

A stylized illustration of the U.S. Capitol building in black and white, set against a bright blue sky with white clouds. The building is reflected in a green field. In the foreground, a blue sign with a black border and a brown post is planted in the grass. The sign contains the text 'SHE SHOULD RUN' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, with red horizontal lines separating the words.

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

# COMPANION NOTEBOOK:

Making the Decision to Serve

# 5

## Is It Rewarding?

I can't imagine any career more satisfying than public service. It's my job to make life better for those in the district I represent, and I have the ability to give voice to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged when shaping our laws. When you do that, you get paid in something that's better than money.

U.S. Representative Linda Sanchez

Doing good, working with dynamic colleagues, and building a rewarding career are three of the best reasons to choose public service. You will be operating to the fullest of your abilities and working with engaging colleagues to solve real problems. Public servants do tremendous good and as a public servant you can make the difference.

## Helping People, Solving Problems

**I love being able to do meaningful work that makes my state a better place to live.**

**-Former Vermont Secretary of State Deborah Markowitz**

Helping people and solving problems are two “pay-offs” frequently mentioned by women who serve in office and who are active in political parties. Ambition cured polio and discovered new continents. The ambition to elevate public education, reform the health care system, raise ethical standards for public conduct, or even place a stop sign has launched many a political career.

There are as many ways to make a difference as there are women who serve. And while women now shape policy on issues as diverse as science technology and agriculture policy, women public servants have advanced the cause of women and families. Here are some success stories and some efforts still underway:

Former U.S. Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker worked in the 1990s to pass sensible health reform passed, working to limit the power of insurance companies to reject coverage or drop patients.<sup>49</sup>

As a State Senator in Wisconsin, Congresswoman Gwen Moore worked with the Attorney General to ensure that all health care companies in her state provided coverage for birth control and contraceptives.<sup>50</sup>



As the former Governor of Arizona, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano succeeded in leading her Republican legislature to pass all-day state-funded kindergarten, which was one of her top legislative priorities.<sup>51</sup>

Former Pennsylvania State Senator Connie Williams fought to ensure that women cannot be fired or discriminated against in the workplace for breastfeeding during a lunch or break, and protected a woman's freedom to breastfeed in public or private places.

Christine Quinn, former Speaker of the New York City Council, sponsored legislation to provide health care benefits to domestic partners over the objections of her Mayor.<sup>52</sup>

Former U.S. Representative Connie Morella worked on behalf of battered women, sponsoring bills that not only provided funds for indigent women to hire expert witnesses in domestic abuse cases, but also trained judges about domestic violence cases.<sup>53</sup>

Former U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe and current U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow pushed their colleagues to support increased funding of breast cancer research in a Dept. of Defense appropriations bill.

Liz Krueger, State Senator from New York, worked to pass the Women's Health and Wellness Act, expanding coverage for contraceptives and parity for breast and cervical cancer treatments.

## Camaraderie of Teamwork

**My position gives me the flexibility to work on issues that are impacting the lives of Rhode Islanders and find creative, collaborative solutions with my partners in and out of government.**

**-Former Rhode Island Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts**

In addition to the direct good that legislators do, camaraderie, teamwork, and the development of lasting relationships adds to the job satisfaction. There is a whole world of dynamic colleagues and professionally challenging public policy issues that need diagnosis and prescription. The work is intellectually stimulating, and resolving disputes and crafting compromise is often personally gratifying.

Women in the State Legislature build this camaraderie in part through women's caucuses: 27 State Legislatures have either formal or informal caucuses for women, where members can network, brainstorm, and discuss legislative priorities.<sup>54</sup> Women's political organizations and the parties themselves have many forums for women officials to socialize and work together on policy issues.

Former California Attorney General and current US Senator Kamala Harris – the first Indian-American (she is also African-American) District Attorney in the U.S. – has discovered first-hand the satisfaction of teamwork in her drive to prevent recidivism amongst non-violent first-time drug offenders. As a district attorney,

she partnered with Goodwill Industries, as various branches of the city government, and private industry, to create the Back on Track program. It has successfully cut the rate of re-arrest to 1/7 of the norm, and Harris describes the program's success as deeply satisfying.<sup>55</sup>

## A Rich Career

Though it wasn't always so, it is now possible to sustain public service as a career. Many women describe their public service as a "great job." The pay is competitive and the opportunity to advance to higher office is often available. Public service careers let you set your own pace and provide flexibility to your career trajectory. The contacts you make during your tenure in one office will help you win and serve in others.

At the state level, most full-time legislators get paid generously. In California, as of 2013, state legislators make \$95,291 per year plus a per diem allowance for every day they're in session. Even part-time legislators in Maine receive \$13,852 a year, as well as a travel and residency stipend.<sup>56</sup>

At the local level and on boards and commissions, pay is more commensurate with a part-time salary, or is based on a small stipend. It ranges from large cities where council members make an average of \$39,061 per year<sup>57</sup> to school boards, where only one-third of board members receive any salary or compensation for their service.<sup>58</sup> For boards and commissions, members typically receive only a daily stipend for service, days, and travel reimbursement.

Flexibility and outside-the-norm hours are to be expected for most types of service. Part-time work is also common. For example, the Texas State Legislature meets only from January to June.<sup>59</sup> Even for full-time positions, long vacations are the norm for all levels of service up to State Legislators (who typically get a month-long summer recess and another four-week recess in the winter or spring).

## PUBLIC SERVICE: BENEFITS

Pensions of up to 45% of one's highest salary are offered in some counties and states, and retired Members of Congress receive \$35,000 a year in benefits.

Federal-level service provides high quality health care, and the government pays roughly 85% of the premiums.

As of 2012, judges have a median salary of \$91,880. Most salaried judges are provided health, life and dental insurance, pension plans, judicial immunity protection, expense accounts, and vacation, holiday, and sick leave.<sup>60</sup>



## Books We Love & Resources We Rely On

Closing the Leadership Gap: Why Women Can and Must Help Run the World. 2007.

By Marie Wilson

In this inspiring call to action, the author describes her practical approach to developing women as leaders. The goal is nothing less than changing expectations of both genders.

Feminist Majority

Promotes equality for women and men, non-violence, reproductive health, peace, social justice, and economic development and to enhance feminist participation in public policy.

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

National Organization for Women

Since its founding in 1966, this organization works to take action to bring about equality for all women.

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

With Liberty and Justice for All. 2006.

By Kate Michelman

Michelman, who led NARAL for nearly 20 years, recounts her experiences in this memoir. She asserts that pro-choice politicians win elections more often than their anti-choice counterparts, while arguing that Americans overwhelmingly support reproductive choice.

The Impact of Women in Public Office. 2001.

By Susan Carroll

This collection of studies examines the impact of women public officials serving at local, state and national levels.

Independent Women's Forum

Mission is to expand the conservative coalition by increasing the number of women who believe in limited government.

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

Why Women Should Rule the World. 2008.

By Dee Dee Myers

Former White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers challenges us to imagine a world where increasing numbers of women

Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future. 2005.

By Sue Thomas

This book's essays examine how, historically, the cultural norms of women in elected offices have changed in presidential races, but are still moving at a snail's pace in congressional races.

The second edition includes analysis of women of color and international female political leaders, and offers a look at women who run for federal positions.

Women's E-News

News service that sends free emails to anyone interested in receiving all the day's news by, for, and about women.

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