



# turning point

the changing landscape  
for women candidates

BARBARA LEE FAMILY FOUNDATION

*Governors Guidebook Series*

“ I didn’t start out thinking I wanted to be in politics — rather, I knew I wanted to make my community better, and that drive to help and to serve led me into public office. When I first ran, the glass ceiling was strong and barely cracked. The old boys’ club was alive and well. Obstacles stood in my way. So I did what women across the country do so well — I jumped in and fought like the dickens. We are all still fighting today, but the journey is easier with friends like the Barbara Lee Foundation.”

**North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue**

“ Every woman who runs for Governor knows there are strategic potholes on the campaign trail. Those who run with the Barbara Lee Family Foundation’s research in hand have the benefit of knowing what they are, where they show up and how to navigate around them.”

**Former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm**

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## Acknowledgments

In memory of Geraldine Ferraro, who inspired me and millions of others as the first woman to rise to the national stage as a Vice Presidential candidate. We are changed, hopeful, and forever grateful.

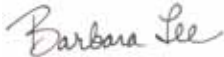
Thanks to our research partners Mary Hughes, Celinda Lake, Christine Stavem, Bob Carpenter, and Pat Carpenter for over a decade of remarkable study on women gubernatorial candidates.

This project is also made possible thanks to the hard work, dedication, and insights of a fabulous team of women. My sincere appreciation to Team Lee:

Adrienne Kimmell, Alison Cashin, Greeley O'Connor, Joy Lai, Kate Bragg, Marisa Diaz, Moire Carmody, Monnikue McCall, Natalie Hildreth, Natalie Stemple, Nicole Bourgoin, and Rebecca Bowes.

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

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Lee". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Barbara Lee



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# foreword

**2010** was a turning point for women running for Governor — and a turning point in our 12 years of researching their campaigns. In the midst of the most partisan political landscape in recent history, gender disadvantages faded and women candidates showed distinct advantages over their male competitors. More than ever, gender has the potential to become a strategic asset for women running for executive office.

But advantages for women came with drawbacks. As we have seen in the past and as one woman running in 2010 observed, “Men are judged on their potential; women are judged on their performance.” Voters continue to set a higher bar for women candidates than for their male counterparts. Though some women cleared that bar in 2010, those who didn’t had farther to fall.

This report is designed to help women candidates navigate the changes that the 2010 elections represent. In many ways a departure from our earlier research, *Turning Point: The Changing Landscape for Women Candidates* helps women candidates for executive office identify and deploy all of their assets without succumbing to the pitfalls that gender bias can still present.

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 the smart, strong, inspiring women who you know and want to see become our country’s future leaders.

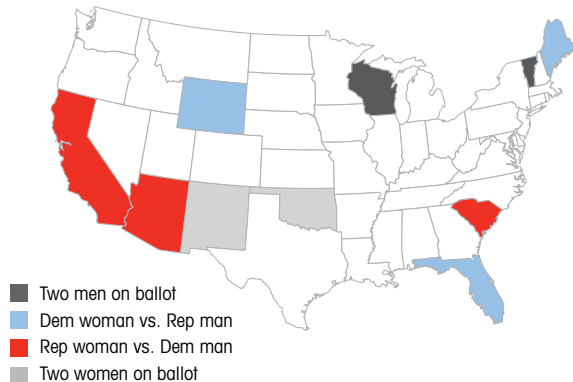
Barbara Lee  
Founder and President  
Barbara Lee Family Foundation  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
June, 2011





# methodology

Beginning in 1999, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation has conducted research every election cycle to study women candidates for Governor and how the voters respond to these campaigns. The research team for the *Governors Guidebook Series* includes Lake Research Partners, American Viewpoint, Inc., and Hughes & Company (formerly Staton Hughes).



## Survey Research and Focus Groups

In 2010, Lake Research Partners (LRP), a Democratic research and consulting firm, and American Viewpoint, Inc., a Republican firm, conducted a number of pre- and post-election surveys in ten states with gubernatorial contests.<sup>1</sup>

### *Pre-election*

LRP and American Viewpoint conducted pre-election surveys on October 11, 2010 and October 19, 2010 among registered likely voters in the eight states with women gubernatorial candidates (Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Wyoming) and two states with only men gubernatorial candidates (Vermont, Wisconsin) as a control group. We also conducted an oversample of young women voters ages 18 to 34 in California, Florida, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.

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1 States with two women on the ballot:

Oklahoma and New Mexico

States with a Democratic woman vs. a Republican man on the ballot:

Florida, Maine (Maine also had a viable male third party candidate)

Wyoming

States with a Republican woman vs. a Democratic man on the ballot:

South Carolina, Arizona, California

States with two men on the ballot:

Wisconsin, Vermont

LRP and AmericanViewpoint screened participants for likelihood to vote in the 2010 General Election. Participants indicated they were undecided in their upcoming vote for Governor or supported one of the candidates, but not strongly. We recruited participants to reflect a mix of ages, occupations, levels of education, marital and parental status, and political orientations, with strong partisans excluded. All participants identified as voters.

For the two states with woman vs. woman races, Lake Research Partners and AmericanViewpoint also conducted seven pre-election focus groups in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Albuquerque, New Mexico, between October 14 - 20, 2010.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Post-election*

We conducted post-election surveys between October 31 - November 3, 2010 among general election voters in Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Vermont. We included oversamples of young women voters ages 18 to 34 in the eight states with at least one woman on the gubernatorial ballot.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> October 14, Oklahoma City: 1 group among 18 to 35 year old women, mix of race/ethnicities; 1 group among white women ages 40 to 70; 1 group among white men ages 35 to 65. October 16, Albuquerque: 1 group among white women ages 40 to 70; 1 group among white men ages 35 to 65. October 20, Albuquerque: 1 group among 18 to 35 year old women, mix of race/ethnicities; 1 group among Latinas ages 40 to 70.

<sup>3</sup> Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wyoming

## **Campaign Tracking and Interviews**

Beginning in August 2010, Hughes & Company led a bipartisan team of researchers who tracked the eight gubernatorial contests in which ten women were nominees of the major political parties.

Candidates for Governor in 2010 were Jan Brewer (R-AZ), Meg Whitman (R-CA), Alex Sink (D-FL), Libby Mitchell (D-ME), Diane Denish (D-NM), Susana Martinez (R-NM), Jari Askins (D-OK), Mary Fallin (R-OK), Nikki Haley (R-SC), and Leslie Petersen (D-WY).

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 November elections, these researchers interviewed 67 individuals who participated in or observed those campaigns including candidates, campaign managers, finance directors, press secretaries, consultants, party officers, and reporters who covered the race.

# introduction

The 2010 election was the most partisan and polarized in recent American history. Political partisanship trumped all other factors in voters' decisions, and a desire for change drove many voters to the polls. Voters were conflicted — wanting candidates with government experience and candidates they saw as outsiders able to implement change.

Amid this polarization and partisanship, voters' views on gender and executive leadership shifted. Our 2010 polling and focus groups showed that gender had significantly less impact on voters' decisions. Women competed in similar ways as their male counterparts, able to convey key traits to voters in equally persuasive ways. In fact, for the first time in our 12 years of research, we found more strategic advantages than disadvantages for women candidates.

In other words, gender may now give women candidates an edge.

Several candidate qualities that were once a priority for voters but challenging for women to demonstrate, such as toughness, are being replaced by more gender-neutral qualities, such as problem-solving and strength. Voters now rate women and men candidates equally on measures of economic competence. Essential for a winning campaign, credibility on the economy once put women at a disadvantage. That's no longer automatically true.

These shifts eliminate a number of roadblocks women candidates historically have faced in campaigns for executive office. But in becoming less unique to voters, women candidates also have lost some key advantages.

In this guide, we take a closer look at voters' complex views of women gubernatorial candidates in 2010. First, we review key traits shaping voters' impressions and examine women's newfound credibility on the economy. We then delve into the advantages and disadvantages of gender. Our voter spotlight looks at the preferences of younger women voters and independent voters. We also look ahead to the unique challenges presented by woman vs. man races. Finally, we offer advice to campaign teams.

Our key findings show that:

- After partisanship, **likeability** is the candidate trait that most strongly predicts the vote, especially for races with women candidates.
- Being perceived as **having and setting the right priorities** forecasts likeability. This is true for women candidates of either party who ran against male opponents.
- **Problem solving** is a critical trait for candidates in establishing likeability and winning the vote.
- **Strength** is an important trait for women of both parties and also predicts likeability. “Strength” is a separate quality from “toughness,” which is no longer a priority for voters.
- Being perceived as an **agent of change** enhances a candidate’s likeability, though in 2010 the criteria voters used in evaluating women candidates as “change agents” shifted dramatically.

- Women candidates today are on equal footing with men in their ability to show **mastery of the economy**. Democrats overall were at a disadvantage on economic issues.<sup>4</sup>
- Women candidates have **more strategic advantages related to their gender** than in years past.
- Voters judge women candidates more harshly — and penalize them accordingly — when they believe they are engaged in **negative campaigning**.
- **Young women** are conflicted about women candidates. **Independent women** are more likely than Independent men to vote for a woman.
- Looking ahead, **woman vs. woman races** pose new challenges and questions for women candidates.

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<sup>4</sup> Economic issues — such as making it easier to start and run a business, jobs and the economy, taxes, and creating a favorable business climate — are problematic issues for both male and female Democrats.





# key findings in 2010

For the first time in our research, a woman candidate's gender was not a disadvantage on the most critical qualities for voters.

# 1

## Likeability matters most for women candidates

Likeability — whether a candidate is viewed favorably by voters — has become the single most important predictor of the vote for women. In 2010, the more likeable candidate won in nine of the ten races in which women ran for governor. As one pollster said of women candidates, “Women care more and connect better.” Another pollster who has worked with many women candidates offered, “Women candidates are in touch with people...and in their corner.”

Likeability appears to be more important in races with women candidates — either woman vs. man or woman vs. woman — than in all-male races.

**{table no. 1} In races with women candidates, in all of these states except Florida, the candidate with the highest favorability won. The men vs. men states split in this regard. Of the five Democratic women candidates, four received net favorable ratings.**

table no. 1 Candidate Favorability Margins

	Winning Candidate		Losing Candidate	
	Pre-election	Post-election	Pre-election	Post-election
<b>California</b>	+2	+7	-8	-10
<b>Florida</b>	-11	-4	+4	+14
<b>Maine</b>	--	+3 (Rep)	--	-13 (Dem)
<b>Wyoming</b>	--	+61	--	+16
<b>New Mexico</b>	+21	+22	-1	+2
<b>Oklahoma</b>	+32	+37	+17	+25
<b>South Carolina</b>	+17	+23	+12	+22
<b>Arizona</b>	--	+21	--	+8
<b>Vermont</b>	--	+7	--	+16
<b>Wisconsin</b>	--	+20	--	+18



A reporter described what makes a candidate likeable:

“She’s very funny and very personable, and so I think that helped her. She has this real kind of humanity that comes across when you meet her. I mean, she just has this very kind of what-you-see-is-what-you-get vibe to her, whereas [the opponent] is much more cerebral and policy wonkish.”

How do candidates convey this critical trait? In 2010, voter and candidate party identification had the strongest impact on a candidate’s likeability, but Democratic and Republican women candidates needed to “have and set the right priorities” and “share people’s values” in order to maintain likeability.

For a Republican woman running against a Democratic man, predictors of likeability included:

- “having and setting the right priorities”
- being perceived as “honest and ethical”
- “knowing what she’s doing”
- “sharing voter values”
- being a “problem solver”
- being “in touch with her life”
- being “strong”
- and “looking like a Governor”

**{chart no. 2} In the woman vs. woman states, having honesty and ethics, setting the right priorities, knowing what you’re doing, and being strong are predictive of favorability for both the Democratic and Republican women candidates.**

chart no. 2

**Among voters in the woman vs. woman states, the traits that predict to holding a favorable view of the Democratic women are:**

Being seen as honest and ethical, warm and likeable, setting the right priorities, knowing what she’s doing, and being strong.

Traits that are negative predictors of likeability of the Democrat include: handling a crisis, being decisive, and being a typical politician.

**The traits that predict to holding a favorable view of the Republican women in the women vs. woman states are:**

Being seen as honest and ethical, having and setting the right priorities, knowing what she’s doing, being strong, sharing your values, standing up for people, and being decisive.

Negative predictors of favorability are working with the state legislature, handling a crisis, being too partisan, and being a typical politician.

For a Democratic woman facing a Republican man, traits predicting a favorable view of the Democratic woman included:

- “having and setting the right priorities”
- “bringing about change”
- “sharing voter values”
- and being “strong”

In races between two women, these traits predicted to favorability for both Democratic and Republican women:

- being “honest and ethical”
- “setting the right priorities”
- “knowing what she’s doing”
- and being “strong”

**{chart no. 3} Having and setting the right priorities and sharing people’s values are predictive traits for both the Democratic and Republican women. Being seen as a typical politician is a negative factor for likeability.**

chart no. 3

**Among voters in the Democratic women states, the traits that predict to holding a favorable view of the Democratic women are:**

Having and setting the right priorities, bringing about change, sharing your values, and being strong.

Traits that negatively predict to favorability of the Democratic candidate are running a negative campaign, handling a crisis, and being seen as a typical politician.

**Among voters in the Republican women states, the traits that predict to holding a favorable view of the Republican women are:**

Being honest and ethical, knowing what she’s doing, sharing your values, being a problem solver, having and setting the right priorities, being in touch with your life, being strong, and looking like a Governor.

Being a typical politician negatively predicts to favorable views of the Republican women.

# 2

## Setting priorities and sharing voters' values

When a voter believes that a candidate has and sets the right priorities and shares her or his values, that voter is likely to have a favorable impression of the candidate. This is true whether the candidate is a Democratic or Republican woman. In this era of reduced budgets and constrained resources, voters really value a candidate who has the right priorities.

Candidates and campaign teams corroborated the power of sharing people's values. For one senior advisor, it was one more way to "connect with people." For a pollster, sharing values is consistent with his view that "women usually run to make a difference."

Many campaigns used call-to-action language to suggest shared priorities. "Join the movement" and "Take our state back" were both employed by campaigns to convey shared values and goals with voters.



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Practice the Rule of Threes.** Know and repeat your top three priorities. This gives voters enough opportunities to agree with you, but not so many that they can't remember what you stand for. Also, contrast your priorities with your opponent's priorities.

**Include voters.** Even if they never see the inside of your campaign headquarters, asking people to join in a common effort to end corruption, clean a harbor, or reduce the deficit gives them a sense that by supporting you they are doing something to achieve their goal.

**Provide a rationale.** By communicating your priorities, and how you will go about achieving them, you give voters a rational basis on which to choose you as their representative.

**Live your shared values.** If literacy is the priority, hold a book drive. If energy conservation is the shared value, drive a hybrid.

**Identify savings and investments.** Your most important focus for setting priorities will be the state budget. Be prepared to say what's on the chopping block and what you'll prioritize.

# 3

## Voters like problem-solvers

A woman candidate's biggest opportunity to close the leadership gap is being seen as a problem-solver. In our past research, being perceived as a leader, particularly by male voters, meant that women candidates needed to display toughness. Previously, voters have seen toughness as decisiveness like that shown in the quick back-and-forth of a debate or standing up to powerful interests on behalf of constituents.

But in 2010, problem-solving trumped toughness as a key leadership quality. Importantly, problem-solving is a more easily achievable characteristic for women candidates than toughness.

In surveys, women voters rated women candidates as more effective and better problem solvers than male voters did. A woman candidate agreed, saying, "I think people do still see women as more inclusive and problem-solvers. So, I think that is an advantage."

A woman focus group participant described men as more intent on process, while women looked for solutions. "They (men) seem to buddy up...and women seem to be more innovative and they'll try something new..."



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Define yourself as a problem-solver.** Show that you're a problem-solver from day one. Even if you have an uncontested or non-competitive primary, take advantage of the opportunity to show voters who you are and why they should support you.

**Take credit.** In describing yourself as a problem-solver, use the pronoun "I," not "we." Voters are electing you to be in charge.

**Use policy examples based on personal stories.** Describing how you hunted down a lost social security check for a senior citizen conveys your problem-solving ability just as much as offering a compromise budget amendment.

**Plan to solve the problem.** Offer voters a plan, experts who support it, and evidence of past success.

Problem-solving is a crucial trait for successful women candidates, but it is even more powerful when voters see it combined with other traits they value. A woman problem-solver who stands up for people and has worked with a state legislature has a combination of traits that is extremely powerful for all voters.

For women voters, other valued traits included being decisive, honest, and a political outsider; looking like a Governor; and sharing voters' values.<sup>5</sup>

The strongest predictors of the male vote in states with one woman on the ballot included being a problem solver; being fiscally responsible; being in touch with voters' lives; handling a crisis; and standing up for people.<sup>6</sup>

For voters of both genders and parties, being a problem-solver is key.

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<sup>5</sup> Refers to regressions run on the six states combined that had either a Democratic or Republican woman running against a man

<sup>6</sup> Refers to regressions described in footnote 5

**Problem-solving  
is a more easily  
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# 4

## Strong is likeable

Across all states where women ran for Governor in 2010, strength was a trait that forecasted a favorable view of the candidate. Women candidates showed voters strength by demonstrating moral character and conviction, showing managerial skill, being decisive, and standing up for people.

Strength differs from toughness. As we reported in *Positioning Women to Win*,<sup>7</sup> the distinction that voters draw may lie in the difference between the personal and the political. Strength is seen as a function of character while toughness is demonstrated through actions in the political arena.

In the past, voters saw strength and toughness as interrelated and necessary qualities for successful candidates. That set up a double bind for women candidates, who needed to show that they were strong and tough, but not so tough as to put voters off. By taking on a big entity like oil, insurance, or utility companies on behalf of consumers — “slaying a dragon” — women candidates showed strength and toughness without seeming “too tough.” This brand of toughness had no downside.

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Lee Family Foundation research on the 2006 election cycle



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Define yourself as a problem-solver.** Show evidence of competence. Showing that you are a capable manager in the private or public sector conveys strength. Running a department, an agency, a large staff, or overseeing a big budget can all add credibility to your ability to lead.

**Highlight your crisis management skills.**

Holding a press conference during an emergency reassures constituents and provides a visual example of strong leadership.

**Share your personal challenges.** Personal challenges can reveal strength of character, as can mastering physical challenges like excelling in sports that require endurance or arduous preparation. If you’re a marathon runner, let the voters know.

**Be decisive.** You have an opportunity to show your strength by quickly and firmly responding to a charge from the opposition or when your record is misrepresented.

**Use action-oriented language.** Own your work and ideas. Take credit for them.

In 2010, voters uncoupled strength and toughness. Strength remained an important trait for women, but voters were less concerned with toughness and more concerned with problem-solving. This is good news for women candidates, especially when it comes to male voters who historically have factored toughness into their voting decisions and were less likely to attribute that characteristic to women.

Independent voters gave women candidates of both parties credit for being strong. Voters saw Democratic women and Republican women who ran against men as having the advantage on being strong. On this point, there was an underlying sentiment among campaign teams that voters gave women extra credit on strength for being in the fray during an election climate that was so partisan and negative.

Still, some women candidates believed voters hold women to a higher standard when it comes to strength. As one candidate explained, “[Voters] require management experience and strength. And voters, not just men voters, but women voters, too, give men an edge as a starting place.”

**In 2010, voters  
uncoupled strength  
and toughness ...  
This is good news for  
women candidates.**

# 5

## New views on change and difference

A decade ago, voters automatically saw women candidates as agents of change: rare, outside the political process, and likely to reform it when they were on the inside. That's no longer the case. Now accustomed to seeing women in government leadership roles, most voters no longer automatically view women as outsiders or agents of change.

“Not anymore. Not anymore,” said one focus group participant; and another responded “not as much as it used to be, but a little bit still.” Another focus group participant offered an explanation, “...the political machine has realized that if they didn't bring women in that the public was going to have an outrage...”

In 2010, partisanship, more than gender, drove voter perceptions of who was an agent of change. Democratic candidates — both men and women — had a particularly difficult time being perceived as change agents. Voters, including Independent voters, saw men and women Republican candidates as being more likely to bring about change. Republican women enjoyed this advantage over both men and women opponents. Democratic women lost the “outsider” advantage they may have been granted before, but they had less of a disadvantage on being perceived as change agents than Democratic men in 2010.



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Don't accept the status quo.** If anything can be done faster, better, or cheaper, create the change to make it possible.

**Change = improvement.** When communicating to voters about your reasons for running, talk about those things you'll work to change.

**You can be “in,” but don't be “of” government.** Promote your government experience as well as the steps you've taken to bring about change.

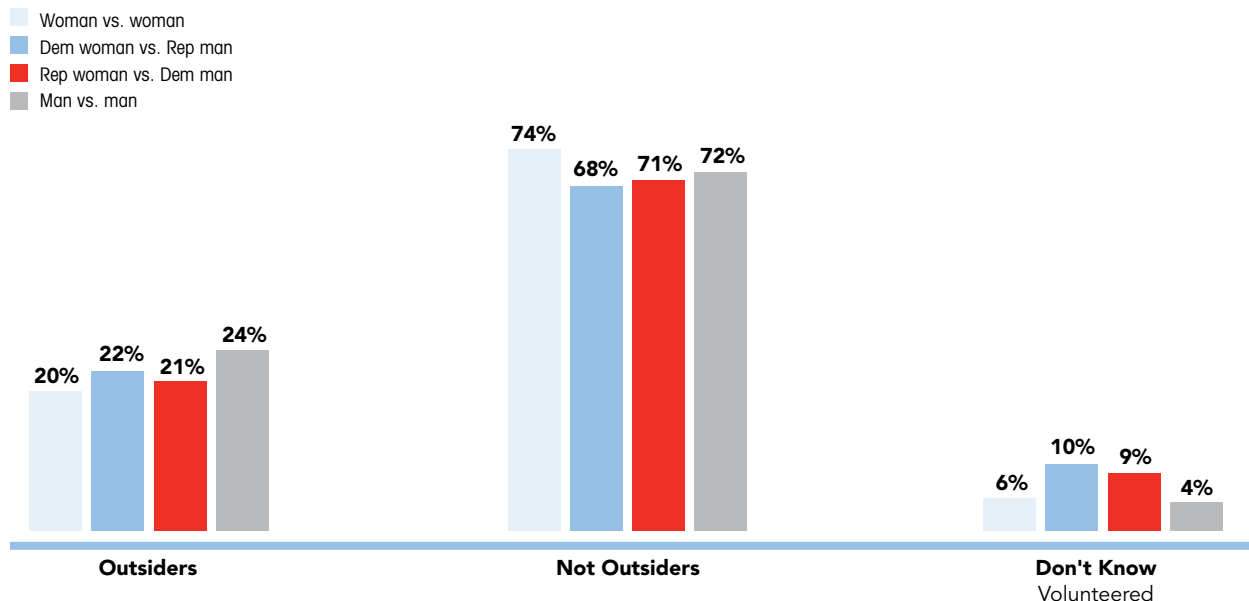
**Speak conversationally.** Using technical names for legislation “AB 32,” “House Res. 432,” or “the NTSB,” suggests that you are too much of an insider. Use conversational language that is easy for people to understand.

**Show how you're different.** To avoid being seen as a typical politician and to underscore your outsider perspective, emphasize what you have done differently than your legislative colleagues. What's different because you serve? Do you have a different approach?

**Depart from the party script.** Share examples of your independence: votes in opposition to your legislative leadership, disagreements with Party leaders, agreeing with the people rather than institutions or lobbyists.



**{chart no. 4}** Women candidates do not receive automatic outsider status due to their gender. Strong majorities across the states do not see women as outsiders. Younger women are more likely to see women as outsiders, but even here two-thirds do not see women candidates in this light. **Do you think women candidates for elected office today are seen as outsiders or are they not really seen as outsiders?**



*Among young women, 33 percent see women candidates as outsiders and 63 percent do not.*

### Difference between men and women officeholders

Overall, voters in 2010 did not see women officeholders as all that different from men. This is a potentially negative finding for women candidates, since the view that women *are* different from men in office positively predicts to voting for the women candidate.

Interestingly, in 2010, voters in Arizona, California and Maine, states where voters have had more experience with women officeholders, were *not* more likely to perceive a difference between women and men officeholders.

**{chart no. 5} Overall, voters across the states do not see women officeholders as all that different than men. A narrow majority in Oklahoma see women as different, while voters across the other states split or do not see a difference. Younger and older women alike lean toward the view that women officeholders are different by a few points, though intensity is weak.**

chart no. 5 Difference Between Women and Men Officeholders		
	Different (A lot Different)	Not Different (Not at All Different)
South Carolina	48% (13%)	47% (27%)
Arizona	40% (12%)	56% (39%)
California	42% (11%)	54% (35%)
Wyoming	47% (14%)	45% (31%)
Florida	49% (14%)	48% (33%)
Maine	39% (12%)	55% (39%)
New Mexico	48% (11%)	49% (33%)
Oklahoma	53% (16%)	43% (25%)
Vermont	46% (10%)	52% (35%)
Wisconsin	42% (6%)	53% (32%)
Young women	50% (14%)	46% (27%)
Women over 50	53% (17%)	42% (28%)



# issue spotlight

## mastering the economy

*The most important issue to master for both men and women*

The single biggest issue on the minds of voters in 2010 was the economy, and credibility on this topic was the most important challenge for men and women candidates in this election. Typical of the 2010 election overall, voter perceptions of a candidate's effectiveness on the economy were tied more to party than to gender.

In 2010, economic issues such as making it easier to start and run a business, jobs and the economy, taxes, and creating a favorable small business climate, were difficult issues for men and women Democrats alike. Still, women candidates overall made progress on two important fronts.

*Increased credibility for women candidates on the economy*

Women candidates in 2010 increased their credibility on economic issues. Over time, women have become more competitive on the economy. Now, women and men are rated equally on economic competence. As one communications consultant said, "[voters] were looking for just a little bit of truth. These are bad times. Just level with me, as a family sits around the table. Mom looks at her kids and says you know, we're all going to have to pitch in here and get through this and we're all going to have to sacrifice. And that being delivered from a woman resonated in this down economic time."

For Democratic women, talking about public sector economic experience, like

### FOR CANDIDATES

**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 and 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's 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.



chairing a budget committee in the legislature or leading a state competitiveness initiative, predicted to credibility on the economy among voters across party lines. For Republican women, issuing a written plan and airing ads on the economy established credibility with voters.

Overall, the most important ways for candidates to show economic expertise were issuing an economic plan and talking about experience dealing with the economy as a public official. As one focus group participant offered, “everybody says that they are going to do this for education and they are going to do that for small business, what are you going to do? Give me specifics.” Talking about private sector experience was a predictor of credibility on the economy for Republican men and Republican women who ran against Democratic women, but it was not a predictor of credibility for the Republican women who ran against Democratic men.

In contrast to voter survey results, a number of campaign managers and consultants reported that releasing plans and integrating economic messages into paid media did not distinguish their candidate from her opponent. These experts did not believe that their candidate’s economic messages persuaded voters. They identified partisanship, national health care reform, or character as driving voters’ decisions. As one media consultant noted, “...we had a national environment getting forced onto the campaign [for example]...the healthcare plan’s supposed inhibiting of job creation. We were fighting a real uphill battle in terms of the larger environment.”

#### *Equal credit for being good on the economy*

The second positive development for women candidates and the economy is that they now get equal credit for being good on the economy when they are good on other issues.

In 2008, if voters perceived a male candidate to be good on health care and education, they presumed he was also good on the economy. A woman candidate who voters viewed as good on health care and education was not similarly presumed to be good on the economy; she had to prove that

## FOR CANDIDATES

**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.

**Jobs, jobs, jobs.** Offer specifics on the ways your state will compete for jobs. Your economic plan should include attracting and keeping large businesses and making it easier to start and run a small business. Look for opportunities to serve on boards or commissions related to job growth.

competence in some other way. This changed in 2010. For both men and women candidates, being good on education and health care help them to be seen as good on the economy. However, these two issues alone don't automatically mean that voters perceive men or women candidates as being good on the economy overall.

Beyond the issue of the economy, voters gave women candidates of both parties the overall advantage on immigration and health care.<sup>8</sup> The other biggest issue advantages differed for Republican and Democratic women. Democratic women who faced Republican men held an edge on education and ethics and corruption; while Republican women's greatest advantage was making it easier to start and run a small business and creating a favorable business climate.

While the economy is consistently high on the list of voters' concerns, education is emerging as an important issue for 2012. It has the potential to be a major asset for women candidates since voters often presume that women, especially Democrats, are good on education.

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<sup>8</sup> The advantage on health care was driven by Democratic women. Republican women were actually at a 5-point disadvantage on this issue.

**The single biggest issue on the minds of voters in 2010 was the economy, and credibility on this topic was the most important challenge for men and women candidates in this election.**

**{chart no. 6} Democrats hold an advantage on education and health care across the types of states.**

Democratic women who faced Republican male opponents enjoyed the largest leads, especially on education and ethics. The one issue that showed the greatest gender effect was immigration, where both Democratic and Republican women were ahead. Republican women also neutralized somewhat the Democratic advantage on health care.

The tables on candidate trait and issue advantages are calculated as the difference between the vote margin and trait advantage margin. For example, if the vote margin is +10 points Democratic, then a trait margin of +15 points Democratic results in an overall net Democratic advantage of 5 points. A trait margin of +3 points Democratic results in a net Democratic advantage of -7 points.

chart no. 6 Net Democratic Advantage				
	Democratic women vs. Republican men states	Republican women vs. Democratic men states	Women vs. women states	Men vs. men states
Education	36	8	14	10
Ethics and corruption	23	5	-2	0
Retirement security	20	11	12	0
Health care	19	5	8	11
Managing public pensions	17	5	10	6
Energy	10	8	5	6
Immigration	8	-11	-12	-2
Crime	4	4	-11	-6

{chart no. 7}

**Economic issues — such as making it easier to start and run a business, jobs and the economy, taxes, and creating a favorable business climate — are problematic issues for Democrats, both male and female, though no greater for Democratic women. Republican women really accentuated the Democratic disadvantage on starting and running a business.**

The tables on candidate trait and issue advantages are calculated as the difference between the vote margin and trait advantage margin. For example, if the vote margin is +10 points Democratic, then a trait margin of +15 points Democratic results in an overall net Democratic advantage of 5 points. A trait margin of +3 points Democratic results in a net Democratic advantage of -7 points.

chart no. 7 Net Democratic Advantage				
	Democratic woman vs. Republican man states	Republican woman vs. Democratic man states	Woman vs. woman states	Man vs. man states
Managing the state budget deficit	6	-6	-2	-11
Jobs and employment	5	-5	2	2
Bringing jobs to the state	1	-3	2	-11
Competing with other states for jobs	1	-8	0	-13
State budget	1	-6	-3	-12
Making it easier to start and run a business	-2	-23	-2	-9
Jobs and the economy	-3	-9	-2	-9
Taxes	-3	-9	-2	-14
Creating a favorable business climate	-7	-15	-4	-19







# gender (dis)advantages

## **Opportunities for strategic gains**

In 2010, women candidates for the first time showed an advantage over male opponents in connecting with voters by using the full range of their personal, professional, and community experiences and relationships. Voters continued to give women candidates overall an advantage on honesty (Democratic women held a large advantage over Republican men on this trait, while Democratic men held a narrow advantage over Republican women). Voters also judged women candidates more harshly than their male counterparts when they believed they were engaged in negative campaigning. Understanding these qualities and voters' responses to them can give women candidates a competitive edge and help them avoid unnecessary pitfalls.

# 1

## The 360° candidate

For the first time in our 12 years of research, consultants reported that women candidates are on the verge of a gender advantage. By equaling men in professional and government management experience and besting them in managing personal issues and relationships, women have more opportunities to connect with voters.

A pollster defined this advantage this way: “You know they can manage things pretty well because they are moms and wives. I think that’s strength. They’re more open to dialogue, more consensus builders. Isn’t it just that a woman can use everything and if she does, voters will perceive her as more?”

A campaign manager spoke about a woman candidate’s ability to “use everything” including her personal experience. In his view, that made her more “relatable, knowing a family budget, about school and work-life balance...the advantage is you can play both sides.” Another campaign manager spoke in similar terms, noting, “You can be tough and policy-minded and still talk to people about your kids.”

In earlier election cycles, women candidates were reluctant to share much of their personal lives, fearing that it detracted from their seriousness and electability. That reserve appears to be dissolving as women candidates make progress with voters by using messages that convey, “I am like you. I am on your side.”

One note of caution: our prior research shows that some voters are still wary of a woman with young children running for office. As more moms run, issues like extended-family childcare and stay-at-home partners will become part of the discussion.



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Try a discovery exercise.** Write your obituary. Is there a better way to find out what you believe is meaningful and important among the things you’ve done or those you hope to accomplish? 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 kindred 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, child, spouse or partner. That’s the thing about family — everyone has one.



# 2

## “Tough enough” is enough for voters

Deciding the appropriate degree of toughness has stumped many women candidates and campaign teams. Toughness and the penalty women can pay for being perceived as “too tough” has been an evolving topic since the start of our research.

In 2010, toughness did not predict either likeability or the vote. Both men and women voters separated toughness from strength and showed less concern about whether a woman was tough enough for the job. This is a significant change for women candidates who have long been challenged to show that they were tough enough, but not so tough as to become unlikeable.

Toughness did correlate with problem-solving and handling a crisis, traits where many women candidates have an edge.

Despite this decline in voter concern about a woman’s toughness, consultants and campaign teams continue to sound the alarm on the issue of toughness. Operatives reported their observations that women are routinely tested on personal toughness (can she take it?); on ideological toughness (is she committed enough?); and managerial toughness (can she handle the legislature and her campaign?).



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Be mentally tough.** Don’t slow down your campaign operations or lose your focus over a decision. Mental toughness is essential to keeping your campaign on course. Weigh a decision thoroughly and quickly; confer with experienced advisors; solidify your messages. Make the decision and move on.

**Don’t confuse harshness with toughness.** Voters give women points on toughness for being in the political arena. But they can quickly deduct points if they perceive that a candidate is too focused on her opponent rather than the issues. Stand firm on principles, but remember that harshness can be perceived as negative campaigning.

**Be an authority, not a bully.** Persistence, specificity, knowing what you’re talking about, effectiveness, standing your ground, defending your position, and standing up for those less powerful are all qualities that could lead a voter to conclude that you are tough, without actually acting tough.

**Know when to stand apart.** Most of the time, candidates are well served to appear in public surrounded by supporters and staff. On occasion and to make a point, a candidate should face the cameras, the public or her opponent by herself.



As one campaign manager pointed out, newcomers will have to prove their ideological toughness. “If you’re an unknown and you’re a woman in a Republican primary, the threshold of proving to primary voters that you are sufficiently ideologically sound is higher than men have... a woman must show she is adequately conservative.” The apparent conflict between voter and campaign views on toughness in 2010 may mean that campaign teams relied on perceptions of toughness from past elections rather than current voter opinion.

Another test of toughness is a candidate’s willingness to trust her own instincts. Here’s how an operative described his candidate on this score: “...she had the guts to do the right thing from the beginning... Her gut instinct has been right all along on everything. And her gut is what... ultimately led us to victory and having a path that we could navigate and succeed.”

**{chart no. 8} In the states with Democratic women, women voters give the female candidate more credit on these toughness traits, though men are not far behind. This is in stark contrast to the past where men were much harsher. Male voters were harder on Republican women candidates than women voters, especially on toughness, but both thought the Republican woman was better on toughness than their male opponents.**

chart no. 8 **Net Democratic Advantage**

	Democratic women vs. Republican men states		Republican women vs. Democratic men states	
	Male Voters	Female voters	Male Voters	Female Voters
<b>Can handle a crisis</b>	9	12	0	0
<b>Problem solver</b>	7	10	-1	-10
<b>Strong</b>	6	7	-13	-4
<b>Decisive</b>	5	7	-9	-11
<b>Effective and gets results</b>	3	9	2	-8
<b>Tough*</b>	-6	-2	-13	-27

*As we have seen in the past, perceptions of strength and toughness are quite different. In 2010, neither traits predicts to the vote. Women voters gave Democratic women candidates more credit on strength, but gave Republican women less credit than male voters on strength. Women voters rated the women candidates as more effective and better problem solvers than male voters. The tables on candidate trait and issue advantages are calculated as the difference between the vote margin and trait advantage margin. For example, if the vote margin is +10 points Democratic, then a trait margin of +15 points Democratic results in an overall net Democratic advantage of 5 points. A trait margin of +3 points Democratic results in a net Democratic advantage of -7 points. Having an advantage on negative and positive traits/issues is beneficial.*

# 3

## Voters assume honesty and penalize perceived dishonesty

Voters historically have accorded women candidates a “virtue advantage,” seeing them as more honest and ethical than men. That remains true, especially among Independent voters, though by a smaller margin and with significant partisan differences. In 2010, Democratic women 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 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.

One media consultant noted, “In my experience voters are more likely to think that a woman candidate is in politics for the right reasons. They [voters] tend to start from a presumption that they are less corruptible and more honest and have more integrity than males.”

But 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 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 launch negative media with an assault on a woman’s values or character.



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Be transparent.** Set a standard of openness and stick to it. Your website is a great place to publish your public schedule, post video of speeches and debates, release position papers, and feature print interviews.

**Don’t be a goody two-shoes.** 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. No one likes a whiner.

**Be careful.** Conduct opposition research on yourself. Decide on 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. Anticipate what character attacks might be made against you or your family instead of giving that advantage to your opponent.

**Acknowledge mistakes.** Everyone makes them. Quickly take responsibility and move on. Don’t over-explain or respond for longer than one news cycle.

**Don’t set yourself up.** 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.



# 4

## The high price of perceived negative campaigning

Negative campaigning undercuts all gender advantages for women candidates. Voters see negative campaigning by a woman candidate as a clear indication that she is a “typical politician,” eliminating any other gains she may have earned for being a woman candidate. Because likeability is so important, no voter believes that she would be running negative ads or attacking an opponent so aggressively if she were the candidate. Consequently, those candidates who are perceived as going negative are judged as more of the same.

Critiquing an opponent’s record, priorities or decisions without being seen as negative is an extraordinary challenge for women candidates and their campaign teams. Campaign staff and consultants reported that it is much more difficult for a woman to execute a critical strategy without repercussions than it is for a man. As one candidate said, “I don’t like those commercials, they make us look bad. To me as women if we want respect as women in office, we have to kind of put all that stuff aside...”



### FOR CANDIDATES

**Be factual.** Present comparisons of voting records factually and document the sources of the information for voters. Use footnotes and refer to corroborating information, “Candidate X cast the deciding vote as reported by the Times.”

**Be accurate.** In 2010, several campaigns suffered setbacks because their opposition research was inaccurate or incomplete. If an opponent’s shortcoming is significant enough to be the focus of an ad, it is important enough to double-check. Review the source material yourself. You will be answering for it.

**Be fair and relevant.** It may be accurate to say that an opponent’s teenage child was expelled from school, but how is it fair or relevant?

**Find a referee.** When drawing a contrast between your record and an opponent’s, use a neutral expert to deliver the criticism.

**Avoid melodrama.** Fuzzy pictures, scary music, extreme language and loose facts are the hallmarks of ads that turn voters off. Set a standard with your campaign team and review this checklist before each new critical ad.

**Third party validators.** Use third parties to reinforce your position.



Candidates and consultants repeatedly pointed to the costly toll of airing negative ads. “It’s been my experience if you’re a woman and you go negative on a man it eventually hurts you more,” observed a pollster. A senior advisor in a different race reported of his candidate “her negative ads hurt her with women [voters].” One candidate in a race between two women lamented that even a neutral comparison of records can be perceived as negative, “I think there’s a public perception of when women try to battle it out on issues that they are in a cat fight. And just talking about each other’s records gets perceived as something it’s not.”

Of course, all candidates need to contrast their beliefs and records with those of their opponent. The manner in which a woman candidate presents the contrast, the messenger, and the tone and style of the ads, all make a critical difference in whether a voter views a woman candidate as engaging in negative campaigning.

**Critiquing an  
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 I  
Voted



# voter spotlight

## Younger women voters and Independent voters

### Younger women

A decade ago, we reported that younger women were among those voter groups with the strongest preference for a woman candidate, and suggested that higher turnout among young women was a strategy to combat high turnout among voters biased against women.

In 2010, women under 50 were less likely than those over 50 to vote for the woman candidate. Younger women ages 18 to 34 expressed a slight preference and slight enthusiasm for women candidates, but that preference was not borne out in their actual voting behavior. “Baby boom” generation women over the age of 50 were the most supportive group of voters for women candidates.

**{chart no. 9} Younger women give the Democratic women advantages on a number of key attributes, though they dip down significantly on sharing your values.**

The tables on candidate trait and issue advantages are calculated as the difference between the vote margin and trait advantage margin. For example, if the vote margin is +10 points Democratic, then a trait margin of +15 points Democratic results in an overall net Democratic advantage of 5 points. A trait margin of +3 points Democratic results in a net Democratic advantage of -7 points.

chart no. 9 Net Democratic Advantage

	Young Women 18-34		
	Democratic women vs. Republican men states	Republican women vs. Democratic men states	Woman vs. woman states
Warm and likeable	34	1	7
Ran a negative campaign	26	-6	18
Honest and ethical	18	5	2
Will work with Legislature	23	1	11
Too partisan	22	1	27
Looks like a Governor	10	10	-2
Knows what they're doing	12	-1	4
Shares your values	5	-4	9
In touch with your life	23	8	12
Stands up for people like you	13	-2	8

Typically, younger women were less engaged in this non-presidential year than they were in 2008. A significant number of young women ages 18 to 34 decided their vote in the last month before the election, suggesting that campaigns should delay ads and other paid communication targeting these voters until later in the campaign.

Younger women were surprisingly strong in their desire for a Governor with past government experience. Fifty-seven percent of young women voters said they preferred a candidate with past experience, while only 26% said they wanted to see someone new to government. Younger women gave Democratic women running against Republican men the largest advantage on likeability, not having run a negative campaign, being in touch with their lives, working with the state legislature, and not being too partisan.

By large margins, young women believed that Republican women who faced Democratic men were political outsiders, tough, and also not likely to be typical politicians. They also credited Democratic women who faced Republican men with being honest, less partisan, and less likely to be typical politicians.

### *Independent voters*

One of the fastest growing subsets of voters, Independents have become key to winning in many races. In 2010, Independent women were more likely than Independent men to vote for a woman of either party. In seven of eight states with women candidates in Governors races, Independent voters voted Republican. In Maine, the only state with a competitive Independent candidate in the general election, voters favored the Independent candidate.

Independent voters saw women candidates as less likely to run a negative campaign and more likely to share voters' values. For Independent voters, honesty and being ethical were traits that predicted the vote.

**{chart no. 10} By large margins, younger women however give Republican women the advantage on leadership traits and as political outsiders, toughness, and less likely to be typical politicians.**

chart no. 10 Net Democratic Advantage

	Young Women 18-34		
	Democratic women vs. Republican men states	Republican women vs. Democratic men states	Women vs. women states
<b>Can handle a crisis</b>	4	-2	-3
<b>Has the right priorities</b>	13	16	2
<b>Sets the right priorities</b>	14	-1	-3
<b>Typical politician</b>	14	-30	8
<b>Fiscally responsible</b>	6	-13	-4
<b>Problem solver</b>	4	-13	6
<b>Strong</b>	2	-20	-5
<b>Decisive</b>	-3	-22	1
<b>Effective and gets results</b>	9	-10	-7
<b>Political outsider</b>	1	-49	12
<b>Tough</b>	-8	-42	-10
<b>Will bring about change</b>	3	8	-9

The tables on candidate trait and issue advantages are calculated as the difference between the vote margin and trait advantage margin. For example, if the vote margin is +10 points Democratic, then a trait margin of +15 points Democratic results in an overall net Democratic advantage of 5 points. A trait margin of +3 points Democratic results in a net Democratic advantage of -7 points.







# looking ahead

Woman vs. woman races

Questions from candidates

A note for campaign teams and consultants

# 1

## woman vs. woman races

A woman running against another woman for Governor was still a novelty in 2010. The woman vs. woman contests in New Mexico and Oklahoma produced interesting data for the future, but also raised more questions.

- In states with two women on the ballot, the Republican women outperformed the party identification margin.<sup>9</sup> In other words, both won more votes than their party holds in voter registration.
- Voters did not see a big difference in how the media treated a woman of one party vs. her opponent. In New Mexico, voters were split as to which candidate's coverage was less favorable, and in Oklahoma voters reported slightly more negative coverage of the Democratic candidate.
- Independent voters in the woman vs. woman states were more likely to believe that women officeholders are a lot different than men. This is important because those who do see women as different are more likely to vote for them.
- In woman vs. woman races, getting endorsements from experts helped with credibility on the economy for women candidates of either party.
- In woman vs. woman contests, honesty and ethics, setting the right priorities, knowing what you're doing, and being strong were predictive of favorability for both Democratic and Republican candidates.

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<sup>9</sup> The vote margin for the winning Republican candidates was larger than the party identification margin. In NM, the party ID margin is 4 points Democratic; vote margin is 8 points Republican. In OK, party ID margin is 10 points Republican; vote margin is 20 points Republican.

# 2

## Questions from candidates

In the course of our 2010 qualitative research, we asked candidates a series of questions to capture and convey their first-hand experience. Questions included, “What would you like the next women running for Governor of your state to know?” and “What research would be helpful to women candidates in the future?”

The candidates’ responses reiterated key findings from our research. Women know that voters punish them for negative ads and attacks. This was particularly true for women running against women. Candidates also dislike negative campaigning and doubt that it works in their favor. Yet they acknowledge the importance of contrasting their views, values and records with those of their opponent.

In addition, women candidates were aware of the diminished gender loyalty from women voters and wanted to understand that dynamic better.

The uncharted territory of woman vs. woman races also led to a number of questions, including:

- Is it possible to run against another woman in a hotly-contested race and compare and contrast beliefs and records without being perceived as mean-spirited and negative?
- What is an acceptable competitive posture for candidates in woman vs. woman races in order to avoid stereotypes of “catfights?”
- Can a woman candidate critique another woman candidate’s record in a way that is acceptable to voters? What would that look like? What are the elements or perimeters of that critical ad? Do tone and messenger matter?
- Are women voters more critical of women candidates than men voters?
- If they are, why? What’s the solution?

These are just a few of the issues that merit future research.



# 3

## A note for campaign teams and consultants

For the first time in our research, we saw campaign teams' understanding and strategy lag behind voters' actual beliefs about gender and women candidates. Campaign teams should take note that some women voters are changing their attitudes about women candidates.

Here are some suggestions for future campaigns:

- **Stay current.** In your benchmark poll, test voter attitudes on historically challenging traits for women. Almost every advisor and operative we interviewed believed that a woman candidate's toughness was a high priority to voters, when in fact other qualities have become more important.
- **"Firsts" aren't persuasive.** Don't waste time or money promoting the historical nature of electing a first woman Governor. Few voters are excited about it anymore.
- **Build on boomers.** "Baby Boom" women voters are more likely to vote, more likely to believe that women officeholders are different than men office holders, and more likely to support a woman candidate when they hold that belief.
- **Expect incoming fire on character.** Since the Barbara Lee Family Foundation first published evidence that voters give women candidates a "virtue advantage," opponent campaigns have launched early, vigorous attacks on women candidates' ethics. While the "virtue advantage" has diminished, the trend to attack women early on character has not.
- **Diversify!** Several candidates lamented their inability to find experienced women staff and consultants to join their teams. To solve the problem, campaign managers and consulting firms should put more women operatives on staff and younger women in the campaign manager pipeline.
- **Reach younger women voters closer to the election.** Young women engage and decide their vote preferences late in the campaign. Talk to them when they are listening.



# conclusion

In 2010, we learned that problem-solving, priority-setting, and strength — traits that seem more easily accessible for women candidates — forecast a candidate's likeability and electability.

It was a year in which women faced fewer gender-related obstacles than ever before, and one in which gender-related advantages appeared in bundles rather than one by one. Women candidates stepped onto a more level playing field than in past years, as well-equipped as their male counterparts to compete and win. We heard from their managers and advisors that woman candidates have a greater opportunity to connect with voters than their men opponents if they employ the full range of their personal, professional and community relationships and experiences.

Less encouraging was the snapshot 2010 presented of younger women voters. In a departure from our early Governors research, but continuing a recent trend, young women profess support for women candidates, but do not follow through with a vote at the ballot box. Today, Baby Boom generation women are the most reliable voting bloc for women candidates. And in addition, Independent women continue to be more likely than Independent men to vote for women candidates. Voters value honesty and ethics and they dislike the perception of negative campaigning.

While there were certainly instances of gender bias and stereotyping among the campaigns in 2010, they stood out as inappropriate and uncommon. And while women candidates enjoyed wider acceptance of their candidacies as the norm, there was also recognition that such acceptance meant an end to special status for women candidates.

We see 2010 as a turning point. Whether the election represents a true and lasting turning point for women candidates or an exception shaped by a desire for change and even stronger partisanship, remains to be seen. But it certainly was a year in which women continued to make electoral history, including a more ethnically diverse pool of candidates than we have seen before, two all-women contests for Governor, and the first women Governors elected in New Mexico, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.

In all, more progress, and new challenges.

For more information about the Barbara Lee Family Foundation's *Governors Guidebook* series, please visit: [www.barbaraleefoundation.org](http://www.barbaraleefoundation.org). Online, you can view, download, and request copies of our research and access a list of additional resources for women in politics.

# gallery

The women who have served 1925-2011



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



Acting Governor  
Jane Swift  
2001-2003  
Massachusetts



Governor  
Judy Martz  
2001–2005  
Montana



Governor  
Ruth Ann Minner  
2001–2009  
Maryland



Linda Lingle  
2002–2010  
Hawaii



Governor  
Olene Walker  
2003–2005  
Utah



Governor  
Jennifer M. Granholm  
2003–2011  
Michigan



Governor  
Janet Napolitano  
2003–2009  
Arizona



Governor  
Kathleen Sebelius  
2003–2009  
Kansas



Governor  
Kathleen Blanco  
2004–2008  
Louisiana



Governor  
M. Jodi Rell  
2004–2011  
Connecticut



Governor  
Christine Gregoire  
2005–Present  
Washington



Governor  
Sarah Palin  
2006–2009  
Alaska



Governor  
Beverly Perdue  
2009–Present  
North Carolina



Governor  
Jan Brewer  
2009–Present  
Arizona



Governor  
Susana Martinez  
2011–Present  
New Mexico



Governor  
Mary Fallin  
2011–Present  
Oklahoma



Governor  
Nikki Haley  
2011–Present  
South Carolina

**The Barbara Lee Family Foundation** 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 political research program, strategic partnerships, grants, and endowments:

**Political research:** The Foundation has studied and published research about every woman's gubernatorial race since 1998. We have shared our findings with hundreds of women candidates at all levels and across parties, giving women essential knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of campaigning.

**Strategic partnerships:** The Foundation builds strategic, nonpartisan partnerships to help women succeed in American politics and make women contemporary artists more visible to the public.

**Grants and endowments:** The Foundation is committed to building the capacity of our partner organizations through grants and endowments.

For more information, please visit

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



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