

Legislating in the First Female-Majority State Legislature: Gendered Power, Leadership, and Patterns of Sponsorship and Cosponsorship

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Timeline

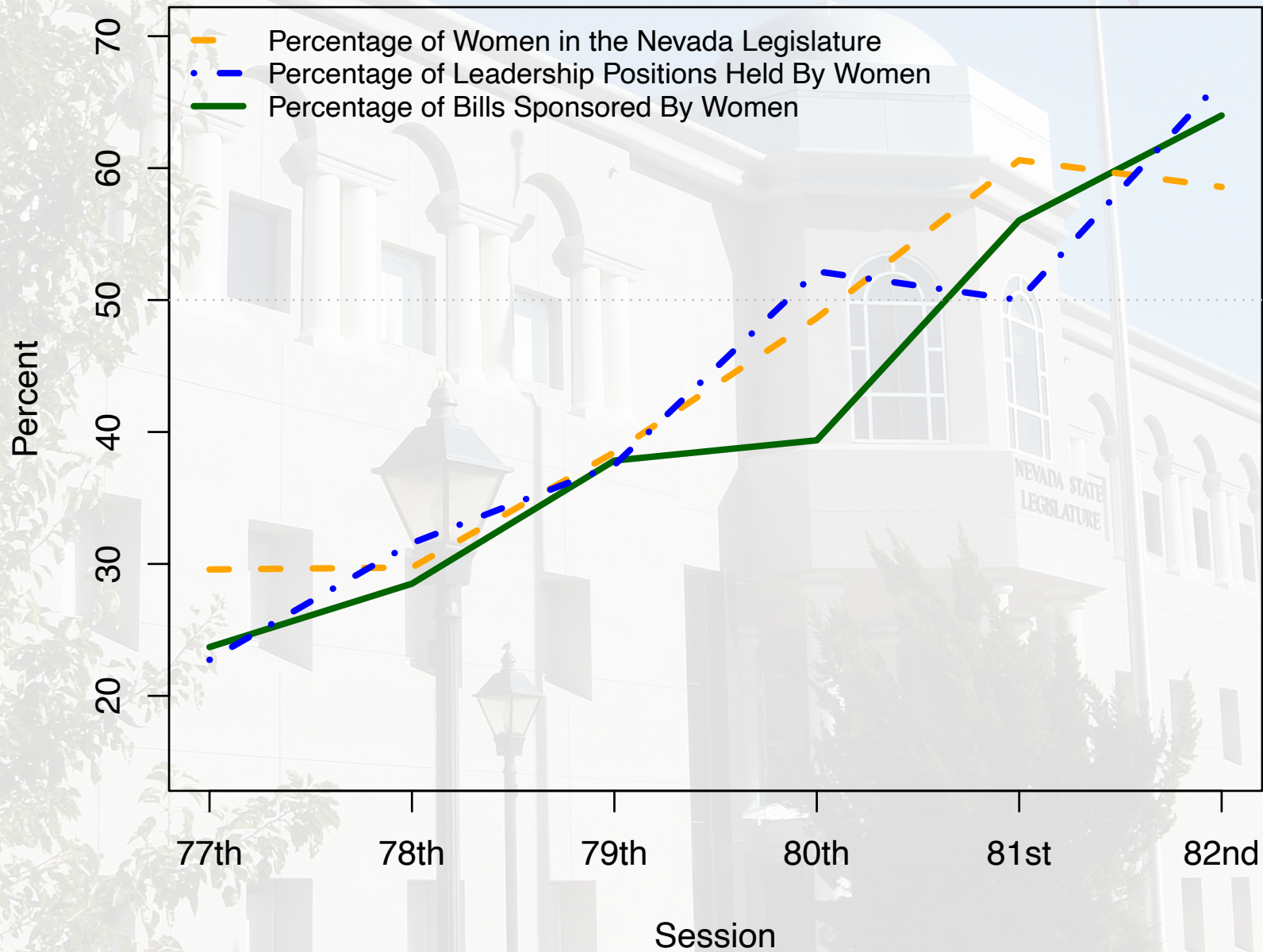
- 1918: Sadie Hurst (R - Washoe) is the first woman elected to the Nevada Legislature
- 1920: Hurst presides over Nevada's ratification of the 19th Amendment
- 1947: Most recent legislative session in which all legislators were male
- 1951: First woman in leadership (Speaker Pro Tempore Louise Aloys Smith, D - Pershing)
- 2001: First all-female leadership team (Democratic minority, Nevada Senate)
- 2007: First woman Speaker of the Assembly (Barbara Buckley, D - Clark)
- 2019: First female legislative majority
First woman Senate Majority Leader (Nicole Cannizzaro, D - Clark)
- 2023: First female majorities in both the Assembly and the Senate

Gender, Leadership and (Co)Sponsorship

Framework: Feminist Institutionalism

- How institutions shape and reflect gender roles, gendered power dynamics, and inequities within and emerging from the institution
- Potentially important roles for:
 - Majority control (Waylen 1994; Beckwith 2005)
 - “Critical actors” (Childs and Krook 2006, 2009; Thompson 2018)
- Suggests that legislative effectiveness may be related to:
 - *Fraction* of women in the legislature
 - Women occupying key *leadership* roles in the Assembly and Senate

Majorities, Leadership, and Sponsorship, 2013-2023



Design and Methods

Quantitative:

- Data: Combine sponsorship / cosponsorship data (*LegiScan*) + Legislator characteristics (*Legislator Diversity Project*) + Leadership (collected by authors)
- Legislator-level analysis: *Number of Primary / Cosponsored Bills, Cosponsor “Position”*
- Bill-level analysis: *Number of Cosponsors + Percentage of Female Cosponsors*
- Predictors: *Female Legislator, Leadership Position, Legislative Session* (trend), interactions + controls (party majorities)

Qualitative (not shown):

- In-depth interviews with $N = 25$ legislators serving in the 2019 session
- 18 women / 7 men, from both parties / chambers

Summary of Findings

1. General trend toward greater female legislative effectiveness over time
2. Partisan effects (GOP vs. Democratic majorities)
3. Support for the majoritarian perspective:
 - As majorities grew, women legislators became more effective, *but*
 - Women in leadership positions (or the fact thereof) isn't associated with female legislative effectiveness at the margin

Our Project: Women in the Nevada Legislature

- A “Critical Case Study” for feminist institutionalism
- Focus on changes brought on by both incremental and rapid change in the legislature’s composition
- Moving parts:
 - A History of Women in the NV Legislature
 - Feminist Institutionalism in Nevada State Politics
 - The Elections of 2018, 2020, and 2022 (and 2024?)
 - Leadership: Chambers, Committees, and Parties
 - Policy Work: Bills, Laws, and Agendas
 - Governing Women: Collaboration and Copartisanship
 - Constituencies, Campaigns, and Cash
 - The Future Is Female

A faded background image of the Nevada State Legislature building, a large, light-colored stone structure with a central dome and arched windows. A sign on the building reads "NEVADA STATE LEGISLATURE". There are trees on the left and right, and a flagpole with a flag on the right. A street lamp is visible in the foreground.

Thank you!

Paper: <https://bit.ly/SCGZ24>

Table 1: Member-Level Analysis

Table 1: Legislator-Level Models of Bill Sponsorship and Cosponsorship, 2013-2023

<i>Predictors</i>	Primary Sponsor	Cosponsored	Cosponsor Position
(Intercept)	1.88 (1.07)	11.35*** (0.45)	73.71*** (12.94)
Female Legislator	-3.49* (1.61)	-4.07*** (0.66)	-11.55 (18.73)
Legislative Session	<0.01 (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)	-0.81*** (0.16)
Leadership Role	0.68*** (0.04)	0.39*** (0.02)	-1.45* (0.56)
Female Legislator × Legislative Session	0.04* (0.02)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.15 (0.24)
Female Legislator × Leadership Role	0.02 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.61 (0.85)
GOP Legislator	-0.08* (0.04)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.10 (0.46)
GOP Majority Session	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.02)	-2.05** (0.74)
GOP Legislator × GOP Majority Session	0.16 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.89 (1.03)
<i>N</i>	433	433	412

Note: Entries in columns one and two are Poisson regression estimates; column three reports OLS estimates. Cell entries are coefficient estimates; standard errors are in parentheses. One asterisk indicates $P < 0.05$, two indicate $P < 0.01$, three indicate $P < 0.001$ (two-tailed). See text for details.

Table 2: Bill-Level Analysis

Table 2: Bill-Level Models of Cosponsorship, 2013-2023

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>ln(Number of Cosponsors)</i>	<i>Female Cosponsor Percentage</i>
(Intercept)	1.35*** (0.06)	13.71*** (1.28)
Female Sponsor	-0.04 (0.09)	-1.65 (1.93)
Legislative Session (77th = 1)	-0.09*** (0.01)	2.10*** (0.30)
Leader Sponsor	-0.09 (0.05)	-1.09 (0.96)
Female Sponsor × Legislative Session	0.04 (0.02)	1.05* (0.45)
Female Sponsor × Leader Sponsor	0.10 (0.07)	0.05 (1.48)
GOP Sponsor	0.03 (0.04)	-8.17*** (0.85)
GOP Majority Session	0.21** (0.07)	2.25 (1.50)
GOP Sponsor × GOP Majority Session	-0.32** (0.10)	1.80 (2.00)
R ² / Adjusted R ²	0.020 / 0.018	0.075 / 0.073

Note: $N = 3,896$. Cell entries are OLS coefficient estimates; standard errors are in parentheses. One asterisk indicates $P < 0.05$, two indicate $P < 0.01$, three indicate $P < 0.001$ (two-tailed). See text for details.