



The Barbara Lee Family Foundation (BLFF) advances women’s equality and representation in American politics and in the field of contemporary art. Our work in both our program areas is guided by our core belief that women’s voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture.

We achieve our overall mission through our nonpartisan political research program, strategic partnerships, grants, and endowments:

- ***Nonpartisan political research:*** For nearly 20 years, politicians, practitioners, and press have used BLFF research to understand the obstacles and opportunities for women running for office. BLFF has studied and published research about every woman's gubernatorial race since 1998. We have shared our findings with thousands of women candidates and officeholders, at all levels and across parties, giving women essential knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of campaigning.
- ***Strategic partnerships:*** BLFF builds strategic, nonpartisan partnerships to help women succeed in American politics and make women contemporary artists more visible to the public.
- ***Grants and endowments:*** BLFF is committed to building the capacity and ensuring the long-term viability of select partner organizations through grants and endowments.

Learn more about BLFF at www.barbaraleefoundation.org. Follow along on [Facebook](#) and Twitter ([@BLFF_org](#)).

We welcome press inquiries. To request information or an interview, please contact:

Amanda Hunter
Communications Director
ahunter@blff.org
Office : 617.234.0351 ext. 109

Megan Piccirillo
Communications Manager
mpiccirillo@blff.org
Office: 617.234.0355 ext. 119

Barbara Lee Family Foundation research shows that women have some disadvantages, as well as some advantages, when running for office.

Obstacles

- **Likeability Litmus Test:** Voters have to consider a woman candidate both qualified and likeable before voting for her, but are willing to support a male candidate they do not like but who they think is qualified. In other words, men don't need to be liked to be elected, but women have to show both competency and likeability.
- **Proving Qualifications:** Voters continue to have high standards for what they consider a "qualified" woman candidate. While men can simply list positions of leadership and service to show their qualifications, women need to tout their specific accomplishments. Women must show their credentials, whereas men can just tell.
- **Personal Presentation:** Voters decide whether a woman candidate is ready to lead, in part, based on her personal presentation. Although all candidates are judged on these attributes to some degree, women have a steeper climb in convincing voters to judge them on their merits. Voters notice a woman's looks, makeup, hair, clothing, race, and voice when judging her likeability, and what they notice often mirrors gender stereotypes.
- **Family Life:** Voters continue to judge women on their families and personal lives. In the minds of voters, the ideal woman candidate is a well-educated, married 55-year old with previous experience in office, but, in reality, America doesn't look like a 1950s sitcom. Voters express concerns about the ability of women candidates to balance the competing priorities of their families and constituents. Voters recognize that moms face different expectations, but actively and consciously participate in this double standard.
- **Contrasting with Opponents:** Women candidates pay a higher price for "going negative" even though it's an essential part of campaigning -- candidates must show how they differ from their opponents. Voters expect more from women candidates. They feel that, by engaging in negative campaigning, a woman is reduced to the status of a "typical" politician.

Opportunities

- **The 360-Degree Candidate:** By using all of their experiences and expertise, women have a broader range of opportunities to connect with voters. Women candidates can effectively use storytelling from their lives or others' lives to communicate credentials while also connecting with voters. Relatability has evolved, with voters being more willing to take into account less traditional experience in their decision making.
- **In Touch:** In the current political environment, the perception that women candidates are more in touch than male candidates is a huge asset. To motivate voters to vote for women candidates, it works to focusing on how women elected officials understand what people are experiencing -- and that they're in touch with real life works.

- Honesty Pedestal: Voters historically awarded women candidates a “virtue” advantage, seeing them as more honest and ethical than men. While this perception remains, there are significant partisan differences, with Democratic women running against Republican men being most likely to enjoy an advantage on perceptions of honest and ethics. Voters who see women as offering unique traits like honesty are more likely to support a woman candidate.
- “Women’s” Issues: 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. Being good on education and healthcare can, in turn, help women candidates be seen as good on the economy.

What Voters Think

- Party Trumps Gender: People often talk about “women voters” as though women are a monolithic voting group. They’re not. In fact, BLFF research has consistently shown that partisanship is the single most important predictor of votes.
- Not Enough Women in Office: A majority (59%) of voters say there aren’t enough women in elected office. This sentiment is especially strong among young women (73%). Two-thirds (67%) of women agree, and 52% of men agree. The core of voters who say there are not enough women in office are unmarried (particularly unmarried women), Democrats, African Americans, Latinos, post-graduate, and college-educated women.
- Just Enough Women in Office: Men who are weak partisans, Republicans, unmarried men, and born-again or Evangelical Christians are more satisfied with the number of women in office. Of these satisfied groups, all but unmarried men are less likely to vote for women candidates.
- Least Supportive of Women Candidates: Older men are the least supportive of women candidates, according to our findings.

All Barbara Lee Family Foundation Research is available online at www.barbaraleefoundation.org.

Barbara Lee, Founder & President



Barbara Lee is a national leader in advancing women's equality and representation in American politics and in the field of contemporary art. She founded and leads the Barbara Lee Family Foundation.

Inspired by her grandmother's stories of suffragists marching on New York City's Fifth Avenue in the early 1900s, Barbara has worked to educate the public about gender disparities in government since 1998. Today, through the Foundation's nonpartisan research, Barbara gives women candidates, elected officials, and other leaders at all levels essential knowledge to meet the challenges of campaigning.

Through the Foundation, Barbara spearheaded Presidential Gender Watch 2016, a nonpartisan project with the Center for American Women and Politics to track, analyze, and illuminate the gender dynamics of the 2016 presidential election. She has also endowed a nonpartisan training program for women at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and an internship program at the Massachusetts State House for students at Simmons College in Boston.

An advocate for Boston's cultural life and for public access to contemporary art, Barbara is Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. Boston Magazine has included Barbara among "Boston's Most Powerful Thought Leaders," "The 100 People Who Run This Town" and is listed among their "50 most powerful women" in Boston. Women's eNews ranks her among the "21 Leaders for the 21st Century."

Barbara earned a Master's degree from the Boston University School of Social Work and her Bachelor's degree from Simmons College.

Nicole Carlsburg, Executive Director



As Executive Director, Nicole Carlsburg leads the Foundation's nonpartisan efforts to advance women's political equality and increase women's representation in the field of contemporary art. With experience on a broad range of national and local campaigns, Nicole brings years of strategic insight to the Foundation's work, including seven years on Barbara Lee's senior leadership team. As Program Director, Nicole managed strategic nonpartisan grant-making initiatives that expanded women's participation in American politics and contributed to the Foundation's nonpartisan research.

Nicole came to the Barbara Lee Family Foundation from the Family Equality Council, the national organization working to ensure equality for LGBT-headed families. There, she managed the organization's grant seeking and donor communications, designed and implemented resources and programming for LGBT parents and their children, and advanced issue advocacy campaigns such as California's marriage equality initiative (Prop 8) and overturning Florida's LGBT adoption ban. In her earlier career, Nicole worked at the Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center, where she served as a human resources coordinator, and later raised critical funds for patient-centered, community-focused healthcare.

Nicole is a 2013 Fellow of the New Leaders Council, a national progressive political entrepreneurship training program for young professionals.

Nicole graduated magna cum laude from Tufts University with a Bachelor's degree in psychology and drama.