



emerge Oregon

Our mission is to identify, educate, and inspire Democratic women who want to pursue elective office at the local and state level in Oregon. emerge makes a long-term investment in these future leaders by honing their political skills; expanding their knowledge of local issues; and connecting them with mentors.

Sobering Statistics

Currently the United States ranks 84th in the world for representation of women in elected office, behind China and Pakistan. Until this year, women held 87 (or 16.3%) of the 535 seats in the 110th U.S. Congress, 16 (or 16.0%) of the 100 seats in the Senate, and 71 (or 16.3%) of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives. In 2009, women will make up 17% of Congress—a small but important increase. Only 23.5% of legislators in all 50 states in 2008 were women.

In Oregon, only 29 of the 90 state legislators are women and, currently, there are no women federal delegates. Oregon's only female member of Congress retired in 2008 and there was no female candidate to run for her seat.

Why do we care about having equal representation in elected office?

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, "women's unique experiences and shared concerns may be ignored in the policymaking process due to their underrepresentation in elected office." Having women in office widens the political debate to include a larger group of issues traditionally ignored by male policymakers. These include, but are not limited to, issues like paid family leave, flexible work options, after-school programs, health care for all kids, excellent childcare, fair wages, and strong environmental policy that protects our futures. The same research suggests that states with higher averages of female representatives also had more women-friendly policies in place than other states, including legislation reducing violence against women, alleviating poverty among women, and enhancing women's physical, mental, and reproductive health and well-being. (<http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/i910.pdf>). *There is no doubt that pressing issues confronting our country today are being ignored due to a lack of elected women leaders.*

Why emerge?

emerge was founded six years ago to address the critical problem of the underrepresentation of women in elected office. emerge is one of only two groups in the country that provides Democratic women with the comprehensive training they need to achieve their political aspirations, and the only organization with an affiliate specifically addressing Oregon. Our core mission is to recruit women who want to run for public office, train them, and provide them with the support they need to win. emerge's application process is competitive and the training intense; classes typically consist of only 15-25 people and training takes place over seven months.

Affiliates are up and running in California, Arizona, Massachusetts, Maine, New Mexico, Nevada, and Wisconsin and have experienced unprecedented success with 38% of the 350+ alumnae running for office and half that number winning their races.

Why Oregon?

In 2008, Oregon ranked 8th in the country for its proportion of women holding elected office. Our state has proven time and again that we are open to electing women. Women in Oregon have held not only local seats, but state and Congressional seats as well. Oregon's challenge, however, is to increase the number of women running for office and this is the exact problem that emerge Oregon is designed to address.

Our goal is to have a board that reaches into the social fabric of Oregon. We want to find the next great leaders earlier and start filling the political pipeline with candidates who may not necessarily be thinking of running for office, but share our values of community service, whether they are involved in business, civic, ethnic, or religious organizations.

What we need from you and how you can become involved.

1. Become an emerge Oregon Founding Funder. We have an ambitious timeframe and would like to launch our first training in March 2009. We have a \$100,000 annual budget and have already raised \$25,000. That budget will allow us to hire an Executive Director who will build out the organizational infrastructure, recruit participants, and prepare to implement the emerge Oregon curriculum. Please join the emerge Oregon team by becoming a founding funder. A founding funder commits to making a two- to three-year financial commitment to the organization. As a founding funder, you will be listed in our newsletter, Website, and annual report, and will also have the opportunity to meet our participants and other involved elected officials at our monthly trainings and receptions.

2. Help us recruit talented Democratic women to run for office. Please help us identify and recruit women in your community who are interested in becoming emerge participants. We would like to have 25 women from across the state who are interested in pursuing elective office to fill our first training program. This is an ambitious goal, however, we feel confident that we can do it with your support. We know there are plenty of women who are interested, we just need to let them know that we are now up and running in Oregon, and tell them where to sign up!

3. Join the emerge Oregon Board of Directors or a Board committee. We are always looking for energetic and talented people to join our Board to assist with fundraising, special events, and participant recruitment. If you are committed to advancing women in politics, we would love to utilize your talents at the Board level.

emerge Oregon Board

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