The Barbara Lee Family Foundation
advances women's equality and representation in American politics and contemporary art through nonpartisan political research, strategic partnerships, and grantmaking. Our work in both areas is guided by our core belief that women's voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture.

For more information, please visit
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BARBARA LEE
FAMILY FOUNDATION

ISBN 0-9748913-8-X

keys to elected office

the essential guide for women

BARBARA LEE FAMILY FOUNDATION

20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Governors Guidebook Series

"Despite what many say, women do continue to face unique obstacles when running for office. Having the tools and knowledge about what it takes to run a campaign and win will be a valuable tool for all women candidates."

New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, 1994-2001

"We know that women need to be encouraged to run for office, while men don't wait to be asked. The Barbara Lee Family Foundation takes that concept a step further: Their comprehensive, unique research provides women candidates and elected officials the tools to be effective. The Foundation's research is an indispensable resource for all women in politics."

Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius, 2003-2009

"Barbara Lee is the leading expert on women's campaigns for governor. She has taken her unique expertise, combined it with her passion for women in politics, and created a pragmatic go-to guide for all women elected officials, candidates, and their staff. We know women face barriers on the campaign trail. But with Barbara Lee Family Foundation research in hand, women also have the tools to break those barriers."

New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan, 2013-2017

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foreword

Since its inception in 1998, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation has studied every woman candidate's race for governor, producing nonpartisan, pragmatic guides for women on both sides of the aisle to enable them to maximize their strategic advantages and clear the hurdles on the way to public office.

While each woman's race is unique—with region, political landscape, party affiliation, and key policy issues playing roles—the pages that follow offer the most direct, must-know advice we've gleaned for women elected officials and candidates running for office.

From personal traits, to actions that convey qualification and likeability, to bouncing back from mistakes, this guide is a concise look at what it takes for a woman to run and succeed.

Over the past two decades, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation has watched the face of leadership (literally) start to change as more women were elected to office at every level. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary and the centennial of women's suffrage, and recommit to our belief that our democracy is stronger when women's voices are heard, I hope you'll consider this guide an invitation. If you are running for office or planning to run, I invite you to use it to its fullest to help inform your campaign. If you have not yet decided to run, our research is an invitation to become a candidate yourself.

And since we know that women need to be recruited to run, I urge you to pass this invitation along to other smart, strong, inspiring women who you know and want to see become our country's future leaders.

Thank you—and onward.

Barbara Lee
Founder and President
Barbara Lee Family Foundation
Cambridge, Massachusetts

"I just hope that it is boring one day that a woman is governor. I hope that breaking a glass ceiling means that somebody threw a rock through your sunroof."

CANDIDATE

20th anniversary

We're taking a moment to look back at how the campaign trail has – and hasn't – changed for women since the Barbara Lee Family Foundation opened its doors.

"I know we had some people out there who did not give her money because they just simply didn't think a woman could win."

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

1998

"One thing about being a woman in politics, no one tapped me on the shoulder and said, why don't you run?"

GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE

2004

"The challenge for women is not leadership, but overcoming voters' initial doubts in order to win the chance to lead in the first place."

BLFF RESEARCH GUIDE

2006

"Men are used to being in charge. Running for office is something they take as an entitlement. Women need to show 'I have the right.'"

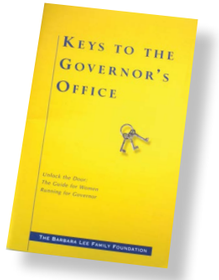
STATE PARTY OFFICIAL

2008

FACT: 20 States have still never had a female governor.

NUMBER OF WOMEN GOVERNORS

1999: 4	2002: 6	2005: 8	2008: 8	2011: 6	2014: 5	2017: 6
2000: 3	2003: 7	2006: 8	2009: 7	2012: 6	2015: 6	2018: 6
2001: 6	2004: 9	2007: 9	2010: 6	2013: 5	2016: 6	2019: 9



"2010 was a turning point for women running for Governor – and a turning point in our 12 years of researching their campaigns. In the midst of the most partisan political landscape in recent history, gender disadvantages faded and women candidates showed distinct advantages over their male competitors. More than ever, gender has the potential to become a strategic asset for women running for executive office."

BLFF RESEARCH GUIDE

2010

"I think if you are looking at almost any job, a woman usually has to perform better to reach the same standards as a man."

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

2012

"It's incredibly hard to convince people that you are strong but also nice. It is much easier for men to be [both] leaders and kind, so you are going to have to find your own way to convey that you are strong but also kind."

GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE

2016

FACT: Only 3 women of color have ever been elected governor.

introduction

Running for office as a woman is different than it is for a man. Why? Voters have higher expectations for women candidates which create obstacles and some opportunities. And even though voters say it is important to have more women in office, it doesn't always mean they will actually vote for women. Findings from Barbara Lee Family Foundation research paint the picture:

- Women candidates have to prove they are qualified. For men, their qualifications are assumed.
- Women face the double bind of needing to show competence and likeability. Voters will support a male candidate they do not like, but for women, this quality is non-negotiable.
- Voters accord women candidates a "virtue advantage," seeing them as more honest and ethical than men. This advantage can be dramatically reversed if voters perceive a woman candidate to be dishonest or acting unethically.
- As more women run for office and are elected, voters question how women can serve constituents and take care of family responsibilities at the same time. Voters recognize a double standard for moms, but actively and consciously participate in it.

While the current political landscape for women candidates presents obstacles, our no-nonsense, pragmatic guide helps overcome them. We study and analyze the challenges of campaigning in order to give women directive advice on how to succeed. The Essential Guide is the compilation of 20 years of research studying these complex attitudes toward women candidates, every woman's campaign for governor on both sides of the aisle, and real-time polling on voters' views on everything from words that work for women candidates to how to call out an opponent's record.

In the pages that follow, we distill the most relevant findings into three key categories, designed to be easily-digestible resources for elected officials, candidates, campaign teams, and the general public.

This guide is a distillation of two decades of research. For more in-depth information on specific topics, below is a full list of all research available from the Barbara Lee Family Foundation:

- *Relaunch: Resilience and Rebuilding for Women Candidates After an Electoral Loss (2018)*
- *#MeToo: An Issue that Transcends Party (2018)*
- *Voters, Candidates, and #MeToo (2018)*
- *Opportunity Knocks: Now is the Time for Women Candidates (2017)*
- *Modern Family: How Women Candidates Can Talk About Politics, Parenting, and Their Personal Lives (2017)*
- *Politics is Personal: Keys to Likeability and Electability for Women (2016)*
- *Unlocking the Door to Executive Office: Essential Tips for Women Candidates (2015)*
- *Change the Channel: Ads that Work for Women Candidates (2013)*
- *Pitch Perfect: Winning Strategies for Women Candidates (2012)*
- *Breakthrough Messages for Women Voters (2012)*
- *Turning Point: The Changing Landscape for Women Candidates (2010)*
- *Leading with Authority (2008)*
- *Positioning Women to Win (2006)*
- *Cracking the Code (2002)*
- *Speaking with Authority (2001)*
- *Keys to the Governor's Office (1998)*

In **preparation**, we look at what it takes for women to lay the groundwork for a run for office—the necessary traits and resources, and how to acquire and convey them.

In **substance**, we break down the essential issue areas to master and how to do that, from establishing qualification, to owning an economic plan, to contrasting with opponents.

Finally, in **presentation**, we lay out the importance of using messages that resonate, having a style that is professional and approachable, and possessing the ability to bounce back from mistakes or a campaign loss.

"For people to get comfortable seeing women in executive roles, they have to see women in executive roles. They have to see women run."

CANDIDATE

communicating confidence, strength, and executive leadership

The Challenge

Women must be prepared before they publicly announce their plans to run for office. Showcasing executive leadership is critical. Women must underscore prior political experience with their history of professional accomplishments. Tying experience to accomplishments helps to establish qualifications—one of the hallmarks of electability.

Women candidates for major statewide office must come across as confident, qualified, and competent in their initial presentation. They also need to maintain that confidence, as it is critical to appearing qualified. Voters immediately hone in on perceived weaknesses, because women candidates have added visibility. While women candidates tend to hold on to doubts about whether they should be running, they cannot begin their campaigns looking anything but qualified and confident.

Voters punish women for on-the-job learning as a candidate and for campaigns that take time to ramp up; this erodes the sense that they are qualified. Women often start their campaigns with their personal stories and biographies, which makes them appear likeable and in touch—both important traits—but often does not do much to establish their qualifications and credibility.

The Solution

So what's the secret? The best way for a woman candidate to establish her qualifications is to weave her experience and professional accomplishments into her narrative. To help women relay their qualifications, they must focus on both the presentation and content of their introductions. It is important for women to lead with their issue expertise and accomplishments before sharing their personal stories.

Voters believe that most women running for major office in their states are hard-working, qualified, confident, organized, knowledgeable, compassionate, assertive, strong, and leaders. While these are all positive qualities, they do not all convey to voters that a candidate is qualified. The traits that describe women who run for major statewide office and convey qualifications are **confident, organized, and knowledgeable.**

Women candidates must have these words written into their introductions and early descriptions, including their websites, announcements, mailers, and stump speeches.

best foot forward

AS ONE CANDIDATE SAID,

"Every podium in America is made for a six-foot man,"

SUGGESTING THE WHOLE DEBATE EXERCISE IS SLIGHTLY RIGGED AGAINST WOMEN.

The Challenge

Voters decide whether a woman candidate is ready to lead, in part, based on her personal presentation. The emphasis voters place on personal style is substantial and multi-faceted. It's important for women to have visibility early in the campaign.

Although all candidates are judged on these attributes to some degree, women have a steeper climb—they must work harder—in convincing voters to judge them on their merits.

The Solution

The Look: In order to be successful in this reality, women must be well-suited for the job: dressing appropriately for campaign events, whether they are at new construction sites or at a senior center, is critical. In short, dress the part: don't wear heels to a picnic. And even casual attire must be professional. For more on clothing and style, see *Elements of Style* on page 37.

The Sound: Tone of voice and speaking style also factor into the candidate's presentation. Voters are in tune to whether a woman candidate sounds authoritative or bossy, serious or boring, high-pitched and unsure or clear and steady.

The Substance: Voters say women convey their qualifications by:

- Being prepared
- Answering tough questions
- Speaking with authority
- Projecting confidence
- Making and maintaining eye contact
- Commanding respect

The way a woman runs her campaign is also important. It is an opportunity to showcase that she has her act together, is a good leader, and an effective manager. Because of this, candidates must choose staff members they trust to make wise decisions independently.

Positive leadership styles that work for women also include being in touch, meeting with voters, and bringing men and women together—or Democrats and Republicans together —to get results. The latter is different than traditional messaging about reaching across the aisle. **Results are key.**

KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES: PREPARING TO ANNOUNCE

- **Set the right tone.** Make an excellent first impression on voters when you announce your candidacy. Your look, theme, setting, and staging must mirror the level of professionalism, preparation, clarity, and organization that the voters can expect of your administration. Videotape this event. It can provide excellent footage for closing TV ads.
- **Know why you can do it.** Identify the three or four reasons you will be an excellent leader and keep them in the forefront of your mind. Knowing at all times why you should be in office can help you perform confidently under adverse circumstances. Being sure of these reasons also helps you communicate them to voters.
- **Take good care of yourself**. Campaigns are notoriously unpredictable. Unexpected events and delays happen. Demand enough time in your schedule to ensure you are prepared, rested, professional, and presentable.
- **Hire a diverse, experienced staff.** Don't pinch pennies. You are undertaking a multi-million dollar enterprise with enormous implications for the future of your state. Hire the most seasoned, experienced people you can, particularly those who have won a campaign for other women running for the same level of office. Aim to have a professional campaign manager selected soon after making the decision to run. Gender balance and racial diversity are also important. The most effective and disciplined campaign teams are diverse, according to candidates and staff.
- **Meet the professionals.** Everybody needs somebody: a voice coach, a personal shopper, a stylist, a media trainer, a make-up artist. Don't wait until midway through the campaign. Months before your announcement, do a personal inventory, and get the help you need.

The Challenge

Voters are more accustomed to seeing women as part of a deliberative body, such as the legislature. When a woman is running to be CEO of her state, voters need more evidence to believe she is prepared to do the job than they do for a man.

Voters want to see specific financial, crisis management, and political credentials when evaluating whether a woman could handle the complexities of running a state. For instance, voters surveyed felt more confident in a candidate who had been a state treasurer when they were told that as treasurer she got the state out of debt than they were in a candidate who did not mention her accomplishments as treasurer.

In contrast, men were assumed to be qualified to lead their state if they had a resume that simply listed positions of leadership and service. **Women must show, where men can tell.**

In the past, women held a huge advantage on being seen as change agents. That has diminished. However, as Americans express frustration with the political status quo, the perception of women as "different" in a sea of male elected officials and candidates offers them a distinctive advantage in the eyes of voters. Voters who see women as different from men when they serve as elected officials are more likely to support women.

Voters still, however, see women as outside the old boys' network. They want assurance that women can lead and get the job done in the largely male game of politics. Women candidates especially need to tout their experience and track record, which can include taking on political insiders. Voters want to know women have the experience and skills to achieve change.

The Solution

Women need to provide more evidence than men of expertise. The first way to relay that to voters is to make an excellent first impression—to hit the ground running and to maintain that momentum throughout the campaign.

What, exactly, does that look like?

- Standing up for herself in a debate
- Standing up for voters and their interests in a debate
- Fielding tough questions from a reporter early in the campaign
- Starting the campaign with a listening tour

These are also ways to demonstrate that a candidate is in touch with voters' lives.

family matters

"You can be tough and policy-minded and still talk to people about your kids."

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

The Challenge

Families in America have evolved since the 1960s, when two-parent households were the norm, most adults were married, and less than a quarter of married women with children worked outside the home. Despite sweeping societal changes, traditional gender roles remain powerful, influencing what voters perceive to be acceptable and appropriate behavior for men and women.

As more women run for office and are elected, voters question how women can serve constituents and take care of family responsibilities at the same time. Women candidates wonder whether they should talk about their families and personal lives and how to do so without alienating voters. Fortunately, there are clear ways to navigate the terrain of talking about family life.

Voters recognize a double standard for moms, but actively and consciously participate in it. They express anxiety about a woman's job in office taking a backseat to her role at home and wonder who is taking care of the children, especially if they are young. If a candidate doesn't have children, voters worry that she may not be able to truly understand the concerns of families.

"We don't make any males running for office explain what's happening with their children."

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

The Solution

So how do women candidates reconcile these facts with the reality of their own lives?

Women have the opportunity to be 360-degree candidates, using all of their expertise, backgrounds, and personal experiences to connect with voters. Managing a family—whether that includes a partner, children, parents, siblings, or any combination thereof—is certainly a facet of that full-life experience.

It is important for women candidates, no matter what their family situation is, to talk to voters about their personal lives. When questions arise about a woman's ability to manage personal and professional responsibilities, she must respond. If voters' doubts and concerns go unaddressed, it negatively impacts the candidate's perceived likeability and effectiveness, both of which are essential to electability for women.

Women can successfully navigate these complexities by:

- Addressing questions about their family lives directly and confidently;
- Showing how their experiences contribute to their work on behalf of voters; and
- Getting back to the issues that matter to their constituents.

According to interviews with candidates, their staff, media consultants, and other political players, embracing one's family as part of the campaign can reveal a positive and warm dimension to a serious candidate. It is also a chance to share the role family has played in motivating a candidate to pursue public office.

KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES: EMBRACING YOUR 360-DEGREES

- **Try a discovery exercise.** Write your obituary. This exercise can help you identify and integrate personal and professional successes and clarify the values at the base of your reasons for running.
- **Spin your experience.** Think through what's in your background that's potentially awkward for you and how you can turn it into an asset.
- **Use everything.** That waitressing job you had in college may be the gateway to connecting with women who don't yet see you as "like them." Present your full range of experience—personal, professional, and in the community.
- **Tap networks.** Explore your own biography to find the overlapping networks of school friends, elected allies, professional colleagues, neighbors, and fellow sports fans in your electoral base.
- **Reference family.** Even if you choose to keep your family far from the campaign trail, you can and should let people hear your point of view. Voters expect candidates to speak about their families, but be careful: sharing too much information hurts as much as sharing too little.

"We were talking about policies, but we were also very cognizant of wrapping that into who she is as a person, to communicate it in a more compelling way."

POLLSTER

fundraising savvy

The Challenge

Although women now often regularly raise and spend money in their campaigns on par with their male opponents, women candidates still report being excluded from financial circles that include the wealthiest and best-connected donors.

These circles are often based around corporate associations and specific industries—talk about old boys' clubs—and rarely include many women executives or board members. As a result, there are fewer women to make introductions and open doors.

Women may also find they need to wage a "campaign of belief" with donors, and spend time highlighting their path to victory.

The Solution

Well before a decision to run, women should be meeting with key allies and honing their campaign skills. This will enable them to hit the ground running, which we know is critical for women's success with voters.

Women's campaign teams should be sure to over-budget the time spent fundraising, and the candidate should be prepared to convince donors that she is worth the investment. A note: while focusing on the historic nature of a campaign may appeal to donors, voters want to see a woman candidate focused on local issues.

KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES: FUNDRAISING BASICS

- **Do the homework.** Know the fundraising centers and party's major donors in the state. Join another candidate's finance committee and learn firsthand what you will be asking of others. Develop a network of women within key fundraising circles and ask for introductions. Lock down substantial financial support before announcing a run.

- **Build a fundraising and powerbroker network early.** Assemble a dozen veteran fundraisers, meet with them regularly, and make them a part of the campaign's permanent political operation.

- **Develop working relationships with activist organizations.** Work with statewide, membership-based organizations on issues of mutual concern. Nurses, carpenters, chiropractors, lawyers, small business owners—these can be allies and support networks.

- **Expand, expand, expand.** Identify the 25 individuals who raise the most for the party's nominees and develop a strategy for meeting them—directly, through friends, at party events, etc. Identify those women's organizations that provide financial support to women candidates and meet with their political directors, enlist their early support, and stay in touch with them.

"As a woman, I've been pretty successful… raising money, but you still don't have access to the boys, and this is very much a boy kind of state…it takes more effort to get that access."

CANDIDATE

a "qualified" woman

The Challenge

We so often hear voters hedge that they'll vote for a "qualified" woman. In focus groups, voters explained that some people only want to vote for "qualified" women because a perception remains that women have to work harder and do more to achieve the same goals as men.

Women have to prove they are qualified. For men, their qualification is assumed. In other words, women have to prove themselves from day one.

The Solution

The most important traits to convey that a woman is qualified include being honest, standing up for what is right, being knowledgeable, getting results, being confident, being organized, having a vision, and being in touch.

To help a woman appear most qualified, it works to show she:

- Brings Democrats and Republicans together to get things done
- "Stands up" in a debate
- Starts the campaign with a listening tour
- Pulls herself up by her bootstraps
- Answers tough questions from a reporter
- Issues an economic plan

Some of these examples are a matter of changing the words women use to convey women's strengths as leaders. For instance, rather than illustrating how a woman candidate has worked across the aisle, it is more effective to show how a candidate brought men and women or Democrats and Republicans together to get results.

Using action-oriented language also helps convey that a woman candidate is qualified. Women must show they take action. Consider action phrases, such as:

- Started a successful business
- Refused to back down
- Answered tough questions
- Led an initiative

"Leadership, knowledge, education, integrity, honesty all go into making a candidate likeable."

FEMALE VOTER

the likeability litmus test

The Challenge

Likeability is a non-negotiable quality voters seek in women officeholders and candidates.

Men don't need to be liked to be elected. Voters are less likely to vote for a woman candidate they do not like. Women face the double bind of needing to show competence and likeability.

Voters acknowledge that a woman's style and appearance are highly scrutinized and connected to her likeability. In a recent study, voters reacted to every aspect of a woman's presentation style, including her appearance, demeanor, and tone of voice. They volunteer that people are still more judgmental about a woman's appearance than a man's. Focus group participants say that if they were giving advice to a woman candidate, they would make sure her wardrobe, makeup, and appearance are impeccable.

Appearing confident is essential. In this study, voters assessed a woman officeholder's confidence in less than 30 seconds. Confidence signals both likeability and qualifications.

However, demonstrating likeability is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. All candidates must stay true to who they are. Just as each woman running for office is unique, so is the combination of factors that contribute to her likeability.

The Solution

Voters, independent of their gender, overwhelmingly say it is important that they like an officeholder they support: 84% of men and 90% of women. There are two key components to making women candidates likeable in the eyes of voters: presentation and track record. In other words, style and substance both matter.

Previous research on women officeholders and candidates showed that many of the attributes and qualities that establish qualifications also improve likeability for women. The two were linked—they rose and fell together. More recent findings show a shift in that conventional wisdom. Some of the factors that help establish likeability do not reinforce qualifications.

Another evolutionary change for women officeholders and candidates is an expansion of how they can relate to voters. Women shown in less formal, relaxed settings have more power than they used to. For example, photos of women elected officials seated by themselves behind mahogany desks—the traditional hallmark of executive leadership —are considered the least likeable. Voters respond positively to women meeting with people and engaging in conversation. In other words, doing the day-to-day work of an elected official.

When speaking with voters, women candidates can demonstrate likeability by showcasing their:

- Preparation
- Confidence
- Listening skills
- Sense of humor

When preparing campaign materials, think about:

- Highlighting how the candidate has overcome an obstacle
- Connecting policies to personal elements
- Mixing team and solo credit when talking about accomplishments
- Offering a solution and acknowledging that others may not agree
- Including photos of the candidate in informal settings in the community

"When you're positioning a woman to run for office, you show that she has held jobs with huge responsibility, with huge challenges, and acquitted herself brilliantly in dealing with these challenges and overcoming them." MEDIA CONSULTANT

issue (dis)advantages: the economy, education, and women's health

The Challenge

Voters want to know that a woman can handle budgets, taxes, and the economy. This area is generally perceived as a weakness for women candidates and not a traditional area of female expertise. Women candidates have advantages on issues that are traditionally "women's issues": education, healthcare, women's health, and fighting sexual harassment. However, voters are split on who handles the economy better—men or women. In addition, decisiveness and effectiveness are areas where women candidates still need to prove themselves.

The Solution

A candidate profile that focuses on experience, including voting record and accomplishments on important issues, is the most effective in portraying qualifications to voters, followed by a profile that outlines a candidate's general previous experience in office. These profiles beat out a competing profile that focused on personal biography. This is proof positive of how critical it is to tout experience first and personal story second.

Voters are adamant that a woman elected official would be more likely to protect women's health issues, access to birth control and contraception, reproductive health issues, Social Security and Medicare, and education. Voters across parties look more favorably upon women candidates who take a strong stance against sexual harassment. Women can and should use the clear, ongoing advantage they hold on these "women's issues" but must also maximize non-traditional experience to demonstrate their qualifications.

Profile	Female Candidate: Very Qualified	Female Candidate: Total Qualified
Issues: Mary Jones is known in the state legislature for her strong voting record on issues like health care reform, education, and economic development. She has successfully passed a number of bills to help our state including getting money to improve our schools and creating thousands of jobs while imposing tough fiscal discipline.	62%	93%
Elected Office: Jan Smith served one term on city council, was mayor, and is currently in her third term in the state legislature. Currently she serves as a ranking member of the Finance committee, as well as on the Governor's Economic Task Force to create jobs.	56%	90%
Work: Kathy Green successfully owned her own small business before climbing the ranks of a Fortune 500 company. She knows how to create jobs, meet a payroll, and manage a company budget.	39%	80%
Personal: Joan Smith grew up in a working class neighborhood, the daughter of a police officer and a teacher, where she learned the value of hard work and discipline. She graduated at the top of her class from a state university.	21%	63%

When it comes to less traditional experience—economic development, serving on a finance committee or economic task force—highlighting accomplishments helps women candidates unlock doors to the executive office and level the playing field by establishing credibility as a leader. In a split sample, the fictional Mary Jones' profile that includes non-traditional experience did just as well as an identical profile about a fictional man (see the chart on page 30. "Total qualified" refers to the total percentage of voters who said this profile effectively conveyed the candidate as qualified).

Certain qualities are particularly important. Voters were likely to see a candidate as good on the economy and were likely to vote for her if they perceived her:

- To be a problem solver
- To be a change agent
- As having the right priorities
- As effective

Women also now get as much credit as men for being good on the economy when they are good on other issues. For both men and women candidates, being good on education and healthcare help them to be seen as good on the economy. Women can harness the advantage they have on these typically "women's issues" as well as kitchen-table economics, to connect with voters.

KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES: ECONOMIC PLATFORMS

- **Be specific about jobs.** Offer specifics on the ways your state will compete for jobs. Your economic plan must attract and keep large businesses and make it easier to start and run a small business. Look for opportunities to serve on boards or commissions related to job growth.
- **Share your budget priorities.** A budget is a statement of your values. It is a proactive document that tells voters what you want to accomplish. Show where you would save, where you would invest, and why. Remember that voters accord women the benefit of "kitchen table budgeting" wisdom and experience.
- **Establish financial credentials**. If you have served as a treasurer, budget director, or on a finance committee in the public or private sector, trumpet it. If you haven't had a high profile financial position, look for other and unconventional ways you have managed a state's or business' money.
- **Learn your state budget.** Former or current Budget or Appropriation Committee chairs, staff, or budget analysts from the Governor's office are all useful resources for learning the intricacies of the state budget.
- **Weave your budget expertise into every issue, ad, and communication**. Give everyone who introduces you a prepared introduction that emphasizes your financial credentials and accomplishments. Check your strategic plan for an integrated focus on jobs, budget, and the economy.

contrasting with opponents

The Challenge

Barbara Lee Family Foundation research has consistently shown that women candidates pay a higher price for contrasting, i.e. "going negative" even though all candidates must show how they differ from their opponents—it is a necessary part of campaigning.

Some women voters say they are disappointed when they see a woman "go negative" because they hold women candidates to a higher standard. Voters expect more from women candidates and they feel that by engaging in negative campaigning, a woman is reduced to the status of a typical politician.

They feel women should use their strengths of compassion and being relatable to overcome negativity. "I expect more from a woman [candidate] than I do a man," as one woman said in a focus group, "because it used to be a man's world and they always bashed, and I think a woman can have more tactfulness to not stoop to a man's level." Some women, especially women of color, worry about whether women can maintain their "femininity" and "compassion." As one woman noted, "I just wanted to comment on the ads from the female politicians; to me they seemed a little masculine. They didn't look soft or feminine."

Voters typically see women as more honest and ethical than men (read more on this advantage in *The Ethical Pedestal: Honesty and Character* on page 38). It is important for women to maintain that advantage, even when contrasting with their opponents.

The Solution

It has long been believed that women candidates "going negative" in ads during a campaign works, but also increases their own negative ratings. There are key strategies women candidates can use that are more likely to resonate with voters. Each campaign has unique circumstances. One common thread, however, is that women candidates can and do need to use contrast ads to win.

Some of the tactics for contrasting with an opponent are not reserved for women only. However, voters remember negative ads from women candidates more than negatives from male candidates, all other things being equal.

KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES: ADS

- **Be present in your commercial.** It is important for voters to hear your stance on issues and what you will do, not only the negative attack on your opponent. As one woman said in a focus group, "What if this is the only ad I see? Every ad should give me some information about the candidate." Contrary to conventional wisdom, it works for a woman candidate to represent herself in an ad, confidently speaking for herself and her positions.
- **Be sure to come across as confident and warm.** In a campaign, it is important to reinforce and project that you are likeable and qualified, even when delivering the negative. We found that women can preserve voters' perceptions of these traits. Voters want some reassurance that you aren't a typical politician.
- **Use the disclaimer as an opportunity.** You can use the disclaimer as a chance to tell voters what you will do for them. For example, "I approve this ad, because I'll always protect Medicare." Voters pay attention to the disclaimer more than people realize.
- **Be simple and concise.** Do not use overly busy, distracting images or music in commercials. Voters want to be able to leave an ad understanding where you stand on issues.
- **Be genuine.** Voters want authentic facial expressions, images, and settings that are appropriate for the topic being discussed. Voters, especially women, pay close attention to how women candidates come across, even in the disclaimer at the beginning or end of an ad.
- **Use real people to deliver a negative ad** by sharing their personal stories.
- **Use a fresh or unexpected approach,** such as humor, without diminishing your credibility. Voters are more inclined to view and listen to a candidate's message if delivered in this frame. Humor works for women, but it is also important to pivot to the serious side. In effective humorous ads, women are often the serious person in the funny situation—not presented out of the role of candidate or in the comic situation themselves.
- **Call out a negative ad from an opponent.** Women candidates are particularly effective when appearing in a response, contrast, or counter-attack ad.
- **Cite sources and provide links** for voters to follow up when looking for more information about you and your platform. Voters like being able to look at the facts and your plan.

presentation

words matter

The Challenge

Traditionally, women are praised for being more cooperative and bipartisan. While voters still give women credit for these traits, they are cynical about the state of politics, unclear whether more women in office will have a measurable impact, and question any individual's ability to change politics.

The Solution

Women candidates can maximize their advantages by using the right words and displaying the right actions. Both Democratic and Republican women have an advantage over a male candidate on representing voters' interests, having the right priorities, being honest and ethical, solving problems, working across party lines to get results, and being warm and likeable.

It remains important for a woman to take on insiders and to stand up for her constituents. Current women elected officials are seen as successfully challenging their legislatures.

Figuring out how to deliver a simple, effective message is complicated and requires practice, and women candidates must consistently communicate better than their male opponents on many fronts.

Women need to prove:

- Strength
- Qualification
- Ability to make change

Ways women can demonstrate qualifications:

- Having the right priorities
- Showing strong negotiating skills
- Working with men and women

Advantages women have:

- In touch, compassionate
- Right priorities
- Honest
- Problem-solving

elements of style

The Challenge

A woman's appearance is under a microscope—or perhaps more appropriately, in the headlines—far more often than her male counterparts'. No surprise there. Voters draw complex conclusions about women candidates from their appearances, according to interviews with campaign staff. One finance director reported, "I think she's so well dressed and so well put together that to some people, that didn't appeal to them. She was almost 'perfect.'"

We've heard it all: Voters and media alike comment on women candidates' clothes, lipstick, hairstyles. As one campaign manager put it, " The news would say 'the candidate appeared before the media in her trademark shapeless skirts'…they would never say 'our male opponent appeared in his scruffy wingtips and rumpled shirt.'"

What may be surprising, however, are some straightforward ways candidates have minimized the scrutiny.

The Solution

- Winning candidates develop a look and style that is authentic and appropriate.
- Women's power-dressing has evolved past feminized men's suits to more colorful jackets over sheath dresses and pants. This change reflects the evolution of work wear in general but is particularly applicable to politics.
- As the saying goes, "Dress poorly and they remember the dress. Dress well and they remember the woman." Keep it simple and cultivate a collection of go-to outfits that convey power and are also practical.

the ethical pedestal: honesty and character

The Challenge

Voters historically have accorded women candidates a "virtue advantage," seeing them as more honest and ethical than men. That perception remains, especially among Independent voters, though by a smaller margin and with significant partisan differences.

In 2010, for example, Democratic women running for governor who faced Republican men enjoyed a wide advantage on perceptions of honesty and ethics. This was a more difficult trait for Republican women who faced Democratic men. In fact, Republican women trailed Democratic men on this trait by several points. This is particularly important because voters who see women as offering unique traits like honesty are more likely to support a woman candidate.

The advantage that voters accord women on honesty can be dramatically reversed if they perceive that a woman candidate has been dishonest or acted unethically. A woman candidate who falls off her ethical pedestal pays a high price in the loss of voter esteem, especially among women voters who expect a woman to be different.

And because the cost of an ethical infraction is higher for a woman, campaigns against women candidates often use the well-worn strategy of launching negative attacks on character or values early in the campaign.

The Solution

Women candidates' place on the ethical pedestal is a worthwhile asset. Women can maintain that advantage by showcasing integrity, transparency, and consistency. Key strategies are detailed on the following page.

KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES: STAYING ON THE ETHICAL PEDESTAL

- **Be transparent.** Set a standard of openness and stick to it. Your website is a great place to list your public schedule, post videos of speeches and debates, release position papers, and feature press interviews.
- **Be careful.** Conduct opposition research on yourself before the campaign ramps up. Develop a strategy to deal with anything that could be harmful with the most seasoned, trusted, and experienced person on your team. Prepare opposition research on your family members and business partners, as well.
- **Be thoughtful.** Anticipate what character attacks might be made against you or your family instead of giving that advantage to your opponent. Pre-emptively prepare a thoughtful, clear response to any potential attacks, and be sure to have clarity with your team about a rapid response.
- **Be sure.** Unless you are certain that your opponent seriously or habitually violates ethical, financial, or legal rules, do not be the first to raise the issue. Before you or your campaign make an accusation against an opponent, review your research to ensure that neither you nor anyone associated with you or the campaign have done the same thing.
- **Be quick.** Everyone makes mistakes. By quickly taking responsibility and moving on, you have a better chance of limiting the story to one news cycle. Also, call in a third-party validator when responding.
- **Be consistent.** If attacks linger, be consistent about your response. Share facts and talking points with supporters that mirror your messages. Be sure these third-party validators use your messages and know how to pivot to vouch for your qualifications, and don't focus on the character attack from your opponent.

resilience following mistakes

The Challenge

No one can run a perfect campaign. However, women do not have much room to make mistakes. Voters remember and punish women more for mistakes, which undermine their qualifications.

Women are often perceived as letting mistakes linger for too long. This is devastating to both their likeability and their qualifications.

The Solution

When women do slip up, they need to work immediately with their campaigns to engage in crisis communications.

One rebound strategy is clear: Respond quickly with a succinct, straight answer and then introduce third-party validators who can reinforce the candidate's qualifications. This strategy worked for women candidates and did not work for men candidates.

"She didn't intend to say [that], but it just came out of her mouth wrong. It was a big gaffe but [the media] definitely gave her a lot of credit for apologizing quickly and not making excuses. And so a story that could have plagued us for days and days became a story that sort of petered out within three days."

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

relaunching after a loss

The Challenge

In the winner-take-all voting system in the U.S., there can only be one winner. As one focus group participant put it: "There is always going to be a loser." Clichés abound about the importance of learning and moving forward after failure, but often that's easier said then done, particularly after an electoral loss.

Historically, women candidates have faced questions about their qualifications and likeability in the campaign post-mortem period. Because voters remember and penalize women's mistakes on the campaign trail, women candidates may feel that running again after losing a campaign is not a viable path forward. However, voters are incredibly open to the idea of a woman relaunching herself as a public figure and running again after a loss.

The Solution

A woman can start her next campaign as soon as her concession speech or statement. It's important to be forward-thinking—don't dwell on the past. Voters are sensitive to any perceived whining or blaming.

The messaging should focus on the voters, not the candidate. It's important for a woman candidate to be values-oriented and grounded in the needs of her constituency. Voters respond when women who have lost elections focus on listening to the community, continuing to fight for their ideals, and getting things done for the community.

After losing an election, a woman candidate has a wide range of options for her next steps. However, voters demonstrate clear preferences for specific things a woman candidate can do after losing that they believe would make her qualified to run for office again. Voters want to see a losing candidate who is a community-focused, issues-oriented public servant. Find ways to stay engaged in the community, and take time to work on an issue that was big in the campaign, build political skills, and network with other leaders.

conclusion

The findings laid out here show that women candidates still face challenges. Those challenges, however, are surmountable–and they are often countered by strategic advantages.

We know that women must:

- Be prepared to hit the ground running
- Use the "qualified" label
- Lead with experience and expertise before sharing personal background
- Utilize the full life experience that comes with being a woman—work experience, family life, balancing the personal and professional—to connect with voters
- Know how to go negative without losing the ethical advantage
- Unravel the double bind to demonstrate qualification and likeability
- Rebound quickly from mistakes

How women reach political equality is important—but so is the *why*. With more women's voices at the center of the conversation, we have a more robust, inclusive dialogue about issues that matter not only to women, but to families and all Americans. With more women in office, issues like economic opportunity, access to healthcare, quality education, reproductive health, and sexual assault get the attention they deserve. To voters, women are the ones likely to bring people together to get results and make government work.

Women in politics are no longer an anomaly. Voters no longer see qualified women as the exception instead of the rule. Since the inception of this research in 1998, the number of women governors in our nation's history has more than doubled, and the number of women in the U.S. Senate has hit a record high.

Progress toward equality in elected representation is slow and incremental. But it is persistent—and persistence is key.

methodology

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation has been lucky to have many partners in the work to study women candidates for governor and how voters respond to women's campaigns, including:

- Lake Research Partners (formerly Lake Snell Perry & Associates)
- AmericanViewpoint, Inc.
- Chesapeake Beach Consulting
- Bellwether Research & Consulting
- The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University
- Iowa State University
- Hughes & Company (formerly Staton Hughes)
- 76 Words

The resulting body of work is the Barbara Lee Family Foundation Governors Guidebook Series. That series is distilled in this book, along with the key findings from separate pieces of research focusing on women candidates more broadly. These works studied messages for women candidates; demonstrating qualification; contrasting with opponents; showcasing likeability; and next steps following an electoral loss, as well as other topics.

Each study and its full methodology are available at **www.barbaraleefoundation.org.**

the gallery
a history of women governors

Governor
Nellie Tayloe Ross
1925-1927
Wyoming

Governor
Miriam A. Ferguson
1925-27 and 1933-1935
Texas

Governor
Lurleen Wallace
1967-1968
Alabama

Governor
Ella T. Grasso
1975-1980
Connecticut

Governor
Dixy Lee Ray
1977-1981
Washington

Acting Governor
Vesta M. Roy
1982-1983
New Hampshire

Governor
Martha Layne Collins
1983-1987
Kentucky

Governor
Madeleine M. Kunin
1985-1991
Vermont

Governor
Kay A. Orr
1987-1991
Nebraska

Governor
Rose Mofford
1988-1991
Arizona

Governor
Joan Finney
1991-1995
Kansas

Governor
Ann Richards
1991-1995
Texas

Governor
Barbara Roberts
1991-1995
Oregon

Governor
Christine Todd Whitman
1994-2001
New Jersey

Governor
Jane Dee Hull
1997-2003
Arizona

Governor
Jeanne Shaheen
1997-2003
New Hampshire

Governor
Nancy P. Hollister
1998-1999
Ohio

Governor
Judy Martz
2001-2005
Montana

Governor
Ruth Ann Minner
2001-2009
Delaware

Acting Governor
Jane Swift
2001-2003
Massachusetts

Governor
Linda Lingle
2002-2010
Hawaii

Governor
Jennifer M. Granholm
2003-2011
Michigan

Governor
Janet Napolitano
2003-2009
Arizona

Governor
Kathleen Sebelius
2003-2009
Kansas

Governor
Olene Walker
2003-2005
Utah

Governor
Kathleen Blanco
2004-2008
Louisiana

Governor
M. Jodi Rell
2004-2011
Connecticut

Governor
Christine Gregoire
2005-2013
Washington

Governor
Sarah Palin
2006-2009
Alaska

Governor
Jan Brewer
2009-2014
Arizona

Governor
Beverly Perdue
2009-2013
North Carolina

Governor
Mary Fallin
2011-2019
Oklahoma

Governor
Nikki Haley
2011-2017
South Carolina

Governor
Susana Martinez
2011-2019
New Mexico

Governor
Maggie Hassan
2013-2017
New Hampshire

Governor
Gina Raimondo
2015-Present
Rhode Island

Governor
Kate Brown
2015-Present
Oregon

Governor
Kay Ivey
2017-Present
Alabama

Governor
Kim Reynolds
2017-Present
Iowa

Governor Michelle
Lujan Grisham
2019 – Present
New Mexico

Governor
Laura Kelly
2019- Present
Kansas

Governor
Janet Mills
2019-Present
Maine

Governor
Kristi Noem
2019- Present
South Dakota

Governor
Gretchen Whitmer
2019-Present
Michigan