

Unit 8

Leadership Choices: Win a Seat at the Table

Gender affects public opinion, decision-making, voting behavior, and political involvement at all levels – national, local and on campuses. Unit 8 reviews the role of the gender gap in public opinion and voting, and the need for more women and feminists in public decision-making positions to reflect and represent women’s views on issues such as reproductive choice.

The feminists of the 19th and early 20th century envisioned a day when women would not only vote, but also when women’s votes would affect the outcome of elections, and would create a more compassionate, nonviolent society. Such a society would outlaw child labor, aid the poor, treat the sick, care for the elderly, end war as well as violence toward women, and educate the young.

The gender gap in voting is a powerful weapon for women to win equality, reproductive freedom, and a change in the spending priorities of the nation. What the suffragists had envisioned at the turn of the century has now happened at the end of this century. Women are influencing the agenda of the nation with their votes.

William Jefferson Clinton is the first president of the United States elected by the gender gap. Not only did a majority of women vote for Clinton – if only men had voted in 1996, Bob Dole would be the President. The gender gap in favor of Clinton was fueled by women’s concerns about Medicare, Social Security, education, and abortion rights. Men placed greater emphasis on taxes and the deficit in their presidential voting.

Today the underrepresentation of women in the decision-making spheres of all the major areas of our society – elections and appointed office, in business, executive suites, in college and university administration, law, medicine, science, athletics, media and religion – leads to a devaluation of women’s concerns, needs, and issues. Most importantly, the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles leads to a narrowing of choices not only in leadership itself but also in options for decision-making. The undervaluing of women’s talents and contributions to decision-making hurts not only women and girls but also our society as a whole.

If women were equally represented in Congress and state legislatures today, the issue of reproductive choice for women would be settled and the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution would be ratified. Additionally, affirmative action for women and people of color would remain intact until discrimination had ended, and spending for family planning, health care, the elderly, education, and the poor would be dramatically increased. This is not just wishful thinking – public opinion poll after poll shows a major gender gap on all of these issues. Moreover, studies with elected officials show these same gender gaps (Center for the American Woman and Politics).

The Gender Gap in Voting and Public Opinion

The gender gap in voting was first identified by Eleanor Smeal in 1980 when she was president of the National Organization for Women. As she led the drive to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution, Smeal noticed that 8% fewer women than men voted for Ronald Reagan.

In Smeal's 1997 address to the National Press Club regarding the discovery of the gender gap and its importance, she stated:

This gender gap could be the power we needed to ratify the ERA. As pollster Louis Harris has said, "The power that any group or any combination of voters can get is in direct proportion to the degree to which they are the margin of difference." It's the power of the margin of difference.

*The **gender gap** – and let us define it here clearly so there can be no mistake about it – is the measurable difference in the way women and men vote for candidates and in the way they view political issues. **It is the margin of difference between women and men—not the votes of all women or all men but the margin of difference between the two groupings.***

The gender gap is not the difference between how different groupings of women voted – but the difference between women and men. In this past election it was widely reported that the gender gap was 17% – the difference between the percentage of women voting for Clinton and the percentage of women voting for Dole. But that is wrong. The gender gap – the difference between the percentages of women and men voting for Clinton – was actually 11%: the largest gender gap in Presidential polling recorded.

Nobody today is disputing the importance of the gender gap, which has in some cases determined the outcome in elections for U.S. Senators, members of Congress, Governors, and now even the President of the United States. But, today,

debate continues over the "why" of the gender gap and the relevance of the gender gap.

The gender gap in voting is based on gender gaps in public issues primarily in three cluster areas: violence, health and human services, and women's rights. Virtually since public opinion polling began, women have registered different opinions from men on a whole host of significant gender gap issues.

Since World War II women have been more reluctant to send troops into battle by some 20 percentage points than men. Women have been more opposed to the use of violence in international relations or in domestic disputes, and more concerned with issues of domestic violence and gun control.

In poll after poll, year after year, women have been more concerned about the poor, health care, education, Medicare and Medicaid, welfare, and Social Security. Additionally, they support social spending by the government by about 15 percentage points more than men.

And, in poll after poll, women have supported women's rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion rights, and affirmative action for women and minorities at a higher intensity level than men. Women have been more willing than men to condition their votes on the basis of these issues by a margin of some 10 points.

The gender gap in voting is fundamentally rooted in the gender gap in attitudes on public issues. And the gender gap is based on life experience and self interest.

Women's rights in particular are always given short shrift as a principal cause of the gender gap. But it is no coincidence that a gender gap in voting on the presidency first emerged in the 1980 election, when the Republican Party platform and its presidential candidate came out against the ERA and legalized abortion. Until the Right Wing became dominant in national Republican politics, equal rights for women and abortion were more or less bipartisan issues. Every president until Reagan, Republican and Democrat alike, had supported the ERA. Both Ford and Carter were for the ERA

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and legal abortion. Women did not see these issues polarized on party lines until 1980 – and even then the picture was confusing. There were many Republicans who supported the ERA and legalized abortion and many Democrats who opposed, and vice versa.

But with the emergence of the new Right this all gradually changed. And what started as a tentative gender gap is becoming institutionalized. If the Radical Right is going to continue to push the Republican Party to oppose abortion rights, affirmative action, and social spending on health care and education, women are going to become more and more alienated from the Republican Party. And more men, by the way, are being pulled away from the Republicans by third party movements. For example, Max Cleland's victory in Georgia resulted from the combination of a third party candidate and a 15 point gender gap.

But political pundits, parties, and candidates are still often not fazed by these facts. Most often they dwell on chasing men's votes. Or, they simply try to explain away the gender gap in terms of marital status, economic status, suburban dweller, soccer moms Anything but gender. But the gender gap is gender. The gender gap cuts across race, economic class, residence, age, and party lines.

Since 1964 women have cast more votes than men. Since the early 1980s, women have been registering and voting at consistently higher rates than men. This participatory behavior, combined with a larger proportion of women in the adult population, adds up to about 8 million more women in the electorate than men. With this voting advantage, women can determine the outcome of elections even with very small gender gaps.

Today, we have perhaps the clearest of gender gaps – a majority of women's votes elected the President and a majority of men's votes elected the Republican Congress. How could the Republican Party have prevailed with more women voting? In total numbers more people voted Democratic than Republican in the 1996

aggregate House races. The Gingrich majority depends on some 20,000 votes in just 10 districts. With gerrymandering in the House districts and with each state having two senators regardless of population size, women's votes and for that matter racial minority votes are given less weight. You see, women and men no longer are distributed evenly throughout the population. Some 45% of women today live without a spouse in the household – divorced, separated, widowed, or never married. And because women on the average have less income than men, they are more likely to live in lower-income housing, clustered in urban areas.

Abortion is another key gender gap issue, which shows signs of only growing in potency. Poll after poll shows that the public believes abortion should be legal and should be a woman's choice. **But, for the first time since Roe v. Wade in 1973, both Houses in Congress have a majority against legal abortion.** And every time a doctor is shot or a clinic is bombed, our support increases. Anti-abortion extremists are recruiting for us. People want to end the debate over abortion by allowing women to make their own choices. Violence and terrorism is not an acceptable political strategy in a civilized society. Anti-abortion extremists are making themselves political pariahs.

The endurance of abortion as a campaign issue and a gender gap issue is clear. Our National Women's Equality Poll, conducted by Louis and Peter Harris, showed that 17% of the electorate are certain to shift their votes away from a candidate who took a position opposite to theirs on the right to choose. And, of this 17%, the overwhelming majority-79%, would come down against the anti-abortion candidate. The gender gap here is enormous. Of pro-choice women, 59% said they would be likely to vote against a candidate opposed to abortion rights, compared with 47% of pro-choice men.

But conventional wisdom in Washington is that abortion had little effect on the 1996 election. The data, however, tell us a different story. Pre-election polls attested to the enduring

importance of abortion as a campaign issue and a gender gap issue. An August 1996 Newsweek poll found that 33% of voters rated abortion as one of the most important issues in deciding who to vote for president. Again, a substantial gender gap appeared: 37% of women said abortion was one of the most important issues, compared with 28% of men.

Of significance, the abortion issue was even more important for young voters. An August 1996 poll of adults 17-29 found that 56% of young people identified abortion as important to their voting. Another poll revealed that young voters were as likely to rank abortion a key issue as crime, welfare, health care, or the deficit.
—(Smeal, “From Gender Gap to Gender Gulf”)

(For a thorough discussion of the gender gap and women’s rights issues see Smeal, *Why and How Women Will Elect the Next President*, 1984).

The gender gap in voting and public opinion polls is also apparent in institutional decision-making. The underrepresentation of women in university and college leadership positions leads to a devaluing of women’s issues and concerns. For example, at one university, feminists led a campus demonstration after the administration, which had invested in a new lighting system for the football stadium, said it could not afford to improve lighting on campus for public safety.

Women in Public Office

Women today are 13.6% of the members of Congress – 13.6% of the members of the House of Representatives, and 14% of the Senate. There are 59 women voting representatives out of 435 and 14 women Senators out of 100. Two women in Congress are non-voting members – Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia and Donna Christian-Green of the Virgin

Islands. At the present rate of growth it will take 280 years – until the year 2276 – for women to hold 50% of the Congressional seats (CAWP).

Nearly all incumbent pro-choice women won re-election in 2002 – although the only incumbent female Representative to lose in 2002, Congresswoman Connie Morella (R-MD), was pro-choice. The only woman Senator to lose was pro-choice Senator Jean Carnahan (D-MO), who was running to complete the term won by her late husband former Governor Mel Carnahan in 2000.

The Senate gained two women in 2002. Senator Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The latter was appointed by her father to fill the remainder of his term that he vacated when he was elected Governor of Alaska.

African American women make up 2% of the members of Congress. Hispanic women are 1.4%. Asian American women had one member in Congress – Patsy Mink of Hawaii – until she died from pneumonia in the summer of 2002. (Her seat was filled by a male candidate.) Of the 59 women in the House of Representatives, African American women are 19% and Hispanic women are 10.2%.

Although a record number of women – 1,680 – are serving in state legislatures, the 1996 elections produced only a 0.8% increase – one of the lowest gains in 20 years. Typically women increase at the rate of 1.2% in the state legislatures every two years since almost 1972. At the current rate of growth, which has been essentially constant since 1972 with only an exceptional doubling of the rate in 1992, it will take 40 years – until the year 2038 – for women to gain equality in the state legislatures. This constitutes a generation and a half before women gain equality.

In order for the rate of increase of women in public office to change, more

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women most run for public office and must run at younger ages. Typically, far fewer women run – and run at 40 years of age or older for their first office. Meanwhile men, who still dominate campus politics, begin running for office in college and subsequently, begin their public careers in their mid- to late twenties.

Feminists Make a Difference

Feminist women – and men – in public office at every level of government make a critical difference. There is a difference in their political attitudes and in their voting behavior that dramatically alters what government does, for whom it does it, how funds are allocated, and even what issues are addressed. Feminists have demonstrated more support for reproductive choice, Medicaid, Medicare, child care spending, and decreases in the defense budget.

Both polls and academic studies – notably those by the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University – have consistently documented the fact that women as a group in office, whether elected or appointed, have distinctly different opinions from men as a group on a wide range of public issues. These different attitudes translate into different perspectives on public policy. Regardless of race, class, age, income, and party, **women prioritize women's rights** – abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and affirmative action – to a much greater degree than men. According to 1996 exit polls, support for abortion among voters is stronger among women. Although 61% of women voters and 58% of men voters support abortion rights, 28% of women compared to 21% of men felt abortion should be legal in all cases (Jackman, “Gender Gap Decisive”).

Issues such as reproductive choice, affordable healthcare, and child care affect

women to a greater degree than men in the United States. Due to these experiential differences including a higher rate of employment without health insurance, increasingly limited control of their reproductive lives, and primary child care responsibilities, women are more likely to encourage discussion of private concerns in the public realm. In the 1980s, women introduced one-third more bills concerning children than did their male counterparts (Thomas 73). Reflected through committee assignments, chair positions, and bills introduced, elected women's policy priorities more clearly support measures aimed at full equality for women. These are just a few examples of legislation introduced by women:

- the Fair Labor Standards Standards of 1938
- 1944 G.I. Bill of Rights
- 1963 Equal Pay Act
- the prohibition against sex discrimination in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act
- the school lunch program
- rules of evidence in rape trials and funding for rape crisis centers
- the prohibition against sex discrimination in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

The increasing numbers of women in government as well as the greater societal acceptance of women in public roles have helped women lower the barriers in their paths. Studies indicate that political arenas that include higher proportions of women foster greater development of women's policy priorities (Thomas). When women gain equal access to elected positions, these priorities will be at the forefront of

legislation. Can we consider ourselves a true democracy when women comprise 52% of the population but only 22% of state legislators and 13% of Congress?

Flooding the Ticket Works

Women’s success rates of election in like races have been equal, if not better, than men’s. The scarcity of female candidates in primaries, rather than their loss rate, has contributed to the small number of women in elected office.

The more women who run, the more

women will be elected. This concept – “flooding the ticket” – has proven successful in the election of women. The 1996 elections saw a record number of women running for the House, resulting in the highest number of women elected to office. And, women showed their power against the incumbents. Although women were only 14% of all candidates for House seats, they were more than 25% of the challengers who defeated incumbents (CAWP).

To be a U.S. House member, an individual must be over 25 and be a (non naturalized) U.S. citizen; for Senate, the age is 30. To run for President, an individual must be a national-born citizen and at least

35 years of age. Women have come from all backgrounds before entering the political scene. Lawyers, educators, nurses, business owners, salespeople, homemakers, and social workers are only a few of the jobs candidates for the U.S. House held in 1992 (Burrell). Women do not need a law degree or years of experience in government to win a seat.

The median age for a newly elected male U.S. Representative is 43, while the median age for a woman is 49 (Burrell). Because women start their careers at a later age, it is harder for them to advance into committee leadership positions and establish seniority. Therefore, it is critical for young women to enter politics. Younger women, like young men,

Chart 1 ■ Women in State Legislatures

State	Total Seats	Total Women	Percent Women	Rank	State	Total Seats	Total Women	Percent Women	Rank
AL	140	6	4.3	50	MT	150	35	23.3	20
AK	60	8	13.3	43	NE	49	13	26.5	12
AZ	90	34	37.8	2	NV	63	21	33.3	4
AR	135	23	17	35	NH	424	131	30.9	6
CA	120	27	22.5	24	NJ	120	19	15.8	38
CO	100	35	35	3	NM	112	30	26.8	11
CT	187	54	28.9	10	NY	211	39	18.5	29
DE	62	15	24.2	17	NC	170	29	17.1	32
FL	160	37	23.1	21	ND	147	24	16.3	37
GA	236	39	16.5	36	OH	132	29	22	25
HI	76	13	17.1	32	OK	149	15	10.1	48
ID	105	25	23.8	18	OR	90	23	25.6	16
IL	177	46	26	13	PA	253	31	12.3	45
IN	150	28	18.7	28	RI	150	39	26	13
IA	150	31	20.7	27	SC	170	22	12.9	44
KS	165	49	29.7	9	SD	105	18	17.1	32
KY	138	13	9.4	49	TN	132	18	13.6	42
LA	144	16	11.1	47	TX	181	33	18.2	30
ME	186	48	25.8	15	UT	104	16	15.4	39
MD	188	56	29.8	8	VT	180	57	31.7	5
MA	200	46	23	22	VA	140	21	15	40
MI	148	34	23	23	WA	147	58	39.5	1
MN	201	61	30	7	WV	134	20	14.9	41
MS	174	20	11.5	46	WI	132	31	23.5	19
MO	197	43	21.8	26	WY	90	16	17.8	31

Source: Center for American Women in Policies. 2003

must begin their careers in their twenties to rise to incumbency and control of the legislative agenda. Only when men and women attain parity among leadership and committee assignments will issues important to women be a priority concern.

Women must take control of their lives by participating in our decision-making bodies. The door to equality will not be fully open until issues of great concern to women are put at the forefront of the political agenda. It is time to flood the ticket, take advantage of the gender gap, and take the power that women, 52% of the population, deserve!

An Overview of Women in State Legislatures

In 2003, women comprised 22.3% of state legislatures. Percentages in the various states range from a high of 36.7% in Washington to a low of 9.4% in South Carolina. Although every state has at least four women in the legislative House, South Carolina has only two women in the State Senate. Of the 1,648 women who serve in state legislatures, 797 are Democrats, 640 are Republicans, 1 is Independent, and 9 are nonpartisan (CAWP, "Women in State Legislatures," 2003).

Women of color hold 298 of 7,382 total seats, or 4.0%, in state legislatures. African-American women hold 205 seats, Asian-America/Pacific Islander women hold 23 seats, Latinas hold 61, and Native American women hold 9 seats. Women of color comprise 18.1% of all women in state legislatures (CAWP, "Women of Color," 2003).

Women of color hold 277 of 7,424 total seats, or 3.7%, in state legislatures. African-American women hold 139 seats, Asian-American/Pacific Islander women hold 21, Latinas hold 57, and Native American

women hold 10. Women of color comprise 16.5% of all women in state legislatures (CAWP, "Women of Color," 1997).

Women are mayors of 20% of cities with over 30,000 people – up from 4.7% in 1973. In 1997, 43 states had women mayors of these cities. Colorado has the highest percentage of women mayors of cities over 30,000 – 57.1% (NWPC, "Fact Sheet").

Exploding the Myths

MYTH: A woman should not use the word feminist in her campaign.

FACT: Feminism and feminist ideas have more popular support than anti-feminist ideas.

The 1995 National Women's Equality Poll conducted by Louis and Peter Harris for the Feminist Majority Foundation found that **51%, the majority of women polled, identify as feminists.** Among women under 30, this percentage increased to 63%. When the public is told a feminist is "someone who supports political, economic and social equality for women," 61% of men and 71% of women define themselves as feminist. The 2003 Ms. magazine/Feminist Majority Foundation Survey on Women, Men, and Feminism, which was also conducted by Peter Harris, found that 56% of women identified as feminists, with 61% of women under 30 adopting a feminist identification. In the 2003 poll, 78% of women and 70% of men identified as feminists after being told the definition. Not only does the general public support feminist ideas, but there are more feminist women in elected office than anti-feminist. Numerous studies have shown women to be the strongest supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment, reproductive freedom, affirmative action, and women's rights.

MYTH: Women will not vote for women.

FACT: Most women candidates get their greatest support from women voters and organizations.

The same *1995 Women's Equality Poll* that found a majority of women supporting feminist ideals also found that 84% of women believe it is important to elect women to office. These statistics were proven in recent elections as women resoundingly elected women to office. In 1994, Dianne Feinstein won a seat in the U.S. Senate with 52% of the women's vote and 41% of the men's. In 1992, Barbara Boxer won her Senate race with 57% of the women's vote and 43% of the men's. In the 1992 Senate elections, the women's vote provided the margin of victory for three of the four newly elected female Senators (Smeal, "From Gender Gap").

MYTH: Women should only run for winnable seats.

FACT: All seats are up for grabs.

For women to advance in politics, they must not only run for open seats but also challenge incumbents. Although the rates of re-election are high, the 1996 elections showed women to be strong challengers. In these elections, women were only 14% of candidates for the House seats, but were over 25% of challengers who defeated incumbents (Seltzer, Newman, & Leighton 83). The rate of re-election for incumbents is over 90% for members of the U.S. Congress and even higher for the state legislatures (CAWP, "The Gender Gap"). Since women make up only a small percentage of incumbents, they must run for seats that may not initially seem viable.

Running, although it might not end in victory, may make a candidate more viable for the next race. In all cases, women will only win if they run!

MYTH: Women candidates lose more often than males.

FACT: In like races, women win as often, if not more often, than men.

This is a dangerous stereotype because perception can mistakenly lead to reality, thus discouraging women candidates from running for office. Since women's election success rates in similar races are virtually the same as men's, the more women run, the more women will win.

MYTH: One woman should not run against another woman.

FACT: If that applied to men, there would be little competition in elections.

The goal of elections is to choose the most qualified candidate to hold office. Women are running against one another with the usual results: one wins, one loses. In Maryland in 1986, Democrat Barbara Mikulski successfully ran against right-wing Republican Linda Chavez for the United States Senate. In Nebraska, Kay Orr, the Republican State Treasurer, ran against Helen Bossalis, the Democratic Mayor of Lincoln, and Orr won. Both women had won their primaries against well-known male candidates (CAWP, "Women Make News").

Cracking the System: Getting an Internship

For many college students, an internship on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. or their state capitol is an introduction to the national or state political scene. Students who want to learn more about the legislative process can work for members of Congress or state legislators. Interns usually work on administrative tasks, press/media responsibilities, or legislative assistance. Internships in women's or pro-choice advocacy organizations that work to influence legislation are another place to begin.

You should contact the office of the legislator you would like to work for to receive an application. Applications include a cover letter, writing samples, and letters of recommendation. The



application deadlines are usually in March. To reach your Congressperson's office, call the appropriate switchboard.

Senate Switchboard:

(202) 224-3121

House of Representatives Switchboard:

(202) 225-3121

Internships with state officials are also important. Interns at a state office might do administrative tasks, constituent advocacy, or research federal government issues. Call your governor's office for a list of possible internships. Working with your governor or state legislative members provides a more local approach to the political scene.

Introduction

The actions included in the “Winning a Seat at the Table” unit of the Study and Action Manual are designed to inspire you and other feminist students, faculty, and staff at colleges and universities nationwide to seek positions of influence on campus, in the surrounding community, and beyond. More specifically, the goal of this portion of *Choices* is to encourage more feminists to: run for elective student government offices; obtain appointments to campus policymaking committees; take leadership positions in student, staff, and faculty organizations; strive for top level roles in campus activities such as newspapers, radio/T.V. stations, and yearbooks; work for parity for women and people of color in “tenure track” and tenured faculty positions; promote the hiring of women and people of color in senior administrative jobs; develop parity for women and people of color on boards of trustees; and take action to promote the Campus Feminist Agenda. By exercising our full potential of *Leadership Choices* on campus, feminists are in a better position to win greater choices in reproduction, careers, and all other areas of our lives.

Clearly, “Winning a Seat at the Table” is a major endeavor. This process is outlined step by step as the major action for this unit of the Study and Action Manual, “How to Win a Seat at the Table on Your Campus.” It is unlikely, however, that your Leadership Alliance will take on this process as simply one major action. Rather, it is through participating in some of the smaller “Additional Actions” suggested at the end of this unit, that your Leadership Alliance can achieve small victories towards realizing the larger goal. Your investment in our vision of gender and racial equality in campus leadership will likely remain a priority for your Leadership Alliance throughout its existence on campus – a priority that you work on little by little while keeping the larger vision in mind.

How to Win a Seat at the Table on Your Campus

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE POSITIONS OF POWER ON CAMPUS

You will likely have done most of this groundwork during the action component of the “Know Your Campus” Unit of the Study and Action Manual. If you have not, however, now is the perfect time to carry out that exercise, as it will be invaluable as your Leadership Alliance begins the process of “Winning a Seat at the Table.”

Using the information you gathered during the “Know Your Campus” Unit of the Study and Action Manual, make a list of the elected positions in student government and other influential bodies such as campus publications, boards, dorm leadership, student organizations, and inter-collegiate commissions.

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR WOMEN

Again, most of this information should already have been gathered during your work on the “Know Your Campus” action. Using this comprehensive pool of information, get a general feeling for the status of women on your campus. Specifically review your figures on the number of women and people of color who ran for student government positions in each of the last two years, the number of men who ran uncontested for these positions, and your figures regarding the diversity of tenured faculty, administrators, and Board of Trustee members.

STEP 3: KNOW THE ELECTION RULES AND CUSTOMS

Be sure to become familiar with the election filing procedures for each influential position on campus. Election information is usually available from the main student government office, from the campus activities office, or from the particular group with the open seat. Review all of the election rules to determine whether any of them work to the disadvantage of women, people of color, disabled persons, or other groups on campus. If so, make this an issue in your campaign. Also find out the spending limits for each race. Often, the student government itself will provide campaign money for candidates running for student government positions.

Be aware of the campus political calendar and make sure other feminist and progressive students on campus are aware of these key dates. More precisely, when is the candidate filing deadline? What are the candidate qualifications? When is the campaign period? When are the elections? Will there be a runoff? Try to publicize this information in key feminist areas (i.e. feminist publications, women's centers, women's studies offices, ethnic studies offices).

STEP 4: SET HIGH GOALS— FLOOD THE TICKET

The goal of the “Winning a Seat at the Table” action is not simply to win one race, but to gain equality for women and people of color in leadership and decision-making positions on campus. To accomplish this goal, the Leadership Alliance must make sure that feminists are running in *every* race, especially the most powerful of the elected positions. Remember, the point is to “flood the ticket” with feminists— to get as many feminists to run in elections as possible, even in those races which appear to be long shots. The theory behind “flooding the ticket” is quite simple – the more feminists that run for elected positions, the more feminists elected to those positions. In other words, it is impossible to have 50% of our campus leaders be women, if fewer than 50% of our candidates are!

To increase the number of feminist candidates running for office, the Leadership Alliance can distribute and post flyers in the library, dining areas, classrooms, and academic offices announcing the group's search for feminist candidates. Additionally, you should talk with professors, deans, and other campus faculty with access to students, and ask them to recommend student candidates and encourage their feminist students to seek office.

STEP 5: SEEK OTHER POSITIONS OF POWER

If you find potential candidates who will not run for student government or other popularly elected offices on campus, encourage them to seek other policy-making positions of power. Often, appointments to committees or boards offer extensive opportunities for feminists to establish a solid feminist support network from “within,” and gain some experience and confidence before making the transition to elected office. Additionally, intercollegiate student groups are important places for feminists to be, and offer a unique opportunity for feminists to organize between campuses.

Develop lists of potential appointees and give these lists to the people responsible for making these appointments on campus. Furthermore, urge all feminist candidates to make sex and race equality in appointments a campaign issue so that those who are elected are committed to appointing women and people of color.

STEP 6: DEVELOP EXCITEMENT AND VISIBILITY FOR THE CAMPAIGNS

While a low key search for feminist candidates can produce results, exposing inequality within the power structures on campus can build support and excitement for your campaign efforts throughout the university. This provides another excellent opportunity for the Leadership Alliance to use all of the information gleaned during the “Know Your Campus” actions. Widely publicizing some of the most disturbing results will help your campus community see the need for feminist leadership, as well as help put feminist issues on the election agenda. Strategic use of your “Know Your Campus” survey will help make equality *the* issue on campus to fight for this year, and every year until equality is reached!

To help spread the word about feminist campaign issues and feminist candidates, members of the Leadership Alliance can speak to classes, departmental meetings, and student organizational meetings. Also work with feminist-friendly newspaper staff to run an article on the feminist election platform and feminist candidates. If editors are unwilling to write a story on your efforts, submit several letters to the editor, or submit an op-ed article.

Additional actions to help build excitement and support for your efforts include holding a rally, hosting an open forum to discuss sexual and racial inequities on campus, or inviting a feminist speaker to address such issues near election time.

STEP 7: GET OUT THE VOTE!

Feminists require two things to “Win a Seat at the Table”— feminist candidates and feminist votes. We have reviewed some ways that the Leadership Alliance can increase the number of feminist candidates running for office on campus. The next step in the election process is ensuring that feminists on campus vote. By making efforts to increase voter participation, the Leadership Alliance is tapping into a supply of supporters that might otherwise remain silent. Since we know that feminists are the majority, we have a greater chance of winning a seat if everyone on campus votes.

On the average, only 20% of students vote in their campus elections. On some college campuses, that turn-out is as low as 3%. There are several reasons for this. One possibility is poorly accessible polling locations. Working to ensure that all students have convenient and equally accessible polling areas will undoubtedly help feminist candidates. Moreover, many students, especially more progressive students, feel that student government candidates don’t address the issues most important to them. By putting gender and racial campus equality at the center of the campaign debate, the Leadership Alliance is introducing to the campaign a topic of vital importance to the majority of the campus community. Redefining the priorities of the campaign and its candidates will surely help feminists “Win a Seat at the Table.”

Additional Actions:

I. MAJOR SPEAKER ON WOMEN IN POLITICS

Try to get a feminist speaker to come to campus near student government election time. Suggested topics of discussion include the importance of increasing the number of pro-choice women and people of color in politics, or a discussion of the speaker’s own experience as a pro-choice woman in politics. Local and state feminist political figures will make excellent speakers for this event, as will feminist political scientists, authors, and

activists. Before taking on this action, you will want to consult the Leadership Alliance’s “how-to” for getting a major speaker to campus. Furthermore, you are encouraged to contact your Campus Organizer for help choosing and securing a speaker.

2. GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL AND STATE LEADERS

Find out who your state and local legislators are, as well as their positions on key feminist issues such as abortion, family planning, and affirmative action. Moreover, try to find out the percentages of women and people of color in these offices and other positions of power such as school boards and town councils.

Remember: The object of this exercise is to *identify* and *educate* these political candidates, not to *endorse* them. The Feminist Majority Foundation and its affiliated Leadership Alliances are not able to endorse, pay money to, or work for any political candidates affiliated with a national, state, or local political party.

3. EXPOSE ANTI-FEMINIST CANDIDATES AND CAMPUS LEADERS

Find out which candidates running for positions of power on your campus are anti-choice, anti-feminist, anti-people of color, anti-woman. Which candidates oppose affirmative action, want to see Women’s and Ethnic Studies programs cut, oppose pro-choice reproductive counseling on campus, oppose funding for gay and lesbian student programming, and resist integrating positions of power on the campus community? Make sure voters know about which candidates support a regressive and limiting agenda for women, people of color, and gay and lesbian students. As the overwhelming majority of students on college campuses are progressive and support equality for women, people of color, and gay and lesbian students, getting the word out about anti-feminist candidates will no doubt hurt their election chances.

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