profit leadership shifts significantly toward men, however, for organizations with budgets that exceed \$1 million.

### CEOs of VT Non-profits, by Gender and Budget Size



## WHY IT MATTERS

“ We see more strands of pearls, flower-printed scarves, and red jackets in the Congress and in corporate boardrooms, but the lineups remain predominantly muted in black and gray. We can no longer wait for incremental change; it has been too slow. Parity will not be achieved by patience. ”<sup>42</sup>

VT GOVERNOR MADELEINE KUNIN, *PEARLS, POLITICS AND POWER: HOW WOMEN CAN WIN AND LEAD*

### Does gender diversity in leadership matter? It does – and for many reasons.

First (and perhaps most obvious) is its benefit to individual women and girls. Leadership roles at work often translate into higher pay, better benefits and greater flexibility. Positional leadership can also result in recognition that furthers personal or professional achievement. Moreover, the presence of women in positions of leadership has been cited as crucial to expanding the career aspirations of girls.

But a decade of academic research demonstrates that gender diversity in leadership—at top levels and on teams—isn't *only* good for women and girls. It is good for Vermont.

- ✓ **It improves the corporate bottom line and corporate decision-making.**<sup>43</sup>
- ✓ **It increases innovation.**<sup>44</sup>
- ✓ **And it ensures that women's experiences and concerns will be reflected in the policies we adopt, the products we design, and the priorities that we set as lawmakers.**<sup>45</sup>

In a small state with an aging population, gender parity in leadership isn't so much an ideal as it is an economic necessity.

“ Tough economic times, dramatically shifting world events, unmet needs in the country —all call for looking beyond the current composition of leadership for different answers. To achieve sustainable long-term economic growth and well-being, leadership must become more balanced—and that means it must include more women. ”<sup>46</sup>

LINDA TARR-WHELAN, *WOMEN LEAD THE WAY: YOUR GUIDE TO STEPPING UP TO LEADERSHIP AND CHANGING THE WORLD.*

# QUESTIONS WE SHOULD ASK:

**What messages are we sending to women and girls about leadership?**

**What are the characteristics we associate with leadership and how do they impact women's participation?**

- How do we know leadership potential when we see it?
- Do we actively address hidden biases in ourselves and our culture that might negatively impact a woman's chances of being elevated to leadership - or might dissuade her from applying?

**How do we define gender balance? How do we use data to know we're making progress toward gender balance?**

- What is the long-term impact of gender *imbalance* in Vermont's public, private and non-profit spheres?

**What are the existing pathways to leadership for women in Vermont?**

- How deliberate are our efforts to recruit and prepare girls and women to take on leadership roles?
- What are we doing to ensure those pathways are available equally to men and women?
- Are we using relevant data to understand how many women are in Vermont's leadership "pipeline"?
- How can we approach defining new pathways to leadership?

**In the public sector...**

- Are we making a deliberate effort to expose girls and young women to a full range of careers in public service - and to encourage them to think of it as a viable path?
- Do we encourage and support women to run for elected office? Are our training programs and recruitment strategies encouraging to or specifically designed for women?
- What are the unspoken "rules" about how to pursue higher office? How do we encourage women to better position themselves to reach those offices?
- Do the structures (e.g. compensation, hours and family-friendly practices) of our public service positions encourage broad participation?
- What is the value to setting goals for gender balance on public governing bodies?

**In the private and non-profit sectors...**

- How deliberate are our actions to promote women to decision-making positions? Do we actively recruit women to serve on boards and apply for management positions?
- How diverse is the pool of candidates for internal promotions to leadership positions?
- Do we sponsor women for leadership roles at the same rate as men? Do women have access to both formal and informal mentors and networks?
- Are we analyzing pay scales for gender equity and making necessary adjustments to hiring and promotion policies?
- Do our organizations have intentional, stated goals for gender balance on boards, in our executive teams and in senior management?
- Do we support women to take part in leadership training programs?
- Can workplace strategies, such as flexibility and telecommuting, enable more women to advance into positions of higher responsibility?

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Women, Work and Wages in VT; Where Women Work and Why It Matters*; and *Women's Business Ownership and the Vermont Economy* can be downloaded at <http://changethestoryvt.org/reports/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Vermont Historical Society. (2017, January). *Vermont Women's Timeline 1950 – Present*. Retrieved from <http://vermonthistory.org/research/vermont-women-s-history/timelines/women-1950-present>
- <sup>3</sup> Vermont General Assembly. (2017, March). *All Legislators*. Retrieved from <http://legislature.vermont.gov/people/all/2018>.
- <sup>4</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. (2017, March). *Women in State Legislatures in 2017*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/legislators-staff/legislators/womens-legislative-network/women-in-state-legislatures-for-2017.aspx>
- <sup>5</sup> Vermont General Assembly. (2017, April). *Committees*. Retrieved from <http://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/list/2018/House-Standing#House-Standing>
- <sup>6</sup> In March, 2017, Governor Phil Scott appointed Karen Russell Carroll to a seat on the Vermont Supreme Court, making the bench of Vermont's highest court majority female, a historic high of 60%. Richard, L. Chief of Planning & Court Services, VT Office of the Court Administrator (2017, March 23) Telephone interview.
- <sup>7</sup> National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ). (2017, March). *The American Bench. State Final Appellate Jurisdiction Courts*. Retrieved from <https://www.nawj.org/statistics/2016-us-state-court-women-judges>
- <sup>8</sup> Vermont Office of Governor Phil Scott. *The Administration*. (2017, March). Retrieved from <http://governor.vermont.gov/administration>.
- <sup>9</sup> *Vermont Legislative Directory and Manual*. Published 1977-78; 1985-86; 1991-92; 1993-94; 2003-04; 2011-12. For source of information on Governor Scott's Administrative appointments, see Endnote 8. For the purposes of this report, top administration officials include Agency Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, and Commissioners. The chart on page 3 indicates the gender balance of administration leadership appointed by a Governor in his or her first elected term.
- <sup>10</sup> Confirmed through email correspondence with: Stevens, D., Chief Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk – Abenaki Nation; Brook, M.W., Elnu Citizen; Gendreau, C., Chief, Abenaki Koasek of the Koas. Additional data retrieved from the following tribal websites: <http://www.koasekofthekoas.org/>; <http://tribal.abenakination.com/tribal-council-members>; <http://www.elnuabenakitribe.org/index>.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Vermont Women in Public Life*, Vermont Commission on Women, 2013 and 2015. For 2017 data, see Endnote 4.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> Vermont Office of Governor Phil Scott: Boards and Commissions. (<http://governor.vermont.gov/boards-commissions>). As this site does not always list members who have been assigned to boards and commissions by statute, full rosters were confirmed through additional searches of state websites or phone calls with state personnel.
- <sup>15</sup> *Vermont Women in Leadership and Public Life*, Vermont Commission on Women, Biennial Report, 2003.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Representation 20/20: Parity for Women in Politics. *Gender Parity Scores by State*. Retrieved from <http://www.representation2020.com/gender-parity-index>.
- Representation 20/20 defines gender parity as the point at which women and men are just as likely to hold elected office. States are scored on a number of factors (including women's representation in the U.S. Congress, state legislatures, and in statewide and local offices) on a scale of 1-100. A score of 50 means women are underrepresented in elective office that year; a score of over 50 means men are underrepresented. In 2017, Vermont received a score of 16, earning a letter grade of "D" and a national ranking of 33rd. By contrast, New Hampshire earned a score of 55, ranked first in the nation, and earned an "A."
- <sup>18</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-States-House-of-Representatives-Seats-by-State-1787120> (2017, March).
- <sup>19</sup> Representation 20/20: Parity for Women in Politics. *Current Women's Representation, Statewide Executive Office*. Retrieved from [http://www.representation2020.com/current-women-representation#statewide\\_executive\\_office](http://www.representation2020.com/current-women-representation#statewide_executive_office)
- <sup>20</sup> Consuelo Northrop Bailey (1899-1976), a Republican from Chittenden County, was a prominent political figure in Vermont from the 1920s to the 1970s. She was admitted to the Vermont Supreme Court in 1926, the United States District Court in 1927, the United States Supreme Court in 1933 (the first woman from Vermont to be so), and the United States Customs Court in 1942. In 1925, she became the first woman to serve as Burlington City Grand Juror. She then served in a number of elected offices at the State level, including two terms as State's Attorney (1927-31), State Senator (Chittenden, 1931-33), State Representative (S. Burlington, 1951-55), Speaker of the House (1953), Lt. Governor (1955-57), and Republican National Committeewoman (1936-73). In 1940, she married Henry Albon Bailey, and together they formed the legal firm, Bailey and Bailey. When her husband became ill in 1941, Bailey took over sole responsibility for the firm. University of Vermont Libraries Special Collections. (2017, March) *Consuelo Northrop Bailey Papers*. Retrieved from <http://cdi.uvm.edu/findingaids/collection/baileyconsuelo.ead.xml>

- <sup>21</sup> Vermont Secretary of State. *Archives & Records. State Offices*. Retrieved from <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/archives-records/state-archives/government-history/government-officials/state-officers.aspx>.
- <sup>22</sup> Center for American Women in Politics. *Facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state-by-state> (2017, March).
- <sup>23</sup> Retrieved from: [https://ballotpedia.org/State\\_executive\\_offices](https://ballotpedia.org/State_executive_offices) (2017, March).
- <sup>24</sup> Richard, L. Chief of Planning & Court Services, VT Office of the Court Administrator (2017, March 23) Telephone interview and Gabel, P. Esq, VT State Court Administrator. (2017, January 10). *Vermont Judicial Branch Overview, 2017 Legislative Session: Courts, Judiciary Programs and Performance Measures*.
- <sup>25</sup> Data collected by Emerge VT (2016, February) and shared with Change The Story. Gender survey of VT municipal clerks. Data is specific to 2015, as information from 2017 elections has not yet been certified.
- <sup>26</sup> Data provided to Emerge VT by Vermont School Boards Association (2015) and shared with Change The Story. Data is specific to 2015, as information from 2017 elections has not yet been certified.
- <sup>27</sup> State of Vermont Agency of Education. (2017, January 26). *Directory of Superintendents by Supervisory Union*. Retrieved from: <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/directory-superintendents-by-supervisory-union>.
- <sup>28</sup> Retrieved from individual town and city websites (2017, March 15-31) and confirmed by email and telephone interviews.
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