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To: Director of Political Communications and Policy at EMILY's List

From: Jessica Laycock, Political Communication and Policy Assistant at EMILY's List

Subject: Underrepresentation of Women in U.S. Public Office & the ERA

Summary: The current policies, organizations and individuals that are working to support women in becoming political thought leaders are from certain Democratic female-Members of Congress, the National Organization for Women, ourselves and the liberal-minded Progressive citizens of the United States. Nevertheless, the representation of women in US politics is very low mainly due to the fact that women do not run for public office as often as men. We therefore, must encourage girls and women to run for office and afford them the full protection under the law by supporting the Equal Rights Amendment.

Stakeholders: Women of the United States Senate, Congress and Judiciary, the Women in the U.S., Voters in the U.S., Citizens of the U.S. & Women of the World.

The Issue:

“The share of state legislators who were women took off starting in the 1970s, according to data from the National Conference of State Legislatures. But it has leveled off since 2010. In governors' mansions, the share of female governors spiked at 18 percent (that is, nine governors), in 2004 and 2007” (Kurtzleben, 2016). According to an article by C. Miller, a gender, family, policy and economy correspondent for the New York Times, in the United States the chances of a woman becoming elected to public office is actually as likely as it is for a man (Miller, 2016). The problem lies in the fact that women don't run for public office as often as men do. It is truly a self-esteem issue. “Women are less likely than men to receive the suggestion to run for office — from anyone” (Kurtzleben, 2016). The role of sexism in the media has had a large impact on how women perceive themselves and places societal pressure on them to be beautiful, demure and passive. From a young age, the media, advertisers and the entertainment

industry present damaging images, wording and situations to young girls who are learning for the first time, what they can be when they grow up. “This confidence gap is not limited to politics. One often-cited study found that when men and women performed equally on a science test, women thought they performed worse, and were less likely to enter a science competition as a result” (Miller, 2016).

There was a short shift in 1992 when there was “the so-called Year of the Woman. In the next year’s Congress, the number of women climbed from 29 to 47, and four new women also entered the Senate, bringing the total of female senators to six... Today, there are 104 women in Congress — the highest total ever, but still far lower than women’s total share of the population” (Kurtzleben, 2016). However, it is important to note that “[f]emale members of Congress from both parties [have said] that women need an extra nudge (or three) before they finally decide to run for office. Women state lawmakers [have said] that they had to be talked into running” (Kurtzleben, 2016). Furthermore the data shows that “in the last mayoral elections in the top 100 cities, only 19.3 percent of candidates were women” (Miller, 2016).

It was only last year, in 2016, that Hillary Rodham Clinton became the first woman ever to run as a Presidential candidate for a major political party (Kurtzleben, 2016). Meanwhile, organizations such as EMILY’s List and the National Organization for Women, as well as many female Senators and Congresswomen, and the two female Supreme Court Justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor, all advocate for more participation of women in politics. Women like Nancy Pelosi, Dianne Feinstein, Kamala Harris, Barbara Lee, Jackie Speier, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand and several, but sadly not nearly enough, more have come out publically to encourage women to run. In fact, “[w]omen make up a bigger share of national

and state lawmakers than ever, and yet the share of women in major political positions remains disproportionately low. Women make up around 19 percent of all members of Congress and less than 25 percent of all state legislators. They also make up six of the nation's 50 governors, or 12 percent" (Kurtzleben, 2016).

As this memo has previously mentioned, there are many organization working to bring more women into the public sector. The Status of Women in the States says that "[w]omen's status in the United States consistently lags behind men's; despite some progress in recent decades, women earn less than men, experience higher poverty rates than their male counterparts, face specific adverse health conditions, and remain underrepresented in political office across the nation. While these disparities have an impact on all women, certain population groups—including women of color, low-income women, recent immigrants, and women living in rural and inner city areas—are disproportionately affected" (Status of Women Data). Only through effective education, healthcare and socioeconomic reform can this obstacle be overcome. For women to truly realize their rights of self-determination, it is necessary for girls to be empowered to feel entitled to every leadership opportunity afforded to them, from the moment that they are born.

As of the end of January 2017, two Democrats and Members of the U.S. Senate and House, Sen. Robert "Bob" Menéndez [D-NJ] on Jan 20, 2017 & Rep. Carolyn Maloney [D-NY12] on Jan 24, 2017, have jointly-proposed S.J. Res. 6 and H.J. Res. 52: "A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to equal rights for men and women" (Menendez, 2017). This bill serves as a revitalization of the attempt to pass the Equal Rights Amendment of 1923 which "[d]eclares that women shall have equal

rights in the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction. Prohibits the United States or any state from denying or abridging equal rights under the law on account of sex” (Menendez, 2017).

To conclude, I would urge Emily’s List to put its full support behind the new ERA. It is very unfortunate that the women of the United States are not fully protected under the law, as they should be under the 14th amendment. Nevertheless, the reiteration of this right through an amendment, though incredibly offensive, is absolutely necessary. As conservative Republican character, Ainsley Hayes, on Aaron Sorkin’s television program *The West Wing*, so eloquently stated about the Equal Rights Amendment — “A new amendment we vote on declaring that I am equal under the law to a man, I am mortified to discover there’s reason to believe I wasn’t before. I am a citizen of this country, I am not a special subset in need of your protection. I do not have to have my rights handed down to me by a bunch of old, white men. The same Article 14 that protects you, protects me, and I went to law school just to make sure” (Sorkin, 2001).

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