

Monday , April 2, 2018

## **Illinois Primary Election Results Show It's Still Hard for Women to Compete**

The Ida B. Wells Legacy Committee is one of the few political action committees dedicated to developing and supporting progressive African-American women candidates in Illinois. After carrying everyone else on our backs, it's time for us to carry each other.

This past election, Ida's Legacy endorsed five women for various offices. Three of the five won their respective races. As a veteran political consultant, there are a number of ways to help candidates without coordinating with campaigns—polling, direct mail, phone banking, and field are the areas that suffer when a candidate isn't endorsed by the party and doesn't have the benefit of its infrastructure, apparatus and workers.

The Illinois Primary Election and International Women's Month intersected on March 20. So far, Illinois and Texas are the only two states to hold primaries this year.

Both states saw an increase in voter turnout. A good sign more voters are engaged, since many people stay home during primary elections and let others decide for them who should be the general election nominees. Democratic turnout in Illinois is reported to be up 300 percent over 2014, the last non-presidential election year.

Surprisingly, the difference between the two states was the number of women deciding to run and ultimately win. A surge of women candidates ran for office in Texas, but not so in Illinois. Seats held by women for years fell to men.

Even more interesting is while the country is seeing an increase of black women candidates running for office at every level of government and being successful, that wasn't the case in Illinois. Of the more than 50 black women to run for office, including three candidates for lieutenant governor, the results are a mixed bag.

According to Sarah Brune, executive director for the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, women candidates face more hurdles than their male counterparts. "There may be more people interested or activated to get involved in politics, but being a candidate for office is nothing easy or simple—it's difficult, and it requires a lot of time...money and resources," Brune told a reporter.

For black women the hurdles are steeper, because they don't have family, business or financial resources to raise the money needed to run for higher office. There is no good old-boys network for black women.

Naperville resident, Lauren Underwood, who emerged as the Democratic nominee and will be facing Randy Hultgren in the 14th Congressional District, told [USA Today](#) that running her campaign was particularly hard in the expensive Chicago media market. “Black women have a unique set of challenges,” including a dearth of organized donor networks from a “shared cultural background.” Only a few groups support black women running for office, she concluded.

Ida’s Legacy is holding its first luncheon fundraiser featuring Hillary Rodham Clinton on Thursday, April 12, 2018 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel, 301 E. North Water Street. As the first woman nominee of the Democratic Party, 96 percent of black women voted for Clinton. Her appearance and anticipated call to action at Ida’s Legacy luncheon are an acknowledgement of how important black women are to the democratic process, not only as voters but future office holders.

Please join us for this momentous event as Ida’s Legacy celebrates a great first year of recognizing the value of black women to the progressive movement and democratic process.