



Office on the Economic Status of Women

Monthly Newsletter
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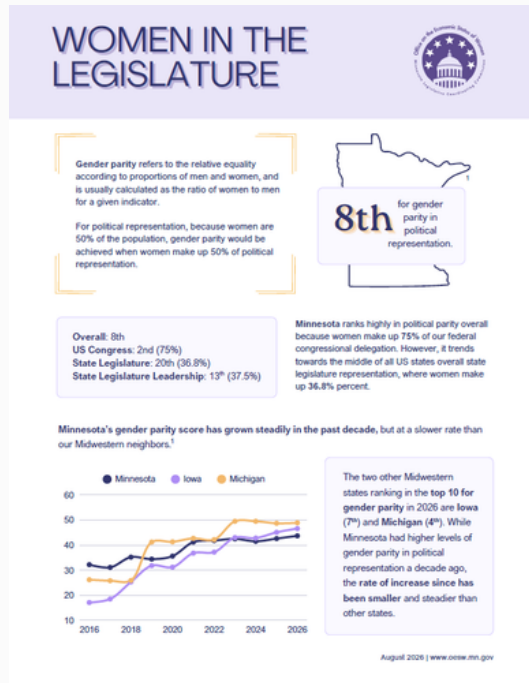
Loon Lake, Jackson County, MN

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Women in the legislature
- Women's Equality Day
- Bureau of Labor Statistics July Update
- Maternal Mental Health
- Reading List

★ Per **Minnesota Statute Sec. 3.303, Subdivision 7**, the Office on the Economic Status of Women "shall study study and report to the legislature on all matters relating to the economic status of women... The [OESW] shall communicate its findings and make recommendations to the legislature on an ongoing basis."

WOMEN IN THE LEGISLATURE: FACTSHEET

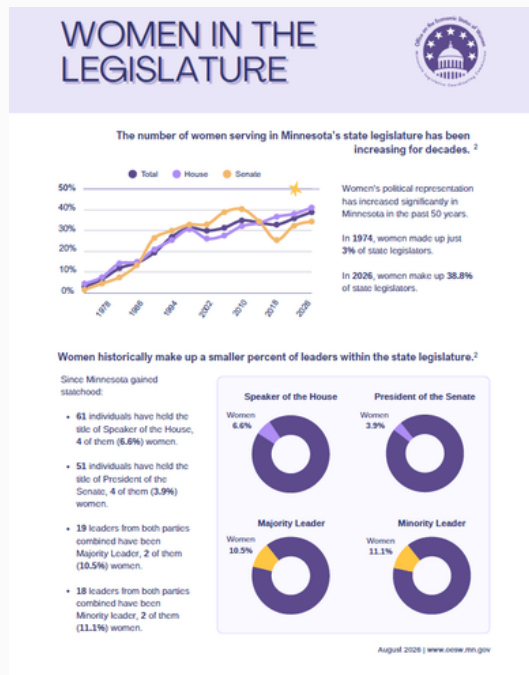


Our August fact sheet looks at representation of women in the legislative branch.

According to Represent Women, a research organization dedicated to measuring political gender parity in U.S. states, Minnesota is ranked 8th best in the nation for state gender parity overall.

Minnesota's state legislature is made up of **38.8%** women as of 2026. This is a significant increase from just a decade ago, when women made up **31.3%**, and especially drastic when looking back 40 years, when women made up **14.4%** of the legislature.

Political representation for women of color has also increased over the past 20 years, from **1.5%** of women in the legislature being women of color in 2006, to **9.5%** in 2026.



While women's representation in the legislature has increased, women's participation in leadership roles within the legislature has seen less of an increase. Of all the people to hold the position of Speaker of the House in Minnesota, **6.6%** have been women. Of all the people to hold the position of President of the Senate, **3.9%** have been women.

Read the [full fact sheet](#) on our website for more in depth statistics on women in the legislature.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

Women's Suffrage in Minnesota

Though **Women's Equality Day**, August 26th, marks the day that the 19th Amendment was adopted and signed by the Secretary of State in 1920, much of the movement for women's suffrage began at the state level.

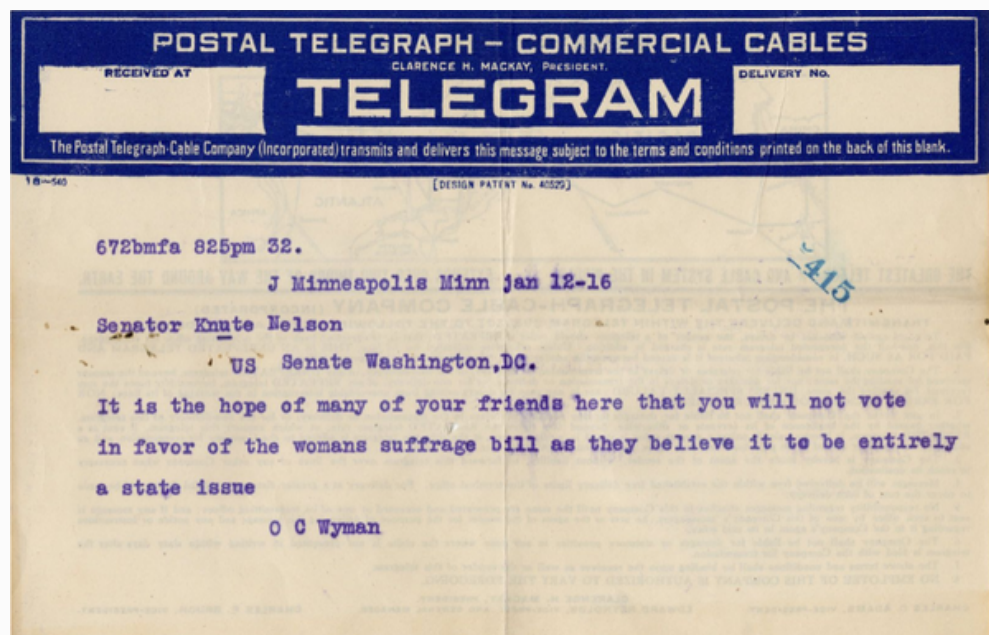
Women's suffrage by state began in Wyoming Territory in the late 1860's. Many western states began to follow suit due to the activism and pressure of their local suffrage organizations. Wyoming, Idaho, California, Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, Alaska Territory, Montana and Nevada all secured voting rights for women before the passage of the 19th Amendment federally. Minnesota suffragists began advocating for state-level voting rights in the 1860's, but making it official would require an amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution.

Several attempts were made by Representatives working with the suffragists; a petition in **1866** brought forth by Representative Anson R. Hayden on behalf of Eva J. Spaulding, another in **1867** by Representative John Seboski, and another from Mary A. Graves by Representative Alpheus B. Colton, each with hundreds of signatures. Each also stalled out at some point in the committee process.

The first petition to successfully become a bill had 605 signatures and became **House File 91**, introduced by Representative John Lathrop from Rochester. A woman named Mrs. Addie L. Ballou testified in front of the House and a vote was taken, but the bill was defeated by a vote of 22 - 21.

A telegram sent by a Minneapolis resident on January 12, 1916, urging Minnesota Senator Knute Nelson to vote against the 19th amendment.

Courtesy of the [National Archives](#).



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

Women's Suffrage in Minnesota

Another push happened in **1870**, resulting in House File 123, brought forth by Representative Abram M. Fridley, which would have extended suffrage to all citizens aged 21 and older, including immigrants and Native Americans. This bill passed the House a week later, and the Senate a week after that.

Because the proposed change was a constitutional amendment, it would have to go to a public vote. The bill specified that both men and women would be permitted to vote, though women's votes would be put in separate ballot boxes. However, the vote never happened.

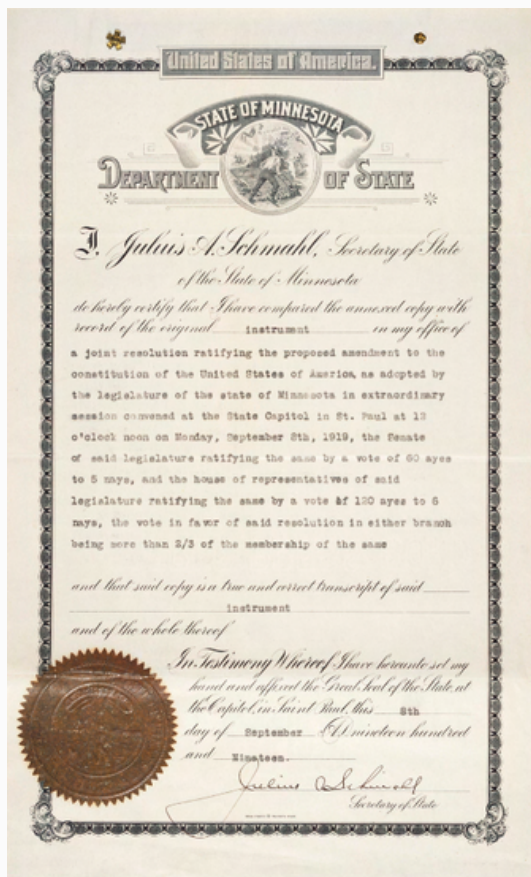


The University of Minnesota's Women's Suffrage Club, in 1913. Courtesy of [Minnesota Historical Society](#).

The bill was vetoed by Governor Horace Austin, who reasoned that the proposed vote on the amendment itself would be illegal if it included women, who could not legally vote yet until the amendment had passed. Austin described himself as in favor of women's suffrage, and encouraged the passage of another bill without such language.

The Minnesota Women's Suffrage Association and the Political Equality Club continued their efforts each session to secure the right to vote for Minnesota women, but each died in committee or was defeated in a chamber vote.

In **1919**, the Minnesota Legislature officially recognized women's right to vote in presidential elections by ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.



Minnesota's Ratification of the 19th Amendment. Courtesy of the [National Archives](#).

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS: JULY

The Bureau of Labor Statistics monthly economic news releases on the national employment situation give a regular, nationwide overview on employment statistics in the United States, broken down for different groups of people. From **June 2026** to **July 2026**, women made up nearly **100%** of all job loss and decrease to the labor force.

The civilian labor force is the number of people employed plus the number of people actively seeking work (unemployed). Among **women over 20**, the number of women employed decreased by **173,000**, while the number of women unemployed increased by **8,000**. Added together, the civilian labor force decreased by **165,000** last month. In total, the number of women not in the labor force increased by **240,000**, **165,000** of which left the labor force, and **75,000** of which are no longer classified as part of the civilian noninstitutional population.

Men of the same age group saw their labor force participation rates remain more steady. The civilian labor force of men 20+ stayed relatively the same between June and July, while the number of men employed increased by **19,000**, and the number of unemployed men decreased by **18,000**. All of the **65,000** person increase in the number of men not in the labor force comes from men leaving the civilian noninstitutional population.

In Minnesota, the preliminary estimates for the decrease in the civilian labor force within the last month is around **4,013**, and the decrease in employment is around **3,149**, with unemployment increasing by **834** individuals. Data on which demographic groups made up these losses in the state is not yet available.

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH

On the Maternal Health Report Card put out by the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health, Minnesota received a grade of a C. No state in the United States received an A-, A or A+, and the highest grade afforded was to California with a B+.

Policies and programs in Minnesota highlighted by the report as supportive to maternal mental health were prenatal depression screenings, a high ratio of maternal mental health psychiatric providers, and high ratio of community based organizations providing direct services for maternal mental health, and more.

Areas identified by the report for improvement were childcare availability and affordability, access to inpatient or residential treatment programs, state-sanctioned task forces or commissions on maternal mental health, and more.

READING LIST

Reading list features a variety of news and articles related to the OESW's areas of interest from different perspectives, but does not necessarily reflect the views of the OESW or function as an endorsement of the views expressed.

Opinion | Everyone benefits from paid leave, including new fathers
Star Tribune

Minnesota will make history with the state's first woman governor. Why has it taken so long?
Star Tribune

Minnesota is poised to elect a woman governor. But will women benefit?
Star Tribune

Opinion | I was Minnesota's first female lieutenant governor. 44 years later, we'll have a female governor.
Star Tribune

They dedicated their lives to teaching. Then the Deepfakes started.
Wired

Powerful Minnesota women are putting their wealth to work
Star Tribune

Her viral video joked about a sponsored trip to the Minnesota State Fair. It's happening.
MPR

Minnesota Lynx strengthen grip on WNBA's No. 1 Seed
Sporting News

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