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*The Barbara Lee Family Foundation Releases New Research*  
**Ready, Willing, & Electable: Women Running for Executive Office**

CAMBRIDGE, MA—The Barbara Lee Family Foundation today released [\*Ready, Willing, & Electable: Women Running for Executive Office\*](#), unique quantitative research that sheds light on voters’ reactions to women candidates seeking executive office. The research looks at hypothetical women candidates of different races, sexual orientations, and political affiliations, from both major parties. It was conducted in collaboration with [APIAVote](#) and the [Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies](#); [Higher Heights Leadership Fund](#); [the Victory Institute](#), and [Voto Latino](#).

“Our new research shows that voters believe women are more electable than ever,” said **Barbara Lee, Founder and President of the Barbara Lee Family Foundation**. “Although women candidates continue to face double standards and sexist critiques on the campaign trail, especially when they run for executive office, our new research shows that the most common concern—that women candidates aren’t as electable as their male counterparts—is a tired myth.”

For 20 years, the foundation has studied the obstacles and opportunities women face when running for office, and has found that [voters are more comfortable supporting women](#) who are running to be part of a deliberative body, like a legislature, than women who are running for executive positions, like governor.

When the foundation started researching women governors in 1998, only 16 women had ever served as the top executive in their state. Twenty years later, there have only been 44 women governors in U.S. history, and 20 states have still never had a female governor. Moreover, only 3 women of color and one openly LGBTQ woman have ever been elected governor.

**This research, which looks at hypothetical Asian American, Black, Latina, lesbian, and white women candidates of both major political parties, examines what it takes for a woman to prove to voters she is ready to serve in executive office.**

**KEY FINDINGS**

- As we saw in our [2017 research](#), 2019 is still a great moment to be a woman candidate. Across candidate profiles tested, all of the hypothetical women candidates either win or tie their head-to-head ballots against a straight white man of the opposite party.
- The top leadership traits voters think are important to elect women to executive office are: can handle a crisis; gets results; and cares about people like you.
- Voters acknowledge that women are held to a different and higher standard when it comes to qualifications and likeability, but many still actively participate in upholding those double standards.
- The traits that make voters believe a hypothetical woman gubernatorial candidate is very qualified and very likeable are: collaboration and bipartisanship, public and private sector economic experiences that have measurable results and are backed by independent validators, and boldness and innovation on policies.

## **WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT**

"We know firsthand how powerful community engagement can be—in not only who goes to the polls, but also who voters ultimately elect," said **Executive Director of Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIA Vote) Christine Chen**, "The women in our community have the power to create change and having a familiar face, whether that is through shared cultural background or as a community leader, can make all the difference."

"The research findings are encouraging and consistent with our trainings with Asian American and Pacific Islander women who were hesitant to run for elected office," said **Madalene Mielke, president and CEO, Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS)**. "Across party lines, AAPI women with broad-based experience—including in the community, that can bring people together, create economic opportunities, and get results—can win elections."

"Gender and racial hurdles still exist, but this newly released data strongly rebuts the often-repeated viability question that is raised about women candidates—particularly when they are candidates of color or lesbians," said **Higher Heights Leadership Fund President and CEO Glynda C. Carr**. "Voters' views on who makes an effective leader are rapidly changing because ultimately they are most concerned about whether an elected official can pass laws and implement policies that improve their lives, and they are seeing that women are succeeding in this capacity at all levels of elected office."

"LGBTQ women candidates have made exceptional gains over the last few election cycles, winning at higher than average rates," said **Mayor Annise Parker, President & CEO of LGBTQ Victory Institute**. "The Barbara Lee Family Foundation research makes clear these victories are because voters across the political spectrum view LGBTQ women as favorably as other women candidates. While LGBTQ women candidates continue to battle the inaccurate perception that LGBTQ equality will be their sole focus, this perception is diminishing as our LGBTQ women elected officials continue to deliver for their constituents on the issues that matter most."

"Latinas on the campaign trail are often expected to operate in two separate avenues: fighting for their community and appealing to larger political forces," said **María Teresa Kumar, President and CEO of Voto Latino**. "Where those interests diverge, Latina candidates are forced to make a choice between their constituents' needs and 'electability.' At Voto Latino, we're working to bridge that gap and demonstrate to politicians in Washington, DC that Latinx issues are American issues. What's good for our community is good for the country."

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research was performed by Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research & Consulting, and conducted in partnership with APIAVote and the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies; Higher Heights Leadership Fund; Voto Latino; and the Victory Institute. These partner organizations provided a landscape of the challenges they see women candidates face on the campaign trail, which informed the development of the research questions. Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research & Consulting conducted 12 focus groups and a national phone survey of 2,500 likely 2020 voters. See the full memo (including methodology) [here](#).

### **About The Barbara Lee Family Foundation**

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation works to advance women's equality and representation in American politics through political research, strategic partnerships, and grants and endowments. The foundation's work is guided by its core belief that women's voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture.

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