

## AAUW presentation

### Overview – highly interactive

- Update status of women in elected office
- Discuss why women are not more fully represented
- What makes women such coveted candidates, legislators
- Potential solutions to resolving the gap in representation
- Q & A

### At present -

#### Globally

- sadly, the US ranks 77<sup>th</sup> on a UN list assessing international women's participation in national government
- Seems a bit ironic as we go into assist founding democracies design their governments that we emphasize the importance of full female inclusion in government. Consider that **despite a close adherence to Islamic Sharia law, Iraq ranks about 40 slots above us on the UN list**

#### Nationally

- Across the nation, **only 23% of statewide elected offices** are filled with women
- In 2013, women held **18% of the seats in Congress – 78 in the House, 20 in the Senate**
- There are three women from NC currently serving in the US Congress, 2 in the House - Renee Ellmers - District 2, Virginia Fox - District 5, and 1 in the Senate, Kay Hagan

#### Status of Women in Politics in NC

- Women constitute **51% of the NC population** and **54% of the registered voters**

#### Elected Office

- NC currently ranks 29<sup>th</sup> - women in the **state legislature**
- In 1975 there were only **15 members of the General Assembly or 9%**
- In 2013 session, women made up only **22% of the GA - 36 women held seats**
- **6 in the NC Senate (4 Republicans & 3 Democrats)**
- **30 in the NC House (12 Republicans & 19 Democrats)**

At more **local offices** based on 2010 numbers

**22% of elected boards and councils**

**14% of county boards – 41 counties have no women on their county boards**

**37% of school boards**

In our other State offices, women have been better represented

Council of State, elected roles, 5 of the 10 positions are held by women

- Elaine Marshall, Secretary of State
- Janet Cowell, State Treasurer
- Cherie Berry, Commissioner of Labor

- **June Atkinson, State Superintendent of**
- **Beth Wood, State Auditor**

**Appointed Office**

**seats on the Governor’s Cabinet, 3 of 8 positions are held by women**

- Sharon Decker, Secretary of Commerce
- Susan Kluttz, Secretary of Cultural Resources
- Aldona Vos, Secretary of Health and Human Resources

On **statewide governmental power boards** – those appointed by Gov, Speaker of the House & President Pro Tempe – based on research by the WF of NC, **only 25% of those serving are women**

- Interestingly, of the **62 appointments made on state-level boards and commissions in 2013, only 13 were women**
- Annually, Secretary of State, Elaine Marshall, **Gender Equity Report**, tracks municipal, county and state-level appointments’
- In the **2012 report**, the overview was a good one with women being represented in **state, county and municipal offices at an average of 34%**

**Judiciary**

Women have made the greatest strides on the NC judiciary

Currently **4 of 7 NC State Supreme Court Justices are women:**

- Chief Justice Sarah Parker
- Associate Judge Cheri Beasley
- Associate Judge Robin Hudson
- Associate Judge Barbara Jackson

**Six of the fifteen judges on the NC Court of Appeals are women:**

- Wanda Bryant
- Ann Marie Calabria
- Martha Geer
- Linda McGee
- Linda Stephens
- Linda Stroud

**Clearly progress has been made in recent years**

**Why then, do women in NC, and women in general, remain underrepresented?**

- In **2008**, despite the prominence of women on the **national and state ballot, only 15% of the ballot positions were held by women**
- The **2012 ballot was worse – only 13% of ballot positions were held by women**
- Finally, the Southeast is the region of the country with the fewest women candidates.

**What do you hear in those numbers?**

We have to have women candidates on the ballot to vote for.

How can we explain the lack of women candidates?

**Is it the voters that perpetuate this disparity? NO**

**New polling in swing-states voters, like NC, found 90% would consider voting for a qualified woman candidate**

- **86% believe America is ready for a woman president**
- **majority of voters in NC believe that women possess the skills to make them effective political leaders**
- **women are coveted candidates because voters perceive them to be hardworking and less corruptible**

So the problem is **not good old sexism . . .**

**Could the problem be in the situation, the political landscape?**

- The reality is that **incumbents are reelected over 95%** of the time in North Carolina – and **most seats are held by men.**
- **Campaign finance is biased to incumbents.** Because there's not that many women in office, women are more likely to be challengers and raising money as a challenger than for the incumbent
- But both **men and women suffer** from this incumbency situation.
- So if not sexism or the situation, what barrier does sex pose for women?

In terms of fundraising and vote totals, there is a **complete consensus** among researchers that there is **complete absence of overt gender bias.** In other words, **winning elections has nothing to do with the sex of the candidate."**

Is it us, the women of North Carolina and the nation? **As Ann Friedman of the NYT put it "We have seen the enemy of political parity and, she is us!!"**

- There is **clear and compelling evidence** that women, even in the **highest tiers of professional accomplishment,** are **substantially less likely than men to demonstrate ambition to seek political office.**
- These findings hold **regardless of age, partisan affiliation, income, and profession.**

There are several factors **influencing this gap in political ambition –**  
We are less like than men to be

- willing to **endure the rigors of a political campaign.**

We react more negatively than men to many aspects of the modern campaign.

- **recruited** to run for office by family, friends or political parties.

Women need to be asked many times – some sources say 3x, others say 7x.

- have the **freedom to reconcile work and family obligations**.

We are still responsible for the majority of childcare, eldercare, and household responsibilities.

- **think we are “qualified”** to run for office. National study found that **“women in both parties are more qualified to than men”**.

- **perceive a “fair political environment”**.

We are substantially more likely than men to perceive the electoral environment as highly competitive and biased against female candidates.

What have we just reviewed about women as candidates – competency, personal attributes – what do we think is the source of this concern?

### **Media**

“The status of the world’s women is not only a matter of morality and justice. It is also a political, economic, and social imperative. The evidence is irrefutable: when women are free to develop their talents and contribute fully to their societies, everyone benefits.” Hillary Clinton, 5/12/2010

There is a **moral imperative for women** to have **equal representation in government**.

- Fundamentally, we assess the **health of a democracy by the degree to which all citizens** – men and women – are **encouraged and willing to engage in the political process and run for office**.
- The reality - Women are the **majority of the American electorate**, and yet we have **less female representation in government than most of the planet**.
- The reality - Issues such as **pay inequity, women’s health needs, and violence against women** receive more attention when women make up a **significant percentage of the policy making body**

*In 2011, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand remarked “*

*My own experience in Congress is when women are on committees and at hearings, the nature of the discussion is different, and the outcomes are better – we reach better solutions, better decisions are made.”*

**Women lead differently than men.** And many folks think we are better at it. What does this difference look like?

Most of the research I drew from for this information was specifically about women in the US Congress, not at the state level.

- Political scientists have proved women's extraordinary efficacy in federal and state legislatures
- Across the board, findings show that the second sex rates first when it comes to effective governance
- Even male senators in the US Congress take note of the influence of women senators. "I don't want to generalize . . . but they tend to be interested in finding common ground," said Senator Rob Portman, Republican from Ohio. So I think it is going to have, and is having, a positive impact on the Senate."
- **women tend to cross party lines to build legislative consensus more often than men.**
- Indeed, as one study noted **"while men choose to obstruct and delay, women continue to strive to build coalitions and bring about new policies."**
- Women in office secure almost **10 % more federal funding than their male colleagues and introduce twice as many bills**
- Women in Congress practice what is known as **"surrogate representation,"** introducing so-called **"women's issues" bills regardless of home district relevance.** Senator Barbara Boxer explains it this way "There are still so few women in Congress, you really do have to represent much more than just your own state. Women from all over the country really do follow what you do and rely on you to speak out for them."
- In order to do that, women in office cultivate diverse and substantial legislative portfolios, especially when compared with their male colleagues. They cannot rely on a "good old boy" network to greet and guide them so they build their own.

I mentioned earlier that women in Congress introduce twice as many bills as their male counterparts. What does that really mean?

- Researching female lawmakers' effectiveness, political scientists crunched all 138,000 plus bills introduced in the US House of Representatives over the past four decades.
- They found women introduced twice as many bills on civil rights and liberties bills; many more on "family" concerns; and significantly more on labor, immigration, education and health.
- Clearly they are interested in more than just who is paying for our birth control.
- In fact it turns out that **gender is better predictor for these issues than partisanship.** When **a female senator replaces a male senator,** there is a significant increase for support of women's issues.
- Unfortunately, the flip side of this is how rarely female initiatives result in new laws. Women's issues bills have the highest rates of gridlock. **Overall, at the national level, only 4 % of bills become law but a mere 2% of women's bills**

**ever make it through the process.** Meaning the average (male) member of Congress does not see those issues as critical.

Women are recognized as **superlative legislators because they -**

- build coalitions
  - work to solutions vs “wins”
  - represent a broader base than most men
  - introduce a large quantity of bills addressing issues long eschewed by their male counterparts
  - practice “surrogate representation”
- 

To effect meaningful change, the general rule of thumb is that you have to have **30% of the seats at the table**. We need to identify women of all ages and encourage them to consider a political career. We need **women candidates in order to have women legislators & leaders**.

### Recruitment

- **Repetition is key** –Women are less likely to be asked and they need to be asked multiple times.
- There have been national programs like “**She Should Run**” through the Women’s Campaign Forum that do just that.
- **LEAD NC** is a progressive NC based program that exists to seek out, encourage and cultivate a new generation of community leaders for North Carolina.
- **Where to find the right women** – women are more likely than men to run for office because of public policy issues so we should seek women who are actively engaged in working on public policy issues
- While male candidates are often drawn from careers in business and law, women can also be recruited from female-dominated fields like health care and education.
- **No longstanding plan for political career is needed.** Holding a lower level office is not a prerequisite. Just under half of female state representatives and more than one-third of their male colleagues had no elective or appointive service before serving in the legislature.

### Timing

- We find that women legislators first ran for their current office at an average age of 50
- We have to reach young women in high school or college as they begin losing interest for all the reasons noted above
- AAUW breadth of programs to address this need
  - Those who played varsity-level sports were more likely to express interest in running

- Girls in sports – 1972 7.4 % of high school athletes were girls. In the 2011-12 school year, that participation level was at 41%
- Find young women before they have pressing family responsibilities and older women may be ready to run because their children are grown and their family responsibilities lessened

### Support in many forms

**Build their confidence** – house parties, network, skill building

**Mentor -**

**Train -**

Formalized skills-based trainings

Wellstone

IOPL Women in Office

**Fund** – overcoming hesitancy about fundraising – when they call, send \$\$\$. Orgs like Emily’s List and Lillian’s List both give directly and bundle funds for candidates. Early Money is Like Yeast – It Rises.

### Conclusion

- reviewed the current status of gender parity in North Carolina politics – for elected, appointed and judiciary positions
- explored why the gender disparity still exists
- discussed in some detail how and what women in the political arena bring to the table that is unique and valued
- outlined several specific considerations to resolve the disparity – we have our marching orders

*Stephanie Schriock, president of the pro-choice political PAC EMILY’S List, said "Whether you see the gender gap in leadership as a reflection of innate or systemic roadblocks, getting more women to run for political office is the answer. Not only do women in elected office serve as role models for future generations to follow in their footsteps, they inspire a country to develop more women into leaders."*