

# ELLE

## Where The Hell Are All The Women?

Hillary's historic run left "18 million cracks in the glass ceiling"

By [Gloria Feldt](#) | July 18, 2008



So where are the other female politicians who should be looking to shatter it? Here's the real reason efforts to get women to run in greater numbers have largely failed—until now. Around a table at Phoenix hot spot Switch, a half dozen mostly young women had gathered for a strategy session of Emerge Arizona, the four-year-old political leadership training group that works to elect Democratic women to political office. With its hip wine bar and organic menu, Switch shares a parking lot with Durant's, the longtime red-meat watering hole of state capital legislators and lobbyists. Which is not to say the state's female political operatives don't hang out there; goodness knows during my two decades heading Planned Parenthood in this conservative capital, I ate my share of Durant's rib eye, medium.

But politics is, inescapably, about relationships. So when Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon materialized from the shadows to shake hands, I understood why we were meeting here: Emerge wanted to be seen in plan-hatching mode. Picking Switch over Durant's signaled the group's intent to become the new face of politics.

[Click here to meet the most connected women in Washington](#)

They have a long way to go. Of the 10 candidates Emerge Arizona fielded during its first try in 2006, only three won, though “three others lost by less than 1,000 votes,” touts the group’s executive director, Dana Kennedy. Like Krista Pacion (“Pacion for the people”), 32, who campaigned for the state House of Representatives on, yes, Rollerblades across her sprawling rural district, all seven losing candidates plan to run again. Meanwhile, they’re attending party precinct meetings and doing the unsexy nuts-and-bolts work that builds name recognition and fund-raising contacts. One immediate payoff, according to Kennedy: “Six of us were elected delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Denver.”

In this historic election year, we can’t talk about women running for political office without considering the importance of being Hillary, who nearly won her party’s presidential nomination. But despite Clinton’s groundbreaking run, Nancy Pelosi’s preeminence as the first woman Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and women like Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice holding top administrative positions, the dial for women in political leadership has moved excruciatingly slowly, from 3 percent of Congress in 1979 to 16 percent in 2008. Ninety-two years after Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to the House, America stacks up an embarrassing eighty-fourth among nations in the proportion of women holding national legislative office—far behind Rwanda, Austria, and Cuba. Men run City Hall in 90 of 100 largest cities; women make up just 16 percent of state governors and less than a quarter of state legislators. Even though women comprise the majority of voters, men, by and large, still decide the laws that govern our lives, from war and peace and equal pay policies to reproductive freedom. Just what is standing in the way of gender equality in political leadership? Where are all the women in this so-called representative democracy, and why aren’t they running?