

Our Story Close the gap CA is a campaign to achieve gender parity in the legislature by increasing the number of progressive women running in open, winnable seats.

We recruit.



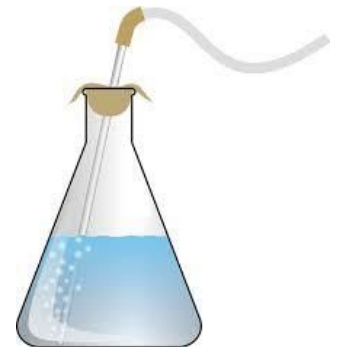
Close the gap CA (ctgCA) was prompted by the convergence of two political shifts. First, California changed its term limits, allowing legislators to stay in the Assembly and/or Senate for 12 years. Because of this shift, the gender split of legislators in place in 2016 would likely remain frozen until the first group of legislators elected with 12-year terms were forced out in 2024.

Second, the percentage of women in the legislature has been declining. Over the past decade it has fallen from 31% to 22%. We watched this backward trend and knew an intervention was needed to stop the slide and reverse course.

California once ranked 5th in the U.S. for the number of women in its Legislature. Today, we rank 32nd. The benefits of women's participation in legislatures are well documented: women expand a legislature's agenda, demand transparency and inclusion in governance, add depth to policy discussions and can change the outcome of votes.

Research shows that while women win elections at the same rate as men, they don't run as often. Men will also self-nominate while women often wait to be asked. Given these findings, it made sense to launch a recruiting effort that coupled an invitation to run with an in-depth exploration of what a campaign for the legislature means for each woman.

Beta Tests in 2014 and 2016 Close the gap CA launched in Los Angeles on June 1, 2013, only 9 months before the March filing deadline for the 2014 election. We recruited several candidates but none were successful. Though disappointing, one result of our 2014 efforts was the realization that most candidates had little understanding of the role Sacramento interests play in the outcome of legislative contests; that they needed to run two campaigns – one in their district and one in the Capitol.



In January of 2015, ctgCA hosted its first 'Sacramento Symposium' where 27 prospective candidates were invited for a day of intense learning from legislators, PAC and Executive Directors of endorsing organizations, political and party operatives, policy experts and senior legislative advisors. The Symposium launched several successful candidates.

In anticipation of the 2016 election cycle, ctgCA vetted hundreds of women, explored candidacies with 83, and **21 of them ran in 17 target districts**. Of those 21, **15 advanced to the November election** and **7 now serve in the Legislature**, including 5 Latinas elected to the Assembly. **Two-thirds of our recruits were women of color**. As a bonus, two women we recruited ultimately ran in non-target districts: one won, one lost.

We employed trial and error in 2014 and 2016, improving our methods as we went along. We learned there are talented, dedicated, progressive women willing to run, but they need to be asked and, most importantly, informed before they make a decision. Start early; prior public service is valuable, but not mandatory; know the community; understand the local party apparatus; and appreciate the way Sacramento politics affect your race.

In those formative years, our work was a labor of love. More than a dozen women across the state worked part-and-full-time as volunteers or for stipends and daily expenses. Our annual budget for those years was just under \$200,000. As we look ahead to what we want to achieve over the next decade, we continue to professionalize our operation and keep our focus on recruiting.

Prepare and Recruit in 2018 and 2020 Over the next decade we



have an opportunity to achieve gender parity. While there will be open seats in 2018 and 2020, the windfall will follow the reapportionment in 2022. In the three successive elections, legislators elected under 12-year limits will term out.

We know there will be fewer open seats over the next 4 years. As we recruit in these districts, we are both anticipating the domino effects of Legislative and Congressional retirements and building a progressive bench by recruiting in open county supervisor seats where we anticipate 2022, 2024, 2026, and 2028 legislative vacancies.

Seize opportunities in '22, '24, '26 and '28 Our experience

has shown that it's possible to reverse course and gain ground with accomplished candidates who match their districts. We look forward to declaring victory and putting ourselves out of business in 2028.

What was born as a labor of love has grown into a strategic, statewide campaign with a team ready to seize the opportunities to achieve gender parity in the CA legislature. We can get there, but we need financial resources to focus on recruiting instead of fundraising to keep our lights on.

At close the gap CA, we remain committed to achieving gender parity by 2028. By adding an additional recruiter in LA, further mining the purple districts in the Central Valley and being ready with a solid list of prospects in the event a legislative seat opens anywhere in the state, we can seize each and every opportunity to elect another progressive woman to the CA legislature.



In order to reach the momentous, but challenging, goal we've set, we need seed funding now to establish a solid base of operations and a committed revenue stream to grow our network of recruiters, our field of prospective candidates and, ultimately, the number of progressive women in California's Legislature.