

# Report says no net gains for women in executive jobs, board rooms

*By Kathleen Gallagher of the Journal Sentinel*

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Women have made no net gains in the executive suites and boardrooms of Wisconsin's largest companies in the past two years, according to the latest report on the topic by Milwaukee Women inc.

The state's top 50 public companies added a total of 12 women directors and executives during 2007-'09, but 12 women left similar positions during the same period, the report shows - a net change of zero.

Eight years after it began calling attention to gender inequality, the group reported Monday that only a handful of Wisconsin's top 50 public companies have embraced gender diversity as a business strategy.

Milwaukee Women inc is urging the state's biggest public companies to make women a combined 25% of their board members by 2014 by filling one-third of each year's total vacancies with females, Tracy Klein told about 150 business people at a lunch meeting.

"That would put Wisconsin companies on par with those in other areas. It would be a very, very important statement to make in this community," said Klein, a member of Milwaukee Women inc's steering committee and a lawyer in the Milwaukee office of Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren.

Boards must drive the strategy for inclusiveness and diversity, and Milwaukee Women inc will be contacting big companies' boards to help them with that effort, Klein said. The group can turn to resources such as the Alliance for Board Diversity, the Center for Executive Women at Northwestern University's Kellogg School, Klein said.

Milwaukee Women inc's 10-year target is for the state's biggest public companies to achieve 50-50 gender parity, Klein said.

The group - which is run by a steering committee of 36 women from industry, academia and the nonprofit sector - will release its next report on the topic in 2011.

Women represent a quarter or more of the board at four of the companies: Alliant Energy Corp.; Associated Banc-Corp; Journal Communications Inc., publisher of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; and School Specialty Inc., it said.