

An illustration of the U.S. Capitol building in black and white, set against a bright blue sky with stylized white clouds. The building is reflected in a green field. In the foreground, a sign on a wooden post reads "SHE SHOULD RUN" in white capital letters on a blue background, with red horizontal lines separating the words.

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

# COMPANION NOTEBOOK:

Making the Decision to Serve

# 4

## Living Well & Serving Well: You Can Do Both

As someone who had never run for office before, I was very concerned that being involved in politics meant giving up being there for my family. I focused on finding a balance. For me, that means I am the only statewide elected official who drives carpool with the kids. It's not always easy, but you can find balance – even if sometimes you have to fight to maintain it.

Cary Kennedy

Former Colorado State Treasurer

Many women contemplating a move into public service get stuck on how to balance their public and private lives; how to give your all to career, family, and public service. The benefits to family and to your career can be surprising.

## Family First

**At the end of the day, you can point to your work and tell your children: See, Mommy left the world a better place.  
-Former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency  
Marianne Horinko**

Many women in public service schedule time with family the same way they schedule all important meetings. Some take young children along while others trade childcare duties with friends who also serve on local boards and commissions. Sometimes, though, time away is required for a conference or a site visit. Anticipate how your family will manage these overnight trips. When is it appropriate for the kids to go along? Who will take charge in your absence? How much time away are you and your partner comfortable with? These are questions you should consider together.

Making it work is possible. As of 2013, Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz has 3 children under age 15 - including twins! When they were younger, Schultz led her daughter's Girl Scout troop back in Florida and checked her twins' homework by fax.<sup>46</sup>

More and more younger women are taking on public roles and making it work with young families - and finding that public service can be very flexible. Jessica Lappin, a Jessica Lappin, a former member of the New York City Council, is in her 20s and took six weeks of maternity leave after giving birth to her son.<sup>47</sup> Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who became a Congresswoman in her thirties, shares childcare responsibilities with her spouse. As a Congresswoman, she gave birth to her second child during her first term. She is the sixth woman to have a child while a member of Congress (of 276 women who have served).<sup>48</sup>

While there appears to be an upswing in young women entering public service, many women who now serve entered the political arena later in life. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ran for her first elective office at 47 and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was first elected to the Senate at 53. Former U.S. Representative Judy

Biggert began her legislative career at the age of 55. They may have started a trend of “mid-life” women – who are successful professionally and personally – then decide to give back to their communities through public service. All of these women, younger and older, are redefining how and when women contribute through public service.

## A Family Affair

Elected officials can choose if and when to make their families part of their public personas or not. American political history is chock-full of families who have shaped the nation together, from John and Abigail Adams and their son, the second president Adams, to the publicly spirited Kennedy clan.

There are a number of families today who have various members serving in public office. In Missouri, the Carnahan family currently boasts a Member of Congress and a Secretary of State following their mom (a former U.S. Senator), their Dad (a former Governor) and their grandfather (a former U.S. Congressman). The Castor family of Florida is another example: Kathy Castor currently serves in the U.S. Congress, following her State Education Commissioner mom’s run for the U.S. Senate. California elected the first sister duo to serve in the U.S. House: Loretta and Linda Sanchez. And no one was surprised when the media asked whether Chelsea Clinton might follow in her mother’s and father’s footsteps.

Gloria Holland, Mayor of Plantersville, Mississippi, comes from a family that epitomizes public service: a great uncle who served in Congress, an aunt who was her county’s first Superintendent of Education, a father who was the first Mayor of Plantersville and a husband currently in the State Legislature. She attributes her genetic predisposition to public life to “the strong women in my family.”

Many folks involved in politics and government today recall fond memories of a first precinct walk or phone bank. Other children of public leaders recall “stuffing and stamping” to get the mail out. Still others mention their in-person civil service. Bringing your family into public service can launch careers or simply stir avocations. Either way, it’s a family affair that keeps you close.

## Public Service. Private Career.

What do employers think about employees in the public spotlight? Often, they are pleased to have a representative of the company visibly contributing to the community. Many consider it part of their “corporate citizenship.” Keep your employer posted on your plans for elected or appointed office. Having an employee or former employee who understands their industry and is also in a position to shape policy is a real plus. You may find that your employer is a strong supporter.

Discussions of flex time and other work adjustments are best had before you put your name forward. You should also consider that public service is itself a career path, and may become more than just a part-time endeavor. Set expectations and update your boss. If your public service becomes a full-time occupation, keep your old friends and colleagues close. They can be a great resource and keep you grounded.



## Books We Love & Resources We Rely On

Commander in Chief (DVD). 2005.

This fictional TV series focuses on first female President of the United States as she encounters gender barriers even as the most powerful person in the country.

MomsRising.org

An online organization, working to bring together millions of people who share a common concern about the need to build a more family-friendly America.

[www.momsrising.org](http://www.momsrising.org)

Parks and Recreation.

This comedic T.V. show follows Leslie Knope, a local government official who runs for City Council.

Storming the Statehouse: Running for Governor with Anne Richards and Dianne Feinstein. 1992.

By Celia Morris

This book follows the 1990 gubernatorial races in Texas and California, and details how two very different women ran two historic races – and why one failed and the other succeeded.

The Girls in the Van: Covering Hillary. 2001.

By Beth Harpaz

This book is a front-row seat in the press van of Hillary Clinton's Senate run, following the First Lady from the beginning of the campaign to her historic victory.

Veep.

In this T.V. comedy series, Julia Louis-Dreyfus plays fictional U.S. Vice President Selina Meyer, whose political mantra is “politics is about people.”