GENDER AND ELECTIONS, SECOND EDITION

This new edition describes the role of gender in the American electoral process through the 2008 elections. Tailored for courses on women and politics, elections, and gender politics, it strikes a balance between highlighting the most important developments for women as voters and candidates in the 2008 elections and providing a deeper analysis of the ways that gender has helped shape electoral politics in the United States. Individual chapters demonstrate the importance of gender in understanding presidential elections, voter participation and turnout, voting choices, the participation of African American women, congressional elections, the support of political parties and women’s organizations, candidate communications with voters, and state elections. This updated volume also includes new chapters that analyze the roles of Latinas in U.S. politics and chronicle the candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin.

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This volume had its origins in a series of three roundtable panels at professional meetings in 2002 and 2003 focusing on how women fared in the 2002 elections. Most of the contributors to this book were participants on those roundtables. As we gathered at these professional meetings, we began to talk among ourselves about a major frustration we faced in teaching courses on women and politics, campaigns and elections, and American politics. We all had difficulty finding suitable, up-to-date materials on women candidates, the gender gap, and other facets of women’s involvement in elections, and certainly, none of us had been able to find a text focused specifically on gender and elections that we could use. We felt the literature was in great need of a recurring and reliable source that would first be published immediately following a presidential election and then updated every four years so that it remained current.

At some point in our discussions, we all looked at one another and collectively asked, “As the academic experts in this field, aren’t we the ones to take on this project? Why don’t we produce a volume suitable for classroom use that would also be a resource for scholars, journalists, and practitioners?” In that moment Gender and Elections was born. We are enormously grateful to Barbara Burrell for organizing the first of our roundtable panels and thus identifying and pulling together the initial core of contributors to this volume.

We produced the first volume of Gender and Elections in the immediate aftermath of the 2004 presidential election. Gratified by the positive response, we are pleased to provide this updated and expanded version that includes information through the 2008 elections. We hope to continue to revise and publish new editions following future presidential elections.
We have added two new chapters to this edition, reflecting important developments in American electoral politics. In recognition of the growing significance of Latinos in U.S. politics, a chapter on the political role of Latinas seemed a necessary addition, and we were delighted when Christine Marie Sierra agreed to write a chapter on the political engagement and contributions of Latinas to electoral politics. History was made in the 2008 elections not only by the election of the first African American as president but also by the campaigns of Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination and Sarah Palin for the vice presidency on the Republican ticket. Although several chapters in this volume deal in one way or another with the campaigns of Clinton and Palin, the historic and unprecedented nature of the candidacies of these two women seemed to merit a more in-depth examination, leading to the addition of another new chapter by Susan J. Carroll and Kelly Dittmar.

The second edition of this book would not have been possible without the assistance of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University. Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP, has embraced and encouraged this project and been supportive in numerous ways, especially in making CAWP staff available to assist on the project. Gilda Morales, who is in charge of information services at CAWP, continues to be an invaluable source of knowledge about women and politics, and several contributors relied on her expertise as well as the data she has compiled over the years for CAWP. We also would like to thank Jessica Rowan who offered technical and logistical support.

While everyone at CAWP was helpful, we want to single out Kathy Kleeman, a senior program associate at CAWP, for assistance above and beyond what we ever could have expected. Kathy, for both editions, has spent numerous hours making each volume much better than it otherwise would have been. She brought a third set of critical eyes to the reading of every chapter, and as an extremely skilled writer, she helped to make all of our chapters more readable, accessible, and polished. We are especially indebted to her.

Finally, we also would like to thank Cambridge University Press and our editor, Ed Parsons, in particular, for unwavering enthusiasm and patience. We have both thoroughly enjoyed working with Ed and hope to continue the partnership through future election cycles.
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