CREATING BALANCE: IOWA’S GENDER BALANCE LAWS
Outline

- History & overview of Iowa’s gender balance laws
  - Sherill Whisenand
- Gender balance: how Iowa made it happen
  - Kristen Corey
- The importance of data & tracking
  - Beth Coonan
- Making the case for gender balance
  - Sherill Whisenand
- Iowa Talent Bank Tool
  - Kristen Corey
A Welcome Message

From our 1st Female Iowa Governor Kimberly K. Reynolds:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/19rq2EilrOtAzy_e2tulwh2GuOH_M-tLG/view
Gender Balance

It’s part of Iowa and national history
1986: Iowa Code change

- In 1986, Iowa made history by becoming the 1st state in the U.S. to add gender balance to Iowa Code for state boards and commissions.
- At time: women occupied under 30% of the seats at the table; now = ~50%.
- Initial language in 1986 law:
  - “It is a policy of the state of Iowa that all boards, commissions, committees and councils shall reflect as much as possible, a gender balance. If there are multiple appointing authorities for a board, commission, or council, they shall consult each other to avoid a violation of this section.”
Requiring gender balance in Iowa Code

- Changes in 1987:
  - In 1986, the “as much as possible” language made it sound like gender balance was a goal, but not a requirement.
  - Changes were made to amend the code to require it.
  - *Important note*: the fact that it is required is what makes Iowa’s law different than others.
Iowa Code section 69.16A (1) "Gender balance"

1987 (current wording): state boards and commissions

1. All appointive boards, commissions, committees, and councils of the state established by the Code, if not otherwise provided by law, shall be gender balanced. No person shall be appointed or reappointed to any board, commission, committee, or council established by the Code if that appointment or reappointment would cause the number of members of the board, commission, committee, or council of one gender to be greater than one-half the membership of the board, commission, committee, or council plus one if the board, commission, committee, or council is composed of an odd number of members. If the board, commission, committee, or council is composed of an even number of members, not more than one-half of the membership shall be of one gender. If there are multiple appointing authorities for a board, commission, committee, or council, they shall consult each other to avoid a violation of this section.
The push at the local level

1990s - early 2000s:
Several women’s advocacy organizations (ICSW as lead) & key legislators started a push for Iowa to make history again by becoming the 1st state to require gender balance at local level.
Iowa Code section 69.16A (2) "Gender balance"

2009: county & city boards and commissions (effective Jan. 1, 2012)

2. All appointive boards, commissions, committees, and councils of a political subdivision of the state that are established by the Code, if not otherwise provided by law, shall be gender balanced as provided by subsection 1 unless the political subdivision has made a good faith effort to appoint a qualified person to fill a vacancy on a board, commission, committee, or council in compliance with subsection 1 for a period of three months but has been unable to make a compliant appointment. In complying with the requirements of this subsection, political subdivisions shall utilize a fair and unbiased method of selecting the best qualified applicants. This subsection shall not prohibit an individual whose term expires prior to January 1, 2012, from being reappointed even though the reappointment continues an inequity in gender balance.
How did Iowa do it?
It didn’t happen overnight

- State boards/commissions:
  - Quest initiated in 1930s with AAUW project
  - Biggest push in Iowa came in 1960s/1970s with the establishment of the ICSW
  - Several key things happened:
    - 50 States Project (started by President Ronald Reagan) – led by former Iowan/now Floridian Kappie Spencer
    - Help from national organizations and networks like the NACW

- City/county boards/commissions: push started in early 1990s (after state board/commission law already in Iowa Code)
How did Iowa do it? (State level)

- Leadership in 1986:
  - Republican Governor Terry Branstad
- Framework/argument:
  - “Good governance”
- Piecemeal strategy: advocates one by one amended bills for “gender balance” until this was known as the “usual amendment”
- Female legislators = managers of bills; Iowa had an active bi-partisan Women’s Political Caucus; drew in male allies
How did Iowa do it? (Local level)

- **Leadership in 2009:**
  - Democratic Governor Chet Culver

- **At time the law enacted:**
  - Laws or affirmative action “quotas” were being abolished

- **Framework/argument:**
  - Good governance (sound familiar?)
  - Iowa already 1\textsuperscript{st} and only in nation for state requirement; easier to make argument
  - Needed to get support of rural districts – argument: “it’s already hard to fill these positions, let alone find women to fill them”
It took a village...

- **Pushback:**
  - Iowa Association of Counties
  - Iowa League of Cities
  - Some County Supervisors
  - Legislators, citizens, staff in some rural districts

- **Advocates:**
  - Key legislators – male and female
  - Importance of rural areas: took some in rural areas to advocate that those in rural areas should have the same opportunities as those in urban areas
  - Variety of Iowa women’s organizations – LWV, AAUW, etc.
Iowa: how are we doing?

Since the addition to the Iowa Code, are boards and commissions in Iowa gender balanced?
Gender balance on Iowa’s state boards/commissions

- In 1986:
  - Women occupied less than 30% of the seats at the table
    - Some boards did not include a single woman

- Now:
  - Approximately 50% (looking at all boards/commissions as a whole)
Gender balance in Iowa counties: The good news

Percentage of total seats held by women:
- 20% or less
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41% & up
- No data

Source: Gender Balance Project: County Boards – August 2018 Data Summary, Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women in Politics, [https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/](https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/) (7 boards: adjustment, compensation, conservation, health, planning and zoning, review and veteran affairs)
Gender balance in counties: The “needs improvement” areas

Percentage of total seats held by women:

- **20% or less**
- **21-30%**
- **31-40%**
- **41% & up**
- **No data**

Source: Gender Balance Project: County Boards – August 2018 Data Summary, Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women in Politics, [https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/](https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/)
Gender balance in Iowa’s cities

Source: Gender Balance Project: Municipal Boards June 2018 Data Summary, Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women in Politics, https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/ (airport board, civil service commission, historic preservation board, housing services board, human rights commission, library board of trustees, the planning and zoning commission, water works board of trustees, and the zoning board of adjustment)
Gender balance in Iowa’s cities

Source: Gender Balance Project: Municipal Boards June 2018 Data Summary, Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women in Politics, https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/
34%: county

42%: city
Making the case for gender balance
Lessons learned in Iowa

- “Piecemeal” strategy of amending specific bills (1980s) related to state and local boards and commissions = less controversial & less of a political lift
  - also built support for more comprehensive action later on
- States with legislatures that may be unfriendly to legislation may be able to take beginning steps towards a state law if the focus is on more cities/counties adopting other progressive measures
Lessons learned in Iowa (pt. 2)

- Having bodies like a women’s commission, women's legislative caucus, etc. put gender balance in policy priorities helped.
- Coalitions with other women’s organizations helped push the issue in Iowa (especially in rural areas).
- Don’t underestimate the power of mayors and local elected officials!
POWER OF MAYORS

- Thought Leaders Need Diverse Input
- Positioned to Influence Local Norms
- In Iowa: Appoint citizens to serve on advisory boards or commissions
POWER OF MAYORS

Majority acknowledge Inequities in Institutions & Structures

- Police, Courts, *Schools*, Healthcare and Workforce
- Access to & Quality of Services to Diverse populations lagging behind
Several years after the laws have passed, the ICSW is still taking steps to help with gender balance at the state, city and county levels.
Iowa TALENT BANK

A Movement for Diversity
Partners make things happen!

- Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, Iowa State University
- Governor’s Office
- Iowa Workforce Development
- AAUW
- Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
- Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
- Etc.
Three Phases

GOVERNMENT

NON-PROFIT

CORPORATE

Mentor Match
How will it work?
Iowa Talent Bank Demos

- Application & match function not yet working
- Main page (board/commission search):
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HtyO5s7ZXar5KCJ7NUf4gAUUq5KPhg1V/view
- Searching current/upcoming openings:
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v6VmY6ceUrinBqytEOMauw67NQTQzfPQ/view
- Updating personal profile:
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kC0HpxakZLYBqmcVrOT3Fsn_T3q_ouHh/view
“Match” Function for Boards/Commissions

- Matching function built off of:
  - City
  - County
  - Interests added (boards/commissions coded with particular interest categories)

- Mentor/Mentee profiles
  - Ability to match by:
    - Same gender (no preference will be added)
    - City board service interest/service completed
    - County board service interest/service completed
    - State interest service interest/service completed
Reporting Function

- Will tell local administrators and system administrators:
  - Overall diversity of their boards/commissions
    - Race/ethnicity
    - Gender make up
    - Language(s) spoken
    - Etc.
  - GIS mapping feature
    - Give state board administrators and the Governor’s office a visual for assessing geographic diversity
Wrapping up …

- We still have our struggles
- But we will leave you with this!
Story County first all-female board of supervisors in Iowa

CATEGORIES: JULY 2019, VOICES

LET'S KEEP GOING!
Questions or need help?

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