Apr 25th, 2:45 PM - 3:45 PM

The Efficacy of Gender Quotas in Politics: The United States and Europe

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Larson, Emily, "The Efficacy of Gender Quotas in Politics: The United States and Europe" (2019). Carroll College Student Undergraduate Research Festival, 128.
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The Efficacy of Gender Quotas in Politics: The United States and Europe
Gender Studies and Political Science
Emily Larson

Abstract:
• Globally, women are underrepresented political office.
• More research must be done on solving this problem, not just why it exists.
• Gender quotas have effects in other countries, but have not been implemented in United States politics.
• This research seeks to answer whether gender quotas could work in the U.S.

Gender Quotas: Not One Size Fits All
• Reserved seats: create a mandate for minimum number of female legislators, usually established through reforms to the constitution.
• Party quotas: most common, adopted by individual parties to set new criteria for selection of candidates.
• Legislative quotas: enacted through reforms to electoral laws, and require all parties to follow the quota.

Background:
• Gender biases effect women’s electoral prospects.
• Psychological and systemic barriers to participation.

European Gender Quotas:
• Gender inequality: a key issue in European democracies
  The creation of gender quotas typically occur due to societal pressures for change.
  • Since the first gender quotas, a new wave revising the old quotas to make them even more effective.
  • European models of gender parity aim not for equal rights and opportunities, but for equal empowerment and balanced participation

Gender Quotas in the United States?
• There is societal pressure in the U.S. for increased gender parity in political offices
  • But, not seeing the same policy implementation as in Europe
• Gender bias in the Constitution itself.
• Some countries implement gender equity policy through amendments.
• Women in the US remain in the private sphere and men in the public sphere.

Analysis: It’s a Start
• Legislative candidate quotas have a positive influence on boosting the number of women candidates and elected women.
• Not whether quotas work. But must also identify the root of the problem.
• Gender quotas can balance representation, and normalize women in positions of political power, but they can’t be the only answer.