

New Data Reveals Growing Presence of Young Elected Leaders in State Legislature Across the United States

New Brunswick, New Jersey (March 5, 2024) – A new report from the [Center for Youth Political Participation](#) at Rutgers University—New Brunswick highlights the increasing number of young elected leaders (YELs) making their mark in state politics across the United States. During the 2022 primaries, some states saw a surge in the election of (160) leaders aged 35 years-old or younger. The youngest legislator is the Honorable Caroline Harris (D-52), representing Texas. The state of Minnesota stands out with twenty-four young legislators, led by the Honorable Elliott Engen (D-36A), as the youngest in their cohort. Massachusetts closely follows with twenty-two newly elected young legislators.

- In general, there remains a notable disparity in gender representation, with a higher proportion of male representatives in both chambers of the legislature in Arkansas, Alabama, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Minnesota.
- Millennials (born 1981 – 1996) and Gen Z (born 1997 – 2012) stand out as the predominant generations represented among young legislators.

While the surge in young candidate participation is a positive sign for greater representation, it remains to be seen how this momentum will translate into the 2024 primaries and beyond.

Included in the Projects key findings, include data for 15 State Houses and Senates:

In the House:

- Across 15 states, 138 young legislators, aged 35 or younger, were elected.
- Vermont, Oklahoma, and Maine saw significant growth, electing 13, 10, and 13 young legislators respectively.

The Senate, however, shows a stark contrast:

- Across 15 states, 22 young legislators, aged 35 or younger, were elected.
- States like California and Maine each elected 3 young legislators, while Alaska and Arkansas had no young Senators. Texas and Alabama each elected 1 young Senator.

Despite the progress, gender disparity persists, with over half of young senators being male, highlighting ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in politics, particularly at higher levels of government.

These figures reflect a dynamic shift in political representation, with young voices increasingly shaping legislative agendas and policy discussions at the state level. The success of these young candidates reflects a growing desire for fresh perspectives and bold leadership in the political arena. As we celebrate these historic wins, we must also recognize the challenges ahead and commit to supporting our young leaders as they work tirelessly to build a brighter future for all.

For more information or to access the full report, please visit [Center for Youth Political Participation](#)

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YOUNG ELECTED LEADERS PROJECT (YELP)

The [Young Elected Leaders Project](#) (YELP) is an initiative of the Center for Youth Political Participation, which is a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. Launched in 2002 with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the YELP studies and works with young people who run for or hold public office. We provide unique insight into youth representation in U.S. political institutions and study young leaders’ experiences in public office.

CENTER FOR YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The [Center for Youth Political Participation](#) (CYPP) is a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. CYPP celebrates and supports political learning and engagement among young people through research, public service and education, driven by the potential impact of Gen Z on American democracy. Comprised of three programs; RU Ready, RU Voting and the Young Elected Leaders Project, the Center’s work encourages young adults to see themselves as part of the political process at all stages of life.

THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

The [Eagleton Institute of Politics](#) at Rutgers University—New Brunswick studies how American politics and government work and change, analyzes how the democracy might improve, and promotes political participation and civic engagement. The Institute explores state and national politics through research, education, and public service, linking the study of politics with its day-to-day practice.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEW BRUNSWICK

[Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#) is where Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, began more than 250 years ago. Ranked among the world’s top 60 universities, Rutgers’s flagship university is a leading public research institution and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. It is home to internationally acclaimed faculty and has 12 degree granting schools and a Division I Athletics program. It is the Big Ten Conference’s most diverse university. Through its community of teachers, scholars, artists, scientists, and healers, Rutgers is equipped as never before to transform lives.