

Boston Business Journal

November 18, 2011

Number Of Women On Boards Remains Stagnant In Massachusetts

By Mary Moore

An annual report on the status of women as corporate directors and executives shows little change since last year in the composition of leadership in Massachusetts' 100 largest public companies.

Of the 836 seats in the boardrooms of these companies, women fill 93 of them — a number that hardly has changed over the past half-dozen years, according to the report.

Forty-one companies have no women directors at all.

Meanwhile, women hold 9.6 percent of the 710 executive officer positions in the 100 largest public companies, an increase from 8.9 percent last year but still lower than the levels in 2006 and 2007, the report states.

Called the 2011 Census of Women Directors and Executive Officers of Massachusetts Public Companies, the report not only notes the “dearth” of women in boardrooms and executive suites, it also predicts “there is little to suggest likely improvement.”

Twenty-nine companies in Massachusetts have no women directors or executive officers at all.

“It doesn't mean they can't change. This is a societal change and it requires time and a lot of work,” said Lucinda Doran of the Boston Club, which collaborates with **Bentley University** and Mercer to publish the Census.

Doran later said, “It just requires keeping at it and cultivating where we can and keeping the needle moving forward.”

The fact that a dozen of the state's public companies fell off the list of largest entities — due to declining revenues, acquisitions or relocation — accounts for at least part of the changes in this year's Census.

The shift in public companies led to the loss of five women directors, a gain of four women executive officers and a gain of four women among the most highly compensated executives.

While the Census highlights many of the deficits for women in boardrooms and C-suites, on the bright side, women are CEOs at a half-dozen of the companies included in the 2011 Census, which is double the number of women leaders last year.

In addition, three companies that previously had all-male boards added women in the past year.

Looking forward, the census predicts there will be no significant increase in the presence of women directors on the boards of the state's largest companies.

“More women are rising to leadership in the handful of companies that historically have recognized the value of inclusion and diversity, and women continue to be virtually shut out of the many companies that traditionally have had only male directors and executive officers,” the report reads.

“This situation appears to be fairly well-ingrained and thus difficult to transform.”