



*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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California Leads the Way for Moms in State Legislatures

SACRAMENTO – 16 September, 2026 – New research from [Vote Mama Foundation](#), a non-partisan non-profit building the political power of moms, shows that **California ranks number one in the country for the percentage of state legislators who are moms of minor children.**

Twenty-six of the state's 120 state legislators, or 21.7 percent, are moms of minor children, exceeding the 18.5 percent of moms among California's population. Only three states have reached proportional representation of moms—California, Virginia, and Nevada.

Close the Gap California's targeted recruiting has been a powerful driver of reflective representation in the state, with 20 of their 27 Recruits who have been elected since 2016 being moms.

"I am the 203rd woman to be in the State Legislature. I'm the youngest mother, and in the Assembly, I'm the youngest Latina," stated Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez (Close the Gap California Class of 2024). "We belong in all spaces. When we have a seat at the table, the needs and experiences of women and families are represented in the decisions we make. We can work together to ensure better outcomes for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our collective future," continued Rodriguez.

Vote Mama Foundation points to parenthood status as a centrally important life experience that shapes how lawmakers see the world and the issues they prioritize.

There has been a 59.1 percent increase in moms' representation across the U.S. since 2022, when Vote Mama Foundation first began tracking the data. In California, the number has doubled since 2022, increasing from 13 (10.8 percent) to 26 (21.7 percent) moms of minor children serving in the Legislature.

Nationally, moms remain underrepresented: only 8.3 percent of all state legislators as of February 2026 are moms of minors, less than half the number needed to achieve proportional representation matching the estimated 18.2 percent of the total U.S. population who are moms with minor children.

According to new demographic analyses released by Vote Mama Foundation this week, 33.6 percent of legislator moms of minors are women of color, and 8.3 percent are LGBTQ+. Their political affiliation varies significantly—nearly 70 percent of the moms of minors serving in state legislatures are Democrats, and just 29 percent are Republicans.

“For too long, women and moms of all backgrounds have lacked the representation they deserve in the State Legislature,” stated Assemblymember Darshana Patel (Close the Gap California Class of 2024). “Representation isn’t simply about visibility; it’s about having leaders who personally understand our lived experiences, our hopes, our struggles, and the communities that we serve. As a mother, I know firsthand what it means to balance caregiving with service and a sense of duty to build a better future for the next generation. We need to continue creating pathways for moms to see public service as a place where they belong and where their experiences are an asset.”

California’s State Senate became majority women for the first time in history after the 2024 election, and the Legislature overall has reached an all-time high of 49 percent women—just one seat shy of parity. The Women’s Caucus is the Legislature’s largest caucus, and its 2026 priorities include issues important to all Californians: affordability; childcare and education; public safety and gender-based violence; healthcare access; support for vulnerable communities; and workplace and economic equity.

The upcoming November election will determine whether California maintains its global leadership in gender representation or falls behind.

“Moms absolutely change the game when voters elect them. Moms shift government’s focus to the kitchen table issues keeping us all up at night, and they prioritize responsive policy and budget solutions. I’m proud to see so many Close the Gap California Recruits working hard on top issues like childcare access,” stated Susannah Delano, Executive Director of Close the Gap Catalyst and Close the Gap California. “Proportional representation of moms is an encouraging milestone, and testament to how dramatically leadership in our state is transforming, but achieving and maintaining our numbers is not guaranteed. The reality is that with at least 10 incumbent women legislators departing in 2026, California stands a very real chance of backsliding on women and moms’ representation this year. California’s challenges demand that we keep up the momentum.”

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About Close the Gap Catalyst

Close the Gap Catalyst is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization centering women’s leadership. We’re integrating strategic initiatives with advocacy, recruitment and coalition-building work. Through research, education, advocacy and leadership cultivation, Catalyst works to make reflective representation the norm and build power in parity beyond election day.

For more information, visit closethegapca.org/catalyst