



ISSUE 11/275

2016: WOMEN'S VOICES FROM AROUND THE STATE

DECEMBER 2016

## Message from the Director

In my first legislative session as OESW Director, I noticed that it was rare for women from Greater Minnesota to testify at legislative hearings, even though bills being debated would significantly impact their lives. This is understandable, of course. It's hard to have the time, flexibility in work schedules, and money to travel to St. Paul.

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So I decided to drive around the state in the months between legislative sessions and hold informal listening sessions on women's economic issues. At these sessions I simply ask, "What is successful in your area in helping women and their families achieve economic security? What barriers remain?" The information from these sessions is passed on to our legislators and legislative staff.

This newsletter summarizes the comments from nine 2016 OESW listening sessions—held in Roseau, Moorhead, St. Cloud, Winona, Grand Marais, Ely, St. Paul's East Side, and Richfield, making a total of 24 communities that have hosted these sessions in the last three years.

Also in this newsletter issue is OESW's "Women in the Minnesota Legislature 2017," where you can see how many women have been elected to serve in the state House and Senate for the coming biennium, and how this number has changed since 1922, the first year women were elected to our legislature.

The 2017 legislative session convenes on January 3. OESW will post updates on Facebook and Twitter about legislative proposals of particular significance to women's economic security.

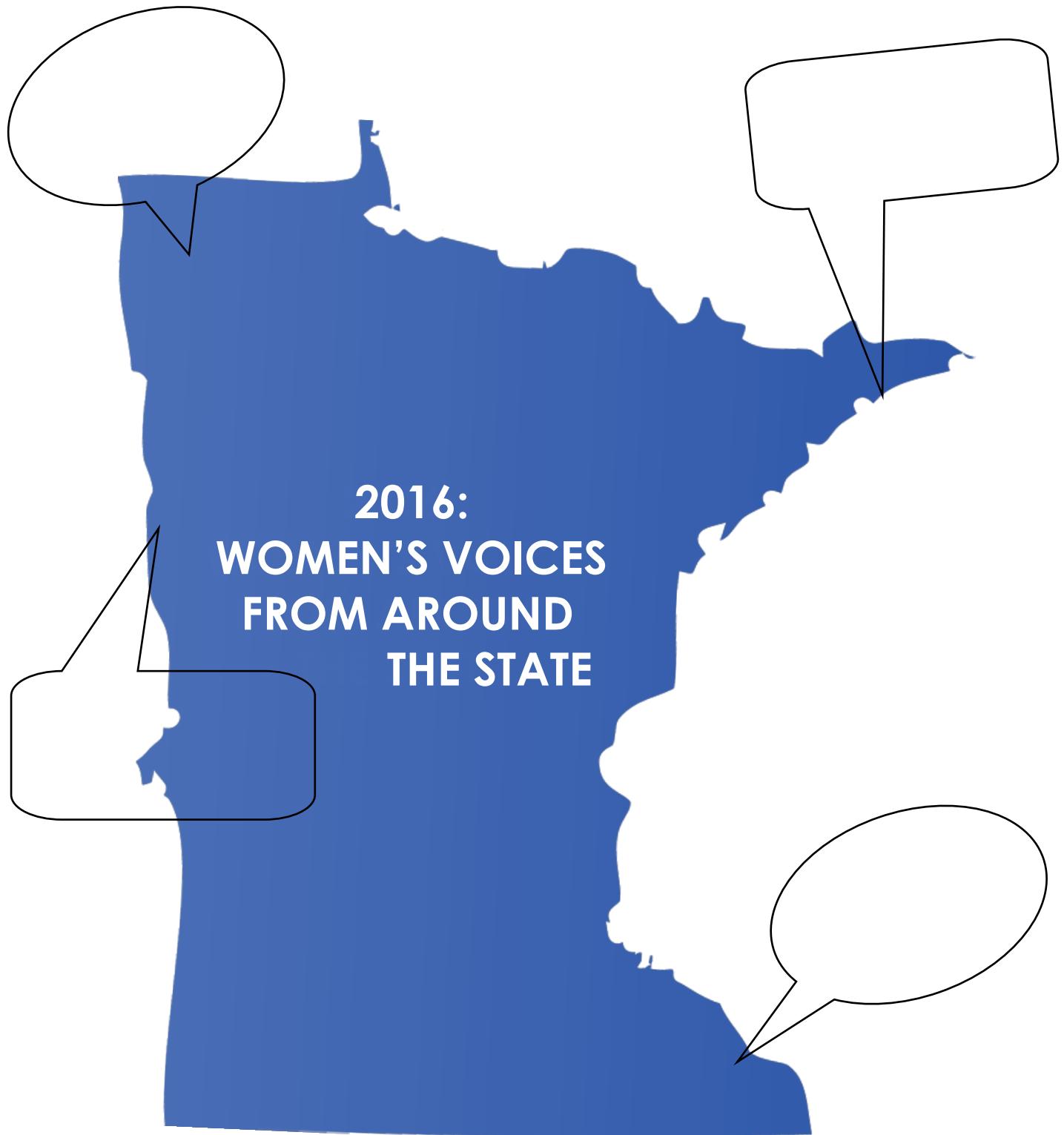
We hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative. Its purpose is to provide information to legislators, legislative staff, and the community on priority and emerging women's economic issues.



Please send your suggestions to [barbara.battiste@oesw.leg.mn](mailto:barbara.battiste@oesw.leg.mn). Visit OESW's [Facebook Page](#), [Twitter](#), and website [www.oesw.leg.mn](http://www.oesw.leg.mn).

*Barbara Battiste, Director, Office on the Economic Status of Women*

Read the full report at <https://goo.gl/0OfqSp>



*Minnesota Legislative Office on the Economic Status of Women  
December 2016*

# 2016: Women's Voices from Around the State

OESW held nine listening sessions around the state this fall: in Roseau, Moorhead, St. Cloud (one session for St. Cloud State students and one for the community), Winona, Grand Marais, Ely, St. Paul's East Side, and Richfield. In total, 126 people participated: individual citizens; representatives from nonprofit organizations and government agencies; state legislators; city and county officials; and advocates for seniors, persons with disabilities, battered women, immigrants, the homeless, and women's reproductive health.

The purpose of the listening sessions is to learn what is successful at helping women (and their families) achieve economic security and what barriers remain. It is difficult for those who live far from St. Paul to have their voices be part of the legislative debate. We learned this year that it is also difficult for those who live fairly close to the Capitol to come to legislative hearings. It is hoped that these listening sessions and this report will make this a little less difficult.

## What is Working

A success for women is the increase in women's leadership—in government, business, and nontraditional jobs like engineering and manufacturing. For example, women in the Roseau area are directors of nonprofits, high level court administrators and county officials, engineers at Polaris, veterinarians, hospital leaders, border patrol and customs officers, and school superintendent in Warroad.

All participants acknowledged, however, that parity is not yet achieved. For example, at the time of the 2016 listening sessions (shortly before the 2016 general election), Stearns and St. Louis Counties had no women commissioners. In Roseau and Clay Counties, only one of the five commissioners per county was a woman. Of the eight counties where listening sessions were held this year, only Ramsey and Cook Counties had a majority of women commissioners.

Women are turning to entrepreneurship as a path to economic security. STEM courses are integral in high school curriculums, and welcome girls.

Minnesota's communities are embracing new immigrants, celebrating the vitality and economic growth they offer to a region. There is great civic pride and individual commitment to finding creative ways to help one's community prosper.

**Read the full report at**

<https://goo.gl/0OfqSp>

## WHAT IS WORKING

**"I started in the mines in 1969, when women were zero; now there are several hundred women working in the mines, at fairly decent wages. ....Ely**

**"There's a three-month program that moves nursing assistants from \$9 to \$14 an hour. That's a drastic change."....Grand Marais**

**"[Cook County] has a higher ed program run by women that provides workforce development, boiler and forklift training, middle management training, 24/7 access to a building where I can get online, and free mentor support. [The program] has a 90% success rate. Many single moms are in the program." ....Grand Marais**

**"The biggest success that we see is the unsung, ongoing efforts among all women to make the best of what is before them. If there were only ways (like money) to make that easier." ....St. Paul's East Side**

**"Some of us Latinas got the right support systems to advance quickly. My dad had three months' education, my mom six years in Mexico. Now, my sister is a teacher; I finished my master's degree. ....Richfield**

**"Plants are allowing people to come in for hours that work for them. That works really well for women and students."....Winona**

**"We have women who have started successful businesses like Steger Mukluks. Lots of women-owned businesses in town are successful." ....Ely**

## Priority Women's Economic Issues

Lack of available, affordable child care; low pay; and lack of affordable housing were the highest priorities as barriers to women's economic security. Many participants noted that all economic issues are deeply interrelated: housing, transportation, health care, and workplace supports like paid leave were listed over and over again as essential (and often unavailable) supports for women and their families.

Two other issues were overriding in importance. First, while all women are vulnerable to economic insecurity, some groups are at greater risk: older women, women of color, single mothers, immigrant women, and those who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault. Second, there was dramatic evidence in all of the Greater Minnesota sessions of the lack of resources and services in rural Minnesota and a powerful sense of rural areas' being neglected by state policy-makers.

### Strong, Recurrent Themes

- Child care is neither affordable nor available.
- With the exception of Ely and Grand Marais, participants said jobs were available. The problems were either that the jobs did not pay a living wage, or that lack of child care, transportation, and housing prevented women from taking those jobs.
- Like child care, the problem with housing is not only that it is not affordable, but that it is not available.
- Older women are living in poverty and isolation, especially older immigrant women.
- Single mothers find it nearly impossible to take care of their children and hold a full-time job, especially when it is a low-wage job with few benefits and little flexibility.
- The high cost of health care insurance is a great concern.
- Policymakers are neglecting rural Minnesota.
- Limited resources in rural Minnesota are limiting growth and prosperity.

County	Hourly Living Wage, Single Parent with One Child
Clay	\$20.09
Cook	\$20.44
Hennepin	\$29.64
Ramsey	\$28.79
Roseau	\$16.99
St. Louis	\$19.52
Stearns	\$19.51
Winona	\$18.92

## PRIORITIES

**“It’s alarming that a single mom needs to make twice the minimum wage to get by. That’s third world country stuff.”**

.....Ely

**“We are becoming a two-state state, rural separated from the rest.”**.....Ely

**“I advocate for homeless women. It’s caused by rent, medical bills, divorce, anything. People are living outside at age 14 or 15 to age 75.”** .....St. Paul's East Side

**“We need worker rights and humane workplaces. Paid sick leave, paid parental leave, livable wages, workplaces where you can take six sick days a year for kids or self.”**

.....St. Cloud

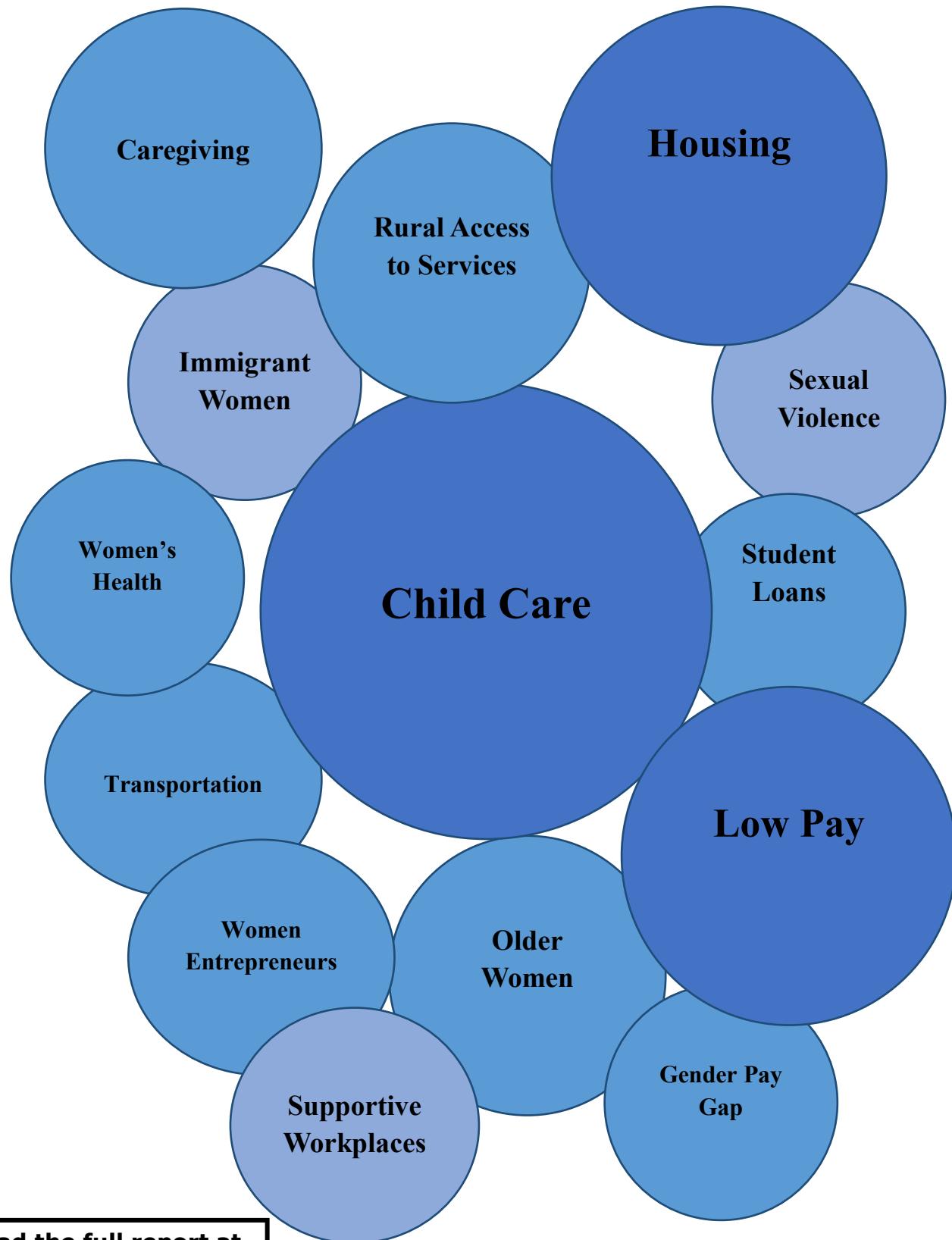
**“You can’t pay for the babysitter at \$10/ hour when work pays \$9.50.”** .....Ely

**“I’m an import—hired by Marvin Windows—biggest problem was finding a place to rent.”** .....Roseau

**“I’m scared to death what my insurance premiums will be come January.”** ....Ely

Read the full report at  
<https://goo.gl/0OfqSp>

# PRIORITY ISSUES



Read the full report at  
<https://goo.gl/0OfqSp>

“We need child care around the clock for second and third shift workers.”

Winona

“Older immigrant women—they are in a safe country, but they have lost hope, can’t work, can’t speak English. They’re isolated.”

Moorhead

“Even prorated benefits for part-time workers would help with retirement and health insurance.”

Ely

“People with disabilities often only have access to low-wage jobs.”

St. Cloud

“The DEED living wage for a single parent with one child in Cook County is \$20.44—accurate but a far cry from reality. We think the actual average here is around \$13-\$15. A lot of things cost more here than in Hennepin County, like housing and fuel.”

“People are leaving their jobs and taking care of their parents. Seniors need caregivers, but the caregivers don’t get social security.”

Richfield

Grand Marais

“Limited opportunities and stagnant income with rising prices for seniors. There is no security and nobody will accept them to work.”

“I’m struggling with student loans. I’m a homeowner with no running water, \$600 for housing, \$600 in loans. I’ve barely dented my loan principal. I have one full-time and two part-time jobs. Some days a wiser choice would be not get a college education.”

Grand Marais

St. Paul’s East Side

Read the full report at <https://goo.gl/0OfqSp>

## WOMEN IN MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE, 2017

*This report reflects certified election results from the November 8, 2016, general election.*

### Women in the Minnesota Legislature, 2017

In the November 8, 2016, general election, women were elected to 64 (31.8%) of 201 seats in the Minnesota Legislature. (One seat in the House is vacant, and will be filled by a Special Election on February 14, 2017.) This is a decrease from 68 (33.8%) in 2015. Compared to 2015, the number of DFL women decreased by 5 seats and the number of Republican women increased by one.

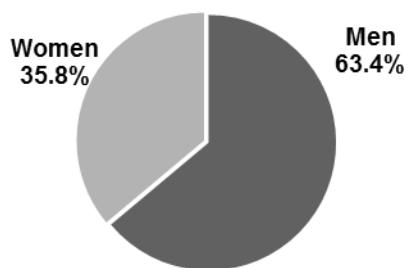
### Senate

Women were elected to 16 (23.9%) of the 67 seats in the Minnesota Senate. This is a decrease of seven seats (from 34.3% to 23.9%), from 2015.

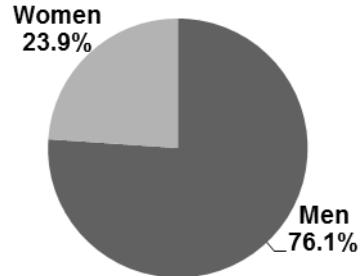
### House

Women were elected to hold 48 (35.8%) of the 134 seats in the Minnesota House of Representatives in the 2016 general election. This is an increase of 3 seats from 2015.

#### Minnesota House, 2017



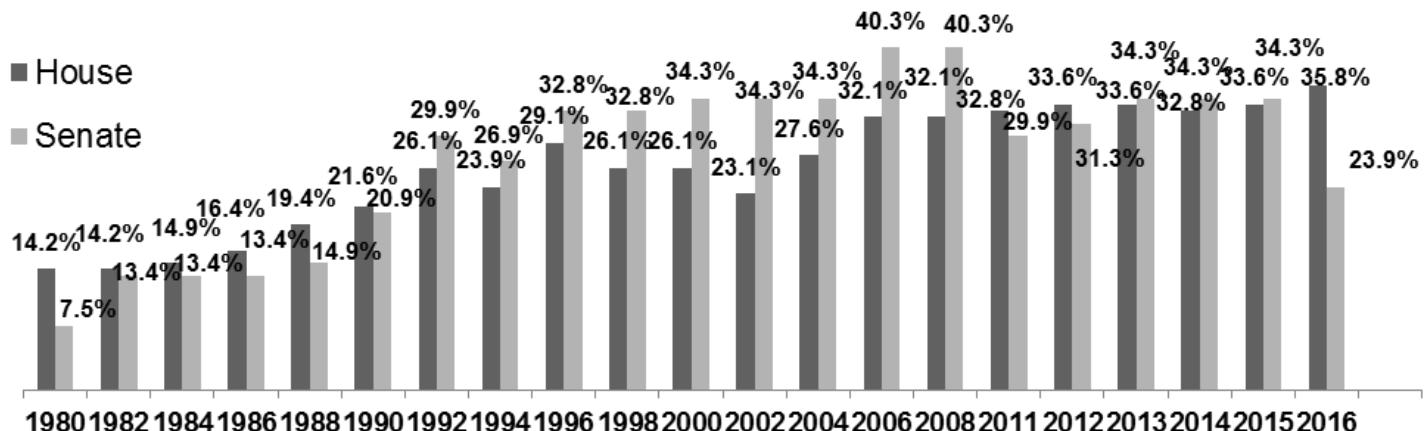
#### Minnesota Senate, 2017



### Newly Elected

Eleven women will serve their first term in the House starting in 2017: Representatives Regina Barr, Jamie Becker-Finn, Barb Haley, Erin Koegel, Mary Kunesh-Podein, Sandy Layman, Liz Olson, Ilhan Omar, Laurie Pryor, Erin Maye Quade, and Julie Sandstede. One woman will serve her first term in the Senate: Senator Carolyn Laine. (Senator Laine formerly served in the Minnesota House.)

### Women Elected to the Minnesota Legislature, General and Special Elections



Women were first elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1922, two years after women won the right to vote. From 1922 to 1970, the percentage of women in the Legislature was very low, ranging from 0 to 2.5 percent. By 1980, 11.9% of Minnesota's state legislators were women. In the 1996 general election, the percentage of women rose to 30.4%. In the 2006 and 2008 general elections the number of women elected reached a historical high of 70 (34.8%). The 2016 general election resulted in 64 (31.8%) women in the Legislature, a decrease from 68 (33.8%) in 2015.

# DEED NAMES RECIPIENTS OF NEW EQUITY GRANTS

In 2016, the Minnesota Legislature passed legislation funding a number of competitive grants aimed at helping Minnesota's people of color, women, youth, people with disabilities, and veterans achieve economic security. Here is a link to a description of grants focused on women and girls of color <http://goo.gl/33zqHa>.

DEED (the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development) has announced the recipients of most of the equity grants. See the full list here <https://goo.gl/xZnwX4>

Two categories of equity grants have not yet been awarded, though the application deadlines have passed: the "Capacity Building" grants for nonprofit organizations and the "Minnesota Emerging Entrepreneur Program."

Applications are still being accepted by DEED for grants to rural communities to increase the number of child care providers. See the article below.

## APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR CHILD CARE GRANTS

The 2016 Minnesota legislature provided funding for grants to rural communities to increase the number of child care providers, with priority to communities with a shortage of child care providers. (Areas *not* eligible are the counties of Anoka; Carver; Dakota, except the city of Northfield is eligible; Hennepin, except the cities of Hanover and Rockford are eligible; Ramsey; Scott, except the city of New Prague is eligible; and Washington.)

A total of \$500,000 is available for these grants, with the maximum for any one grant being \$150,000. Applicants must be either a local governmental unit or a nonprofit. But if you are a for-profit child care provider, or thinking of starting a for-profit child care business, or if you are a private employer that wants to help provide child care for your employees, consider collaborating with a local governmental unit or nonprofit.

Here are some possible uses of these grants (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Funding child care business start-ups or expansions
- Training of child care providers
- Facility modifications or improvements required for licensing
- Assistance with licensing and other regulatory requirements.

**Deadline for applying for these grants is January 6, 2017.**

Here is a link to detailed information <https://goo.gl/NDIwhc> For further questions and access to the data please contact Marnie Werner at [mwerner@ruralmn.org](mailto:mwerner@ruralmn.org). Marnie is with The Center for Rural Policy and Development at <http://www.ruralmn.org/>.