

keys to elected office

the essential guide **for women**

BARBARA LEE FAMILY FOUNDATION

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. ❏

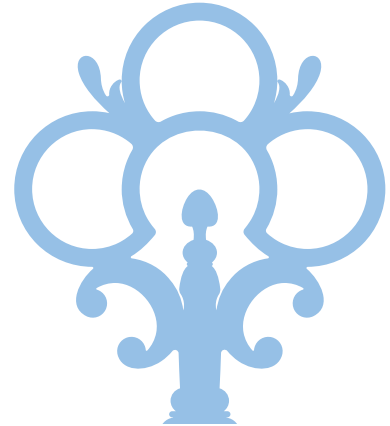
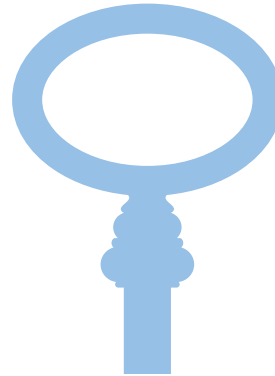
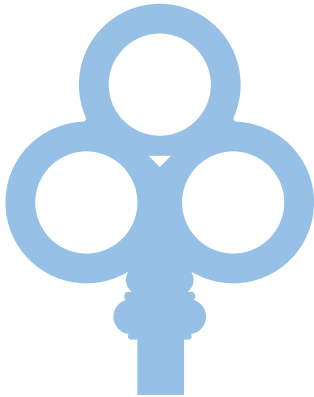
New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, 1994-2001

❏ 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. ❏

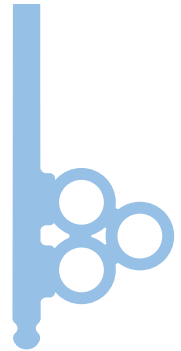
New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan, 2013-Present



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Governors Guidebook Series

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acknowledgments

In memory of Pat Giardina Carpenter, former President of the WISH List, an important voice in the quest for women's political empowerment, who has left her lasting mark on every guidebook in the Barbara Lee Family Foundation series. And in memory of Joel Kozol, Barbara Lee Family Foundation Board member, longtime mentor, and friend. They will be missed.

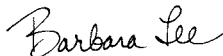
Thanks to our research partners: Mary Hughes of Hughes and Company, Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners, and Bob Carpenter of Chesapeake Beach Consulting for their unmatched insights and analysis on women gubernatorial candidates.

This project is also made possible by the hard work and dedication of my devoted team. My sincere appreciation to Nicole Bourgoin, Emily Cashman Magno, Sarah Groothuis, Natalie Hildreth, Adrienne Kimmell, Jenny Lau, Anastasia Nicolaou, Greeley O'Connor, Erin Souza-Rezendes, and Natalie Stemple.

I remain grateful for the support of our Board of Directors. Thank you David Damroth, Robbie Lee, Zach Lee, and Fran Seegull for your encouragement and commitment to the Foundation's mission.

Finally, to all the women who have had the grace and grit to run for governor: Thank you. You continue to inspire and motivate me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Lee

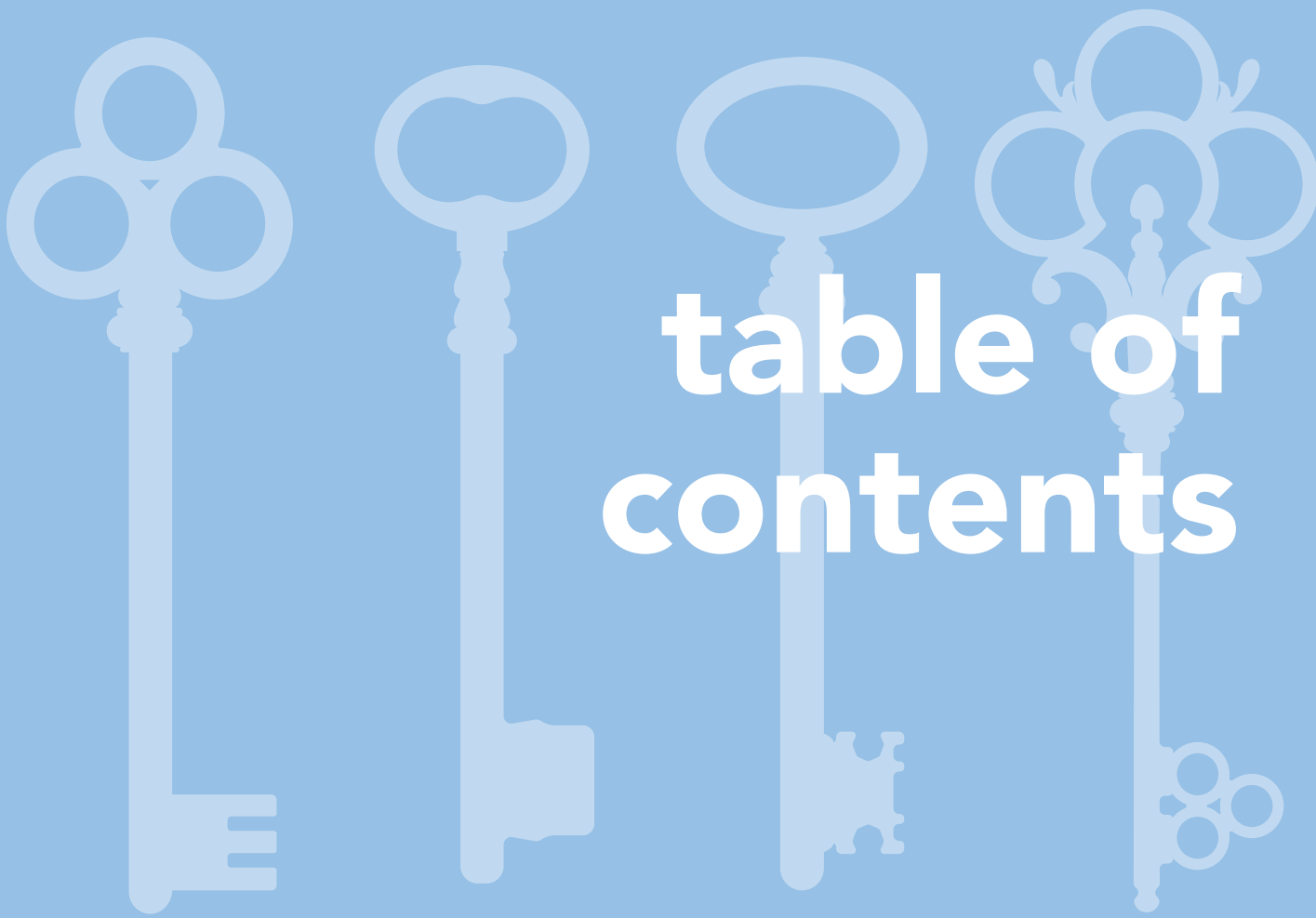


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foreword

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 the 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.

This guide is also 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, consider our research 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
June 2014



"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


introduction

Running for office as a woman is different than it is for a man. Why? Because voters expect more from women and afford them different advantages. 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. Facts about voter demographics help paint the picture:


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. On the other hand, 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. Older men are the least supportive of women candidates, according to our findings. Among women, controlling for all other factors, those under 50 were less likely to vote for a woman candidate than those over 50.

This guide is the compilation of more than 15 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. Find more about our research methodology on pages 40 and 41.


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.



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.

Four decorative keys of different styles are arranged horizontally. From left to right: 1. A key with a three-lobed head and a simple bit. 2. A key with a heart-shaped head and a simple bit. 3. A key with an oval head and a bit with three teeth. 4. A highly ornate key with a complex, multi-lobed head and a bit with three teeth. The word "preparation" is centered over the keys in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

preparation

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. Women 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 well 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 33.



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.

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

- **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 gender-balanced, experienced staff.** Don't pinch pennies, and don't be seduced by youthful enthusiasm. 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. Gender balance is also important. The most effective and disciplined campaign teams are gender-balanced, 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.



"There need to be more women in this media consulting business, and they don't need to be versions of men; they need to be women."

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

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 this environment, voters also claim to value a fresh perspective and disdain political insiders. In the past, women held a huge advantage on being seen as change agents. That has diminished.

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

The Challenge

The personal is political. Voters continue to judge women on their families and personal lives. We've found that this woman candidate appeals to voters: a well-educated, married, 55-year-old with previous experience in office. However, women without this profile can still be successful.

More than 50 percent of American households no longer look like the family from a 1950s sitcom, according to a report on 2010 census data. For the first time since the Census Bureau began tracking this data in 1940, heterosexual married couples with children make up less than half of all American households.

While being a mother is appealing to voters, it also reinforces gender stereotypes. Voters 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, if they are young.

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, background, 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.

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

- **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 as parent, daughter, spouse, or partner. That's the thing about family—everyone has one.

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

CAMPAIGN MANAGER



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.

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.



KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES

- **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



substance



the double bind: qualification and likeability

The Challenge

Being perceived as qualified and likeable is essential for women to win executive office. We so often hear voters hedge that they'll vote for a "qualified" woman. Women have to prove themselves from day one.

When voters think about whether a woman candidate is qualified for the job, two dimensions emerge. The dominant dimension is being results-oriented, and the other is being charismatic and likeable. However, for men candidates, there are four dimensions and all have equal weight (see chart on page 23). For women candidates, not making a mistake is part of being likeable. For men candidates, not making a mistake is part of being organized and getting results.

Because qualifications and likeability are so closely linked, there are dual negative consequences for women when they make mistakes on the campaign trail. A woman candidate who has a mistake in her economic plan, performs poorly in a debate, gets angry in public, or chokes up in public is less likely to be seen as qualified *and* less likely to be seen as likeable.

The connection between likeability and qualifications is of particular concern because voters are perfectly willing to vote for a male executive they think is qualified but do not like. However, they will not vote for a woman they find unlikeable even if she is qualified. A double bind, indeed. A candidate's likeability is especially important to women voters; 90% of women say that it is important to like a candidate they support.

candidate traits

Factor analysis—a process of inferring something from research data rather than directly observing it—illuminates a challenge for women: There is only one factor for women candidates, which means all of the appealing characteristics are tied together. If a woman is not seen as possessing one quality, she is not seen as possessing another. That is not the case for men, who have the ability to rise and fall on different dimensions.

WOMEN CANDIDATES FACTORS*

LEADER	.783
KNOWLEDGEABLE	.739
IN TOUCH	.737
STRONG	.732
CONFIDENT	.725
ORGANIZED	.721
CHARISMATIC	.719
HARD-WORKING	.717
READY FROM DAY ONE	.717
COMPASSIONATE	.707
GETS RESULTS	.681
EXPERIENCED	.676
LIKEABLE	.675
COLLABORATIVE	.674
TOUGH	.669
ASSERTIVE	.649
HONEST	.642
SUCCESSFULLY CHALLENGED THE STATE LEGISLATURE	.630

MEN CANDIDATES FACTORS*	Toughness	Likeable	Confidence
TOUGH	.710	.152	.089
STRONG	.695	.157	.267
SUCCESSFULLY CHALLENGED THE STATE LEGISLATURE	.637	.262	.098
EXPERIENCED	.596	.225	.287
GETS RESULTS	.543	.405	.104
KNOWLEDGEABLE	.484	.306	.416
LEADER	.432	.328	.374
COMPASSIONATE	.081	.712	.255
LIKEABLE	.096	.649	.285
HONEST	.392	.611	.082
COLLABORATIVE	.380	.589	.021
IN TOUCH	.402	.570	.095
READY FROM DAY ONE	.357	.501	.230
CONFIDENT	.183	.030	.739
CHARISMATIC	.006	.313	.642
ORGANIZED	.152	.399	.562
ASSERTIVE	.423	-.012	.540
HARD-WORKING	.426	.315	.477

*The traits are ranked by how closely they are correlated with a perception that the trait describes women candidates well.

The Solution

Here's how to unravel that double bind: The most important traits to convey that a woman is qualified—and therefore, likeable—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 likeable *and* 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 both likeable and qualified. Women must show they take action, and then take sole credit for the results.

For example, consider action phrases, such as:

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

"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, and women’s health. 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.

Profile	Female Candidate	
	Very Qualified	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%



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. 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.

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 (In the chart on page 26, “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

- **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 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 if 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 Character Pedestal: Honesty and Ethics* on page 34). 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 contrasts 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

- **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 protect 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.

Four decorative keys of different styles are arranged horizontally. From left to right: 1. A key with a three-lobed circular head and a simple bit. 2. A key with a heart-shaped circular head and a simple bit. 3. A key with a simple oval circular head and a bit with three teeth. 4. A key with a highly ornate, multi-lobed circular head and a bit with three teeth.

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.

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



"When you have a woman candidate, you always have to make sure she's dressed right, that she looks powerful, yet approachable."

CAMPAIGN MANAGER



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 character pedestal: honesty and ethics

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 political 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 with the following key strategies.



KEY TIPS FOR CANDIDATES

- **Be transparent.** Set a standard of openness and stick to it. Your website is a great place to list your public schedule, post video 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 not 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

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 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 hit a record high.

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





methodology

Between 1998 and 2013, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation commissioned Democratic research and consulting firm Lake Research Partners (formerly Lake Snell Perry & Associates), Republican firms American Viewpoint, Inc. and Chesapeake Beach Consulting, and Hughes & Company (formerly Staton Hughes) to study women candidates for governor and how voters respond to their campaigns. The resulting body of work is the Barbara Lee Family Foundation Governors Guidebook Series. The six volumes in that series are distilled in this book, along with the key findings from three separate pieces of research focusing on women candidates more broadly. These works studied messages for women candidates; demonstrating qualification; and contrasting with opponents.

Each study and its full methodology are available at www.barbaraleefoundation.org and summarized on the following pages.

methodology

Survey Research and Focus Groups

1998-2000: Lake Snell Perry & Associates purchased exit poll data from Voter News Service for all states where data were available. Included were nine of the 10 races in which women ran for Governor (no data were available for Hawaii). They also conducted a survey among registered likely voters nationwide, including likely voters in Arizona, Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Washington (considered “woman friendly” states for their history of electing women to statewide office). Lake Snell Perry & Associates conducted 10 focus groups in the following locations: Baltimore, Maryland; Wilmington, Delaware; Old Bridge, New Jersey; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Phoenix, Arizona.

2002: Lake Research Partners and American Viewpoint, Inc. conducted 10 focus groups with swing voters before the gubernatorial elections in five states where women gubernatorial candidates were running: Arizona, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Michigan. They conducted nine more focus groups with the same participants immediately following the 2002 elections. In one case, a new group convened.

2006: Lake Research Partners and American Viewpoint, Inc. conducted a survey among registered likely voters in seven states where five female governors and two male governors were running for re-election: Arizona, Connecticut, Hawaii, Kansas, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. Lake Research Partners analyzed 2006 exit poll data from Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. Of the 36 states with elections for governor, exit poll data was available in 24. The analysis focused on these states: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Vermont.

2010: Lake Research Partners and American Viewpoint, Inc. conducted pre-election surveys among registered likely voters in the states with women gubernatorial candidates: Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wyoming. They also conducted pre-election surveys in two states with only men gubernatorial candidates (Vermont, Wisconsin) as a control group. They conducted post-election surveys among general election voters in Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Vermont. For the two states with woman vs. woman races, they also conducted seven pre-election focus groups in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

2012: In April, Lake Research Partners conducted a telephone survey among 1,000 likely voters in Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin with an oversample of 200 young women (age 18–35) voters.

In August, Lake Research Partners also conducted four focus groups in Chicago, Illinois and Manchester, New Hampshire. They also designed and administered a phone survey of 1,000 registered likely voters nationwide. In October, Lake Research Partners designed and administered an online dial survey of 1,000 registered likely voters nationwide. The sample was drawn from an online panel and respondents were screened to be registered and likely voters.

2013: In September, Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting conducted five expanded focus groups with 25 people each among registered swing voters in Oak Brook, Illinois and Richmond, Virginia. In addition to the work by Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation assembled a bipartisan group of professional media consultants to review the methodology and findings. The research studied how women candidates can effectively contrast with their opponents—or “go negative”—in TV advertisements. Asking professional media consultants to review the methodology and findings ensured the research would be pragmatic for women candidates themselves and vetted by the experts who could produce the ads.

Campaign Tracking and Interviews

Between 1998 and 2012, Hughes & Company led a bipartisan team of researchers who tracked the gubernatorial contests in which women were nominees of the major political parties. Researchers monitored print and internet coverage, including news websites, campaign websites, and blogs. In addition, the team collected copies of campaign commercials and radio and TV broadcast debates. Following the elections, these researchers interviewed individuals who participated in or observed those campaigns including candidates, campaign managers, finance directors, press secretaries, consultants, party officers, and reporters who covered the races.

gallery

The women who have served 1925-2014



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-Present
Oklahoma



Governor
Nikki Haley
2011-Present
South Carolina



Governor
Susana Martinez
2011-Present
New Mexico



Governor
Maggie Hassan
2013-Present
New Hampshire

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

www.barbaraleefoundation.org

