

A stylized, high-contrast illustration of the United States Capitol building. The building is rendered in white and black, with a prominent dome and a statue on top. It is set against a bright blue sky with several white, fluffy clouds. In the foreground, there is a green lawn. To the left of the building, a sign on a wooden post is visible. The sign has a blue background with a black border and contains the text 'SHE SHOULD RUN' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The words are stacked vertically, with 'SHE' on the top line, 'SHOULD' on the middle line, and 'RUN' on the bottom line. Red horizontal lines separate the words.

**SHE**  
**SHOULD**  
**RUN**

# COMPANION NOTEBOOK:

Making the Decision to Serve

# 3

## What Does It Take: Skills & Preparation

The obstacles American women face in seeking elective office are many, and they are substantial. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the only obstacles women face in politics are thrown up by men. Women have to have more confidence in other women. We also need to have more confidence in ourselves. Far too often, smart, capable women simply talk themselves out of running for office.

Susan Collins  
U.S. Senator

Now that you know there are literally hundreds of thousands of opportunities for public service out there, you have no excuse. Maybe you want to take the plunge, but you're not sure you're qualified.

You are. You need talent and a commitment to do the work, so you likely already have much of what it takes. What do we mean by "talent?" We mean the experiences and skills that will enable you to make good decisions for your community. Consider this list of skills and the experiences that demonstrate them. You just might be surprised to realize how many of these you already have:

**Public Speaking**  
-Host and introduce at an alumnae gathering  
-Participate in a school debate team or local Toastmasters group

**Ability to Analyze**  
-Evaluate your property taxes  
-Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece

**Group Decision-Making**  
-Organize or lead a PTA chapter  
-Plan an event to raise money for a local non-profit

**Consensus Building**  
-Coach soccer or chaperone a field trip  
-Put together a company retreat

**Debate and Negotiate**  
-Be a mom, enforce a curfew  
-Advocate during an office meeting for changes to policies

Your professional and personal background is part of what you bring to the table as a public servant. Your career might have given you confidence in public speaking, taking a leadership role, or working on the details of issues with others.

Public servants come from diverse backgrounds. For instance, 45% of school board members are professionals or businesspeople, and 26% identified themselves as homemakers or retired.<sup>32</sup> Lawyers are still the largest occupational group in state legislatures at 15%.<sup>33</sup> For those interested in an appointment to government service, it's beneficial to have an expertise in a field related to the appointment you seek.

The background of many women in public service reflect the skills of management and consensus building. Barbara Mikulski, a

former U.S. Senator from Maryland, launched her start as a social worker in Baltimore, helping at-risk children and educating seniors about the Medicare program. Social work evolved into community activism when Mikulski successfully organized communities against a plan to build a 16-lane highway through Baltimore's Fells Point neighborhood.<sup>34</sup>

According to women state legislators interviewed in *State Legislators* magazine, another great way to develop the necessary skills is to manage a household, raise children, and build your interpersonal relationships.<sup>35</sup> You will gain such skills as consensus building, listening, empathy, and management.

What kind of public service is right for you? Elected, appointed, and party office each require unique skills:

Elected:	Organizing and interpersonal skills Persuasiveness Networking with opinion leaders
Appointed:	Subject matter expertise Team loyalty Capacity to empathize and see all points of view
Political Party:	Ideological commitment Ability to mobilize volunteers Behind the scenes negotiation

Are you skilled at handling tough situations with grace and a healthy sense of humor? Do you have a strong capacity to build and maintain relationships? Can you actively listen and learn from others? And most importantly, do you have a real sense of civic responsibility?

**Then you've got what it takes to run for office.**

# MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

Many women don't get involved in public service because of misconceptions about what it means to campaign and serve. You might be surprised by the facts!

**MYTH: Women who run for office don't enjoy the campaign process.**

FACT: *Among individuals who actually ran for elected office, women were no more likely than men to express negative attitudes about the campaign process.*<sup>36</sup>

**MYTH: Women have a much harder time winning elections and getting involved in public service.**

FACT: *This is a common misconception – 67% of people of both genders think that women have a tougher time winning. In fact, when they run, women win as often as men.*<sup>37</sup>

**MYTH: You have to raise a huge amount of money to successfully run for office.**

FACT: *More than 75% of school board members reported spending less than \$1,000 on their most recent election.*<sup>38</sup> *In State Legislatures, the median raised for the general election was \$20,493 for House/Assembly candidates and \$47,546 for Senate candidates.*<sup>39</sup>

**MYTH: Voters don't want women to run for office.**

FACT: *66% of Americans say the country has a leadership crisis, and more than half say that we would be better off with more women in leadership roles.*<sup>40</sup>

**MYTH: People won't vote for women, particularly women seeking the highest offices.**

FACT: *A recent poll found that 92% of Americans are willing to elect a woman president.*<sup>41</sup> *More than 18 million Democratic Presidential primary voters cast their ballot for former U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2008.*

**MYTH: Women in public service don't have an effect on the overall number of politically involved women.**

FACT: *The presence of highly visible political women increases the political engagement of teenage girls.*<sup>42</sup>

**MYTH: Women in particular don't run because they don't like the campaigning, fundraising, and the loss of privacy associated with running for office.**

FACT: *Men and women both express disdain toward aspects of running for political office, such as fundraising, making tough compromises and losing some privacy.*<sup>43</sup>

**MYTH: Women aren't as interested in politics and policy as men are.**

FACT: *In every federal election since 1984, U.S. women have voted in greater numbers proportionately than men.*<sup>44</sup>

**MYTH: Losing one race reduces your chances of winning in the future.**

FACT: *Losing can be the preamble to winning. For Dianne Feinstein, losing a close race for California Governor in 1990 enabled her to be easily elected to the U.S. Senate two years later because she was well-known and respected.*<sup>45</sup>



## Books We Love & Resources We Rely On

24 Years Of House Work And Still A Mess. 1999.

*By Pat Schroeder*

Former U.S. Representative Pat Schroeder's autobiography details her struggle to find her place in Congress and how - as the longest-serving woman in congressional history balanced politics with family and children.

Dirty Words on Clean Skin: Sexism and Sabotage, A Hillary Supporter's Rude Awakening. 2012.

*By Anita Finlay*

Told in first person, Finlay examines the costs of media sexism on potential female leaders. This is a discussion of how the media is the culprit for the glass ceiling and without an honest discussion, women will not be able to break through the glass.

Fighting for Common Ground: How We Can Fix the Stalemate in Congress. 2013.

*By Olympia Snowe*

A look at the growing partisan divide in Congress written by a prominent female former Senator. Using her experiences and anecdotes, Snowe discusses how she discovered her moderate Republican values.

Getting Political: Stories of a Woman Mayor. 2002.

*By Joan Darrah and Alice Crozier*

This is an engaging autobiography by Joan Darrah, who at the age of 54 and never having held elective office, was elected Mayor of Stockton, California, a city of a quarter of a million people.

It's My Party, Too: The Battle for the Heart of the GOP and the Future of America. 2005.

*By Christine Todd Whitman*

In this book Whitman explores her own GOP heritage as New Jersey Governor and Bush Administration insider, and describes her experiences with such hot button issues as abortion, stem cell research, race, the environment, and women's rights.

Madame Chair: A Political Autobiography of an Unintentional Pioneer. 2007.

*By Jean Westwood*

This is a powerful memoir of a remarkable woman who held what was arguably one of the most powerful political positions any American woman had ever held – Chair of the National Democratic Party – and an inside account of a period that reshaped national politics.

My Beloved World. 2012.

*By Sonia Sotomayor*

The first Hispanic to become a Supreme Court Justice, Sotomayor writes about overcoming tremendous burdens in her childhood with the inspiration of female mentors along the way.

Nine and Counting: The Women of the Senate. 2000.

*By Kay Bailey Hutchison, Barbara Boxer, Susan Collins, Dianne Feinstein, Mary Landrieu, Blanche Lincoln, Barbara Mikulski, Patty Murray, Olympia Snowe, and Catherine Whitney*

Once a month the women of the U.S. Senate informally meet to share their knowledge, their hearts, and a good meal. This book weaves together their individual stories of triumph, adversity, adaptability, and leadership.

No Place for a Woman: A Life of Senator Margaret Chase Smith. 1999.

*By Janann Sherman*

This is a thoughtful biography about the first woman to be elected to both the U.S. House and the Senate. served for many years as the only woman senator, and was a longtime supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment and an advocate for women's presence in the military.

Notes from a Cracked Ceiling: Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and What It Will Take for a Woman to Win. 2009.

*By Anne E. Kornblut*

This book revisits the women of the 2008 presidential campaigns and measures the progress of female politicians and wonders whether, with women filling just 23% of statewide and 17% of Congressional offices, the political gender gap will ever close.

Pearls, Politics, and Power: How Women Can Win and Lead. 2008.

*By Madeline Kunin*

Kunin uses personal interviews with notable female politicians to understand how women can win elections. This book both educates and inspires potential female candidates.

Pink Politics: The Women's Practical Guide to Winning Elections. 2011.

*By Kathy Groob*

This how-to book explores tried and true methods to running for a political position and winning, including how to raise money, deal with obstacles, and develop a work/life balance.

Secrets of Powerful Women: Leading Change for a New Generation. 2010.

*By Andrea Word*

This book is an interesting collection of true stories from women who hold various and unique leadership positions who share what they learned to get there.

Tales From the Trenches: Achievements, Blunders, and Challenges in Local Government Management. 2003.

*Edited by Len Wood and Joe Baker*

The editors provide a selection of actual occurrences, both great achievements and ridiculous blunders, that depict some of the day-to-day situations that occur in local government. As each tale unfolds, tips are suggested.

Twice as Good: Condoleezza Rice and Her Path to Power. 2008.

*By Marcus Mabry*

An Editor's Choice of the New York Times Book Review, Mabry's book is an insightful look at one of the, historically, most influential women in the world.

When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present. 2009.

*By Gail Collins*

This book is a comprehensive account of the last 50 years of women's history, with particular attention paid to the women's movement and leaders such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem.