

Improving the conditions for women's participation in a Brazilian subnational legislative: the trajectory of a constitutional amendment.

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Feminist theory has offered new institutionalism key contributions that understand women's underrepresentation as part of women's historical exclusion from the public arena and as an outcome of rules and procedures. Brazil is the country with the lowest number of women parliamentarians in Latin America and one of the lowest numbers in world. This has motivated studies on women's political representation that seek to examine obstacles to the election of women, the conditions under which the few women manage to get elected, and also the performance of female deputies and of the women's caucus. Considering institutional affordances and contextual factors, the following study focuses on the determining the trajectory of the State Constitutional Amendment 16/2015, in the State Assembly of Minas Gerais, one of the largest in Brazil. The amendment states that every committee and the Directing Board are to have at least one member of each gender. It has gone through several changes and might reach the floor, notably, in a time when the Assembly has an unprecedented 10% in female members. A bill such as this has symbolic and practical effects, immediately and in the long term. Through the review of internal regiment, text analyses, and interviews with state deputies and social movement participants who were involved in the construction of the bill, we hope to demonstrate opportunities and obstacles to pass a bill that has as its objective increasing female participation within the legislative house.