

BRINGING MORE WOMEN INTO PUBLIC OFFICE

WOMEN'S PACs

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

RUTGERS

CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WOMAN AND POLITICS

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Introduction

In 1981 the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) began studying routes of entry into political office, comparing the paths taken by women and men into both elective and appointive offices. In a project supported by a grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation, CAWP surveyed and talked with public leaders around the country in order to identify effective channels and strategies for increasing the numbers of women officeholders. The project, entitled "Bringing More Women Into Public Office," was divided into two parts: first, surveys of women and men holding high-level federal and state appointive offices, and surveys of women and men serving in elective offices at municipal, county, and state levels; second, a series of group consultations with public leaders around the country.

During the course of the project CAWP staff conducted six group consultations. The goal of each session was to develop recommendations for increasing the numbers of women in public life. While the goal of each session was identical, the focus of each meeting and the types of women who participated were different.

The first consultation, held in New Jersey in 1981, brought together about twenty elected women, women political strategists, leaders of major women's organizations, and women who were holding or had held cabinet positions in the state. Participants at the meeting discussed strategies for ensuring that women would be appointed to key posts in 1982 by the state's newly elected governor. At that meeting, the New Jersey Bipartisan Coalition for Women's Appointments was formed, with the goal of identifying and promoting women for appointments.*

A second group consultation, held in Washington, D.C., in early 1982, brought together a small group of women appointed to high-level federal positions by President Reagan. At the session, these women candidly described their political backgrounds and experiences and talked about how they received their appointments.**

A third session, held in Minnesota in August 1982, brought together women elected and appointed public officials, women candidates, heads of women's organizations, political party leaders, women representing colleges and universities, and women from corporations and foundations. Discussion focused on the factors which facilitate or hinder women's entry into public offices, with a major emphasis on political parties. The forty

* A separate monograph describing how this bipartisan coalition was established and developed is available from CAWP as part of the series, *Bringing More Women Into Public Office*.

** The Washington, D.C., Minnesota, and California meetings are described in a separate CAWP report as part of the series, *Bringing More Women Into Public Office*.

women who participated in CAWP's meeting spent several hours discussing short- and long-range strategies for encouraging Minnesota women's political participation.**

Two meetings held in California—one in Sacramento attended by about thirty women and one in Los Angeles with about forty-five women—brought together political party officials, officeholders, and successful and unsuccessful candidates. The role of political parties in recruiting and supporting women candidates and the various ways women had indirectly encouraged or directly brought more women into public life were major topics of discussion.**

The sixth consultation conducted as part of this Revson-sponsored research project took a very different direction from the other five, in which participants had shared a common geographical base. At this meeting, participants represented political action committees from across the country which had an explicit goal of giving financial support solely or primarily to women candidates. Women representing state or local PACs from Hawaii, California, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Michigan, Louisiana, and Texas, as well as representatives of several national PACs, met to share information about their groups' fund-raising activities, policies for distributing funds, and plans for the future. What follows is a report of that session, held in October 1982 at the Center for the American Woman and Politics.

Women's PACs

The establishment, growth, and influence of political action committees is being hotly debated among the media, politicians, political pundits, and others associated with campaigns and elections. Modern campaigns—particularly for congressional or statewide positions, but frequently for state legislatures and major local offices as well—have reached levels of sophistication that require expensive polls, high-powered consultants, costly television and radio time, and attention-grabbing materials. As the price of campaigning rises, so does the influence of political action committees.

It is not a startling revelation that women candidates have a more difficult time raising the ever-increasing sums required to mount such campaigns. Nor is it surprising that women candidates—more likely than their male counterparts to be challengers in their bids for elective office—are less likely to be the beneficiaries of PAC donations. In CAWP's surveys of and consultations with public leaders, women place great emphasis on the critical importance of money in election campaigns. Whether or not women will seek elective offices—particularly high-level offices—in the future may well depend on the availability of funds to finance their campaigns.

Thus, it is important news that new funding groups targeting their giving chiefly at women have been established in a number of states and at the national level. Groups of politically sophisticated women around the country, understanding the woman candidate's dilemma, are beginning to offer a response to the rising cost of getting elected. Recognizing that electing more women—and in particular, more "progressive" women—will not be a priority for anyone but women themselves, and that the majority of existing PACs will continue to support incumbents—most of whom are men—a new breed of hard-nosed political realists has taken up the challenge of amassing and distributing money for women candidates. In the words of one woman whose efforts brought in thousands of dollars for women candidates, "If we're going to get women moving up in politics as national leaders, we've got to raise the stakes." Where women are raising the stakes, what they are doing, and how and why they are doing it were questions CAWP posed at the first meeting ever convened of representatives of these "women's PACs."

Twenty-three women representing fourteen groups met with CAWP staff members at the Eagleton Institute of Politics on October 21, 1982. They came from eight states and from Washington, D.C.; they represented national, statewide, and local organizations. Some called themselves political action committees (PACs); others had different titles or structures. The oldest organizations dated to the mid-70s; the newest

NWPC was formed in 1971 . . . its purpose was clearly to make the world perfect. And the way it was going to do that was by involving women fully in all aspects of public life—elective, judicial, and appointive.

Marianne Fowler

one was still in the process of being created. Some of the groups were broadly inclusive; others were highly selective in their membership. While financial support for women candidates was the primary goal for most, some had other aims or strategies, particularly support for candidates who support women's issues. What all of the groups shared was a commitment to expanding the impact women have on the political system, a recognition of the specific tools and tactics required to pursue that goal, and a basically feminist or progressive agenda.*

It must be recognized that these "women's PACs" are still small in numbers and influence. Nationally, according to Common Cause, there were more than 3,400 PACs in 1982, and they contributed more than \$80 million to House and Senate races in that year. The American Medical Association raised more than \$2 million for its PAC in 1981-1982, and the National Association of Realtors almost \$3 million in the same period. NCPAC (the National Conservative Political Action Committee) raised over \$9.6 million during that time. By comparison, few of the women's PACs have raised as much as \$100,000, and only NOW has reached the millions. But the groups are new and growing, and they are part of the increasingly important phenomenon of women coming together around political goals.

As the representatives of each group told their stories, a set of common problems or issues emerged—questions faced by virtually all of them. It is the responses to these questions that define and distinguish the various groups. Moreover, for women considering starting similar efforts elsewhere, understanding these problems and the reasons why certain groups have selected particular solutions could help to avoid common pitfalls in establishing their own PACs.

*Each mistake is important,
because that's how we've
learned.*

Janyce Degan

* Because CAWP's consultation was organized for those groups solely or primarily dedicated to supporting female candidates, many groups which have a special interest in backing women, but place greater emphasis on other organizational goals, were not invited to attend. Nonetheless, their efforts on behalf of female candidates play an important role in women's campaigns today. They include: the American Nurses Association PAC, the Business and Professional Women's PAC, the National Education Association PAC, and the National Abortion Rights Action League PAC.

Who Takes Part?

Organizational Structure

The groups at the CAWP session varied in their membership plans, affiliations, bylaws, and requirements for participation. Structure is not merely a given; it reflects choices made by a group's founders and decisions about goals and strategies. The broad categories into which the attending groups could be divided are:

- national membership organizations
- national nonmembership fund-raising groups
- state or local-based exclusive membership organizations
- state or local-based nonmembership fund-raising groups

Two major national membership organizations were represented at the consultation: the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). Each has several PACs, reflecting the different requirements of federal, state, and local campaigns and the legal constraints on acceptance of corporate funding. Forming PACs was a logical strategy for both groups because of their broad commitment to the advancement of women, but for both groups the PACs represent just one part of a more general organizational purpose. In this respect, they are much like other national membership groups—the AMA or the NRA, for example—who choose a political action strategy as one element in a full range of organizational activities. Some of the NOW and NWPC PACs are limited by law to fund raising from members only, but with national memberships of thousands of women and men in each organization, there is still ample opportunity to amass large sums. Other units have been structured to allow them legally to raise money from nonmembers. On the national level, both groups are under the direction of elected officers and board members. The local units have their own structures, leadership, and systems.

The two nonmembership national political fund-raising groups represented at the consultation fill a very different kind of need, serving as mechanisms for raising money for their target constituencies without expecting the active participation more typical of a membership organization. The Women's Campaign Fund, which might be considered the model for many of the state and local groups, was formed solely for the purpose of "electing qualified, progressive women of both parties to public office at every level." It relies on a small professional staff and a self-perpetuating bipartisan board of directors to conduct these efforts, but it reaches out to a much broader constituency of contributors through direct mail and fund-raising events. The Eleanor Roosevelt Fund, a unit of the Democratic National Committee, has no staff or board of its own, and

is operated by the DNC as a mechanism for raising money specifically for female Democratic candidates.*

Most of the state and local groups represented at the consultation employ membership systems of some sort. However, for some (such as the Women's Political Committee in Los Angeles and the Hawaii Women's Political Action League) membership is the *only* way to participate, and membership requirements are very specific. For others, a core membership (usually defined by a set financial contribution) provides the bulk of funding and energy, while other fund-raising mechanisms, including direct mail and special events, are employed to build a larger treasury from nonmembers. For all of the state and local groups, a broad steering committee or other policymaking body is composed of individuals who have made a substantial contribution; in the Michigan and Hawaii groups, however, the contribution may be one of work time rather than money. All but a few of the organizations have bylaws, and most are or will be incorporated. Most have either no paid staff or only a minimal staff, such as a part-time coordinator or administrative assistant.

*I want women to get money
on a professional basis.*

Kathleen Ridder

Many of these decisions on structure were based on an assessment of the possible; given a short time, a high level of immediate interest, and a clearly visible need, what structure will allow for quick action and most effective use of limited funding? Most of the groups agreed that the bulk of funding must go directly to candidates, but several felt that it was unfair (or even un-feminist) to rely entirely on volunteer labor, so that at least some money had to be reserved for staff. Kathleen Ridder of the Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund justified that group's hiring a coordinator by insisting, "I want women to get money on a professional basis."

The need for immediate "front" money and predictable cash flow led in many cases to the setting of a relatively high membership fee, but the desire for broader participation and visibility dictated the necessity for other forms of involvement. Local political exigencies and campaign laws have made bylaws and incorporation seem necessary, but most of the groups are still new enough to want to reserve for themselves the option of some flexibility until they find out how well their systems work.

* In January 1983, the Campaign Fund for Republican Women was formed to provide Republican women support comparable to that provided Democratic women by the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund. The new PAC, staffed by Wilma Goldstein (formerly of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee), will provide funding in its first two years exclusively for U.S. House and Senate campaigns, probably only in general elections. (Later the group may consider other forms of assistance, possibly including debt retirement or primary support.) The only criteria for assistance will be that candidates be Republican women with strong, viable campaigns. The group has no formal connection with the Republican National Committee, so that the amount of money it can give to a campaign will not be affected by the amount the Republican National Committee gives. While the PAC does not anticipate providing forms of assistance other than money during its first two years, they will be examining the possibilities for technical assistance or in-kind contributions. They are currently exploring various options for fund raising.

Inclusive versus Exclusive

Early on, most groups faced basic structural questions: Do we want to be broadly inclusive, reaching out to anyone who shares our goals and has a few hours or a few dollars to give? Or do we want to limit participation to a few large contributors who can make substantial commitments in return for substantial control over our actions? The range of responses to these questions extends from the cadre system developed by the Hawaii Women's Political Action League (HWPAL) to the exclusive, invitation-only, high-stakes Women's Political Action Committee in Los Angeles and the unnamed, informal fund-raising elite in Texas. Most of the PACs and organizations fall somewhere between these extremes.

The Hawaii group is composed of local units, each of which must at all times have at least ten members, with one member of each unit serving on the HWPAL board of directors. Each board member must contribute at least \$50 to the organization, which may be raised from her unit, and she must maintain her unit's membership at ten or more, bringing in new members as necessary. Each unit member must give a specific number of hours of work to the organization or to endorsed candidates. Essentially, membership is available to anyone who agrees with the group's goals and is willing to give her time to a unit. HWPAL has a plan for spawning new units and boards as the number of members increases, and it aims to build "a large army of women who will commit themselves to political campaigns," says its founder Patsy Mink.

The opposite approach—reliance on a small core group for both funding and policymaking—is taken by the Women's Political Committee (WPC) in Los Angeles and by a group of women in Texas who operated as an informal network during the 1982 election season. Here the principle is to solicit from a small, carefully selected group of women relatively large pledges (\$2,000 minimum for WPC, \$10,000 minimum in Texas) with the promise that each contributor will participate in the group's decision-making. Jane Hickie of the Texas group believes, "Any woman who cannot raise \$10,000 in a six-month period is not trying." These groups ask little of their participants beyond the contribution—no committee work, no campaign involvement, no planning of programs or activities. Rather, the goal is, in Hickie's terms, to emulate the "fat cat" model, raising a great deal of money quickly and distributing it quietly to carefully selected candidates.

In between these two extremes are the approaches taken by most women's PACs and campaign funds. Many of them rely on a core group of donors who have given at least a set, relatively large sum—perhaps \$100–\$250. (In Minnesota the twenty-five board members must each pledge \$1,000 over a two-year period, and a total of more than seventy women have given \$1,000 each.) In Michigan, the membership obligation can be paid in money or in labor, either on behalf of the organization or for endorsed candidates. Associate memberships are also available at half

Our standard was the way men raise money for political campaigns.

Marcia Herman

We're trying to get into a way to reach millions of people. We feel that the women's rights movement has never done that, that the money is there, that women will give in their own interest, but that it has to be presented to many more people than we've been able to do before.

Nancy Stultz

The question of who's on your board is critical in fund raising, because unless you can do enormous mailings you need people with clout.

Ernesta Ballard

the full-member rate. Some groups—such as the Sacramento Women's Campaign Fund—allow several individuals to pool their funds and share one membership and one vote. The board of directors or steering committee is likely to consist of founding or early members who have given at least this much, and most of the organization's work is likely to be done by volunteer members of this core group with a strong commitment to the goal of electing progressive (and usually female) candidates. These committed individuals make the major fund-raising efforts: they sign solicitation letters, assemble lists of potential donors, prepare materials, plan events, and serve as spokeswomen addressing the media and other organizations. It is difficult to overstate the amount of energy expended by these women to make the groups work; one woman in Pennsylvania wrote 800 personal fund-raising letters, just to cite a single example. This individual commitment is often a key to the group's success. The fund-raising net is then cast much more widely, drawing in small donors who could not afford membership, people attracted to specific fund-raising events, corporate contributors, and other donors who can give significant sums but do not choose to be closely and visibly associated with the group.

In general, the membership in these groups tends to be middle-to-upper-class white women. Most are professionals; the Michigan group, for example, grew out of a women lawyers' group. In describing her group's membership, Franza Giffen of the San Francisco-based Women's Political Fund said:

We have approached mostly executive and professional women who do not have time to give to canvassing or going to candidates' offices. All they want to do is give their money and know they have some voice in getting primarily women candidates elected.

Many participants are politically experienced, although the Hawaii group makes a special effort to seek out political novices who can learn the most from participation. They come from both parties or from a nonpartisan background, and many are or have been connected with other women's groups or activities. They have also tended to come mostly from the major metropolitan areas—the Twin Cities in Minnesota and Detroit in Michigan, for example.

Who Makes Decisions?

Control of Endorsements

The control over the endorsement and contribution process—as distinct from the actual outcomes of that process—has proven a difficult issue for many of the groups. Should all members have a say? Or are board members elected to represent the entire membership and make decisions for them? The decision reflects a group's philosophy, but is also a function of its size and the feasibility of a "democratic" approach.

For the national membership groups, the endorsement process is controlled by elected leadership in the form of national PAC boards; any more democratic process would prove unwieldy and time-consuming. However, the issues become more complex because state or local units also need a say in the process. To what extent must the national and local groups confer, consider, or bend to one another's will? NWPC chooses to defer to local groups, and their national PAC will not support a candidate unless the local unit has either requested national endorsement or specifically waived its right to do so. NOW has no formally established policy on whether the national must follow a state's lead; while the national group will not go into a race on the opposite side from the state group, national NOW might "sit out" a race targeted locally. Both NOW and NWPC will, on occasion, *endorse* a candidate without making a financial contribution.

The Women's Campaign Fund is also controlled by a national board, which makes its decisions in accordance with set criteria (see below). However, WCF's direct-mail fund-raising solicitations from time to time contain "ballots" asking contributors to choose among endorsed candidates if WCF does not have enough money to support all of them; this mechanism may give contributors more of a sense of participation while alerting them to the urgency of sending more money.

The state and local groups run the gamut from control of the endorsement and contribution process by a small board to membership-wide balloting with varying degrees of flexibility. In several cases, the board (made up of contributors) will control the process in accordance with the group's stated criteria. For example, the "Committee of 21" in Louisiana draws its name from the twenty-one dues-paying members who control the group, although others may contribute to it. The Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund's board makes final endorsement decisions, based on the recommendations of a screening committee. The Pennsylvania Women's Campaign Fund's board also makes endorsement decisions, which are then reported out to donors. While some groups open their endorsement meetings to all members as observers, several noted that interest and attendance at these sessions decline as members gain confidence that the board or committee is representing their interests fairly.

When you try to involve too many people in decision making, you end up with too many angry people. When you look ahead to an expanding donor base, you'll probably have to think of a smaller decision base.

Ranny Cooper

Other groups employ much more "democratic" processes. While their boards or screening committees may make recommendations, final decisions are in the hands of members. For the East Bay Women's Political Action Committee, the first-time endorsement system included a ballot mailed to all members, asking them whether or not a candidate should be supported and what size contribution should be made. A 51% vote was required for support of a candidate. (Since this was a new group and a new process, a re-assessment is planned, which may result in modifying or scrapping this process.) The Sacramento Women's Campaign Fund employed a similar voting system, with the added twist that any candidate not placed on the ballot by the board in its screening process could be entered on the ballot by a petition signed by 30% of the members. Both the San Francisco-based Women's Political Fund and the Michigan Women's Campaign Fund also use member votes to determine candidate support. Ranny Cooper, former director of the national Women's Campaign Fund, offered a cautionary note on this subject, saying, "When you try to involve too many people in decision making, you end up with too many angry people. When you look ahead to an expanding donor base, you'll probably have to think of a smaller decision base."

Interviews and Questionnaires

Once a group has determined its own criteria for candidates, how does it determine whether a given candidate meets those criteria? Some rely largely on questionnaires, others on interviews conducted by screening committees or at meetings of the organization. Still others rely on other information sources, preferring not to place additional burdens on the candidate and her campaign.

For the state and local groups, a questionnaire with follow-up is the simplest way of identifying candidates suitable for endorsement. The Michigan and Minnesota Women's Campaign Funds use questionnaires tailored to the specific levels of office involved, and refer responses to candidate screening committees. In Michigan, that committee then interviews the candidates who meet the basic criteria. The East Bay Women's PAC solicited essays from candidates on their positions and backgrounds, then followed up with additional research and a "candidates' night" at which candidates were questioned by members. The Women's Political Fund in San Francisco seeks both written and verbal assurances of support for its goals. The Sacramento Women's Campaign Fund uses an interview with its board to screen all candidates before endorsement votes.

Interviews and questionnaires can be burdensome for candidates, particularly when the contribution at stake is relatively small compared to the campaign budget. Often groups are asking a candidate to make a written commitment to controversial positions, even though they know that the candidate is with them. Some fail to recognize the political liabil-

ities such public commitments can entail. As Jane Hickie says, "What kind of friend is it who wants to *print* in Dallas County, Texas, 'Yes, indeed I will hire a qualified gay or lesbian on my staff'? They're supposed to be on *our* side." While NOW discourages its local groups from insisting on questionnaires, many of them perceive this as their most effective approach to candidates and use it in spite of the drawbacks.

Some groups, such as the Texas women and the Women's Political Committee in Los Angeles, use no formal mechanism at all. They use their political networks and channels to identify and select appropriate candidates, and make their commitments in a more private fashion, more in keeping with the old-fashioned "smoke-filled room" style of politics. Similarly, the Pennsylvania Women's Campaign Fund and the Committee of 21 have used private and informal channels to decide which candidates were most deserving of their support based on the stated criteria.

One of the considerations we have is "what can this candidate do for us? How can she or he help us to be visible, or to build our membership at the same time we're helping them?"

Franza Giffen

Who Gets Support?

Endorsement Criteria

Many, but not all, of the groups at the consultation employ specific, written endorsement criteria as a first "sieve" for separating out acceptable candidates. These generally begin with, but are often not limited to, core women's issues—support for the Equal Rights Amendment and reproductive freedom. Many groups add practical considerations to issue-oriented, political criteria. These considerations include electability, past feminist activity, endorsements, or a solid financial base.

Some groups take for granted, or choose not to be specific about, definitions of terminology. Thus, the Michigan Women's Campaign Fund's constitution says:

The purposes of the committee are to foster, promote, and support the election and appointment of qualified progressive women to Michigan public office and to support issues which further feminist goals.

"Qualified," "progressive," and "feminist" are left undefined, although their meanings are understood by members. Such general language may be more acceptable to a wider range of potential donors than terms such as "pro-choice."

Other groups have chosen to be quite specific in defining their endorsement criteria. For example, the East Bay Women's Political Action Committee requires endorsed candidates to support:

- women's health/reproductive freedom
- educational equality for women
- economic justice for women
- protection of women in home/workplace
- protection of environment and quality of life.

Other groups, such as the Pennsylvania Women's Campaign Fund and the Women's Political Fund (San Francisco), employ similar lists of issue criteria, which are built directly into their bylaws. The Pennsylvania group may expand its list of concerns to include nuclear arms/peace issues. Ernesta Ballard of the group suggested that, "Since women are traditionally identified with these issues, it will get us a lot more donors to the campaign if we include them."

The Hawaii Women's Political Action League is even more specific. It employs a detailed, two-page policy statement including outlines of acceptable stands on world peace, ERA, child care, the economic system and policies, health, sex exploitation, community services and facilities, education, special groups, work, and political structure.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Fund, as an arm of the Democratic Party, uses somewhat less clear *issue* guidelines, stating only, "There must be support by the candidate on issues of special concern to women, as outlined in the 1980 platform and as reaffirmed by the National Party Conference in Philadelphia, June 1982." Not surprisingly, the Fund's criteria have much more to do with party support, electability, and significance of the race for women.

Electability is an important factor for most of the groups, in that they want to target their limited resources to those races where there is a real chance of winning. Thus, the nature of the candidate's campaign, the existing support, and the prospects for additional support are germane considerations. However, the Women's Campaign Fund offers a slightly different perspective on this issue. Ranny Cooper noted that WCF's won/lost record (approximately 50%) would be considered unacceptable by many PACs; nonetheless, WCF's investments are based on a special view of women candidates' circumstances:

- WCF recognizes the importance of establishing political credibility, so that some of the candidates they support may be building a current base for a future election.
- Women tend to be challengers, so that WCF's candidates have the built-in disadvantage of running against incumbents.
- WCF supports candidates who need them, and stays out of races where the woman candidate, although worthy, will win easily without them.

Partisanship

With the exception of the Democrats' Eleanor Roosevelt Fund, all of the groups represented at the consultation are committed to multipartisanship.* The groups share the belief that being multipartisan is important in drawing women together, as well as in fund raising. Certain legal limitations—including getting corporate contributions—also make non-partisanship or multipartisanship necessary.

However, for many of the groups, finding Republicans who meet the endorsement criteria has been difficult. First, many Republican women conform to party standards and are, therefore, unable or unwilling to make a public commitment to feminist positions on such key issues as ERA and abortion. Perhaps more significantly, many of the groups see Republican economic programs under President Reagan as anti-woman, and refuse to support candidates who back those programs, even when the candidates are pro-ERA and pro-choice. Finally, NOW has pointed out that on the national level, although individual Republicans may be worthy of support, their presence in the U.S. Senate contributes to a majority which places right-wing senators in influential committee chairmanships.

* Another exception, not represented at the consultation, is the new Campaign Fund for Republican Women described at the bottom of page 6.

We're focusing on women and women's issues, and we're trying to encourage people to be party-blind when they look at candidates.

JoAnn Price

Nonetheless, all of the groups continue actively to seek out supportable candidates from both parties. The support of women's PACs may prove especially valuable for G.O.P. feminists who feel isolated; and that support leaves open the channels for candidates and PAC supporters to maintain their Republican party identification while pushing for change from within. As Ranny Cooper suggested:

It's shortsighted of us to turn our backs on Republican women in general. One of the problems clearly is the environment in the Republican party, but that's not going to change if women's organizations say they will only fund Democrats.

What About Men?

The groups at the consultation were formed by and largely for women, and their goals are overtly feminist. Nonetheless, many of them have wrestled with the question of whether and when to support men, placing an emphasis on the policy agenda, rather than on the gender, of the candidate.

Several of the groups were formed for the express purpose of increasing the numbers of women in public life, and they provide neither endorsements nor support for male candidates. These include the Women's Campaign Fund, the Committee of 21, the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund, the Hawaii Women's Political Action League, and the Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania Women's Campaign Funds. While members of these groups undoubtedly could find male candidates who meet their standards, they have chosen to put their organizational emphasis on the election (and in some cases the appointment) of progressive women. They recognize the imbalance in available campaign funds for women and men, and they choose to address it by supporting women. Patsy Mink of HWPAL put it most emphatically: "We are purely committed to helping women candidates, and if you cannot abide by that resolution, then you don't belong."

We are purely committed to helping women candidates, and if you cannot abide by that resolution, then you don't belong.

Patsy Mink

Other groups may give "paper" support, or endorsement, to male candidates without providing any financial backing. Like the groups which support only women, they see the need women have for financial support, but they also place priority on accomplishing political ends, and they are willing to endorse men who share their political goals. Some of the National Women's Political Caucus PACs and the East Bay Women's Political Action Committee have taken this route, although the latter group may at some time choose to give money to men. As Kare Anderson of East Bay Women's PAC explained, "We decided to give no money to men that we might endorse because we felt that the men had adequate resources and adequate groups they could turn to for funding, and we wanted to make as much of an impact as we could on the women we were supporting."

A third group of organizations, while according priority to feminist goals, has chosen to offer endorsements and financial support to both men and women. In some cases, they have even endorsed particularly supportive men over merely acceptable women. NOW, with its reported multimillion dollar war chest, has received national attention for adopting this strategy. Other groups who have taken this direction include: the Los Angeles Women's Campaign Fund, the Sacramento Women's Campaign Fund, and the Women's Political Fund. These groups tend to endorse and fund more women than men, but for their local purposes they feel it necessary to be open to male candidates. Said one representative of a group that chooses to fund some men:

It's easier to fundraise by opening up the process to feminist candidates—male *and* female—though our definite priority will be female way over male. By opening it up to both, when you ask males for money you can always say, "Yes, we're going to give to men also," knowing that you can give a token amount to a man and a chunk to a woman.

When "Good" Men Run Against Women

For many groups, and particularly for the national organizations, a special problem is created by races between men who are seen as friends of progressive causes and acceptable women who oppose them. Recent examples include Assemblywoman Marie Muhler's 1980 and 1982 races against Congressman James Howard in New Jersey. The recent race for New Jersey's open Senate seat provided a slightly different case, with Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick facing political newcomer Frank Lautenberg, who adopted pro-feminist positions and rhetoric, although he had no political track record. In these cases, the question arises of whether the goal of electing more women overrides the goal of electing the candidate seen as most supportive of feminist policies.

The Women's Campaign Fund, after long and difficult deliberation, concluded that its limited resources could be used most effectively by staying out of such races in *general* elections. However, they will support a woman in a primary where she is vying for the opportunity to face a "good" man, on the theory that the general election will then feature two strong candidates and a positive outcome will be ensured. Thus, WCF contributed to Marie Muhler in her 1982 primary race, but did not support her in the general election.

NOW has taken a very different position, choosing to support the candidate they perceive as *most* feminist. In 1982, they also took note of party affiliation, preferring in general a worthy Democrat over a comparable Republican because of the importance of committee chairmanships distributed to members of the majority party in each house. Thus, NOW supported both Howard and Lautenberg over their Republican female opponents.

NWPC has chosen still another path: supporting some “good” women where they are running, even against “good” men. Thus, in contrast with NOW, NWPC supported Fenwick in her Senate bid. For NWPC, increasing the number of women in elective office is a high enough priority to justify supporting women as often as possible when they meet the stated criteria.

The state and local groups who are willing to support men seem not to have confronted this issue in the same way as the national groups. Their resources are generally so limited that they *must* be selective in entering races, so they are *de facto* in the same position as the Women’s Campaign Fund, avoiding the most problematical contests. The Pennsylvania Women’s Campaign Fund has a stated policy of not supporting candidates running against “good” men *or* women, but they have had some negative reactions. As Ernesta Ballard reported, “This has annoyed a number of women who say to us, ‘How can you be a women’s campaign fund when you won’t support a woman candidate?’ ”

Primaries versus Generals

When to enter races has been a central issue for many of the PACs and campaign funds. Is it more useful or appropriate to back strong feminist candidates early when they need start-up funds and demonstrations of their viability? Should groups support candidates in primaries, entering into intra-party battles where prospects may be unclear? Or should they wait until the general election to pick out the candidates who have good chances but need help?

The Women’s Campaign Fund takes a clear stand on this issue: Its role is to increase the viability of women candidates, and it must therefore provide the key early support which can lift a candidacy off the ground. According to a WCF brochure:

What’s the secret of our success? Timing, for one thing. Months before an election, we seek out and encourage qualified women to run for office. Then, while it’s still too early for most groups to take sides, we make major contributions to our candidates—often the first major contribution they receive.

That early support often unlocks other sources of funding, giving our candidates the visibility and credibility they need to wage winning campaigns.

Most groups share this emphasis on early support. For example, the Sacramento Women’s Campaign Fund holds the philosophy that the primary is the most critical race; after the primary, the parties usually take over and provide more support. However, the parties are often unwilling to rally around women at the earliest stages, so the Sacramento group plans to begin “grooming” its candidates at least a year in advance of the election. Similarly, the Los Angeles Women’s Campaign Fund, noting

that men line up behind candidates as early as April in an election year, wants to use its networks to find out as early as possible who is running where and which women need support. The Michigan Women's Campaign Fund cites instances where it will give in a primary and *not* in a general election, in districts considered "safe" by a party.

The women in Texas and the Women's Political Committee in Los Angeles hope to provide the start-up money that makes it possible for a woman to declare her candidacy and approach other potential donors from a position of strength. When Ann Richards was contemplating a last-minute entry into the Texas race for State Treasurer, women raised \$350,000 in twenty-four hours on her behalf, so that she knew she could wage a serious campaign. Marcia Herman of the Woman's Political Committee says:

We're hoping to pledge \$30,000 to a woman *before* she even has to file for the election, so she can call her potential contributors and say, "How would you like to help me match a \$30,000 contribution I have from the Women's Political Committee?" Right away that says a lot of things about her, her candidacy, her viability, her opponent.

Support in a general election has a different function. When the women's PACs contribute at this stage, it is as much an endorsement and a signal to voters as a financial boost. It can raise both the candidate's and the organization's visibility and confirm the organization's bipartisanship. It can also provide targeted late support in races where victory seems close and a late push will be critical. All of the organizations at the consultation support candidates in general elections for one or more of these reasons.

We gave very little to incumbents; in most cases they didn't need it anyhow.

Arvonne Fraser

Local, State, or National

Many of the women's PACs and campaign funds have confronted the question of whether and when to support candidates for various levels of office. For the national organizations, the issue is how far down to reach; for the state and local organizations, the issue is whether to stick to the more local races or to become involved in congressional races.

As described earlier, NOW and NWPC enter races in consultation with their state or local units. These national organizations are most likely to be involved in targeted congressional, statewide, or state legislative races, and NWPC has also endorsed candidates in big-city mayoralty races. Races at lower levels would be the responsibility of the local units.

The Women's Campaign Fund has concentrated largely on congressional and statewide races. More recently, however, they have decided to get involved in selected state legislative, county, and local races where there is potential for broader impact, either because the candidate may move on to higher office or because the race has special significance.

The local and state groups have been much more likely to concentrate on local races—whether for municipal or county offices, state legislatures, judgeships, or statewide office. Some will also give to congressional candidates. In general, these groups have limited resources, and the size of their contributions makes their involvement more significant in a lower-budget race. Some, such as the Pennsylvania Women’s Campaign Fund, have chosen to concentrate on levels where they see the greatest need, as in the Pennsylvania state legislature where the number of women is low. Ernesta Ballard of the Pennsylvania group reported:

One of our selling points as a statewide PAC is that if you live in the eastern part of the state and there’s a good candidate in the western part, you need us to make that decision for you because you can’t know all that.

In Minnesota, the emphasis probably will be on electing women county commissioners. Arvonne Fraser of the Minnesota Women’s Campaign Fund noted:

The counties have so much federal money and they do all the social service work, so if we’re going to help poor women we need women county commissioners. And also, this is the way you build for the future—if someone can win there, she’s probably going to go on.

What Kind of Support?

Many/A Few? Little/A Lot?

In a world of unlimited resources, PACs could give as much to each candidate as was needed, within whatever legal limits existed. In the real world, these groups must make difficult choices between supporting a few candidates with relatively large sums of money and supporting as many candidates as possible with token contributions.

At one end of the spectrum is the philosophy espoused by the group of women in Texas who rallied around Ann Richards' race for State Treasurer in 1982. Statewide races in Texas have no spending limits, and the costs are measured in millions. Recognizing this, the group determined that it would back Richards with the kind of "serious" money required, and it raised that money in large chunks rather than in \$10 and \$25 bits. For a campaign of this nature, the energy required to identify and stroke relatively small donors is not commensurate with the return; big money must be in hand early for major media buys, and taking the time to fill out each questionnaire or meet with each screening committee to get \$500 from a group is seen as counterproductive. The women in Texas know what their brand of politics requires, and they have shaped their giving accordingly. They may not be able to list a long string of winning candidates they supported, but they do know that they were directly responsible for one critical victory.

NOW falls at the opposite end of the spectrum. Most of NOW's contributions come in small checks, many from women for whom \$10 is a real sacrifice. In turn, NOW chooses to spread its money widely but thinly, aiming for broad visibility and stressing the value of its endorsement as much as its financial contribution. NOW backing may mean additional press coverage or volunteer time from members, so that even a small dollar amount can signify a meaningful commitment. Thus, the emphasis seems to be on making NOW endorsement a valued asset in as many races as possible.

In between these two models lie the majority of the groups represented at the consultation. While their monetary contributions have ranged from a relatively low \$100 to a high of several thousand dollars, they are generally selective about which candidates they will support, choosing neither an entirely populist strategy of backing every acceptable candidate nor an entirely focused strategy. As the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund's Kim Brenner suggested, even a relatively small contribution can be a morale booster. "It might be only \$100 that we send, but if it helps get out a mailing, or helps them get off the ground, it's encouraging to them." However, like the Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund, many of the groups scrutinize carefully estimated campaign budgets, making precise judgments about the amount of their support that is needed in Race A as

It might be only \$100 that we send, but if it helps get out a mailing, or helps them get off the ground, it's encouraging to them.

Kim Brenner

compared with Race B or C. Thus, they choose to do some morale boosting while directing more tangible support where it is most needed.

Few of the groups can give amounts of the magnitude available from the Texas group or the Women's Political Committee (which has given as much as \$16,000 to one candidate). Still, all of them are sensitive to the relative impact of a contribution on both the group's own finances and the resources of a particular campaign.

Beyond Money

Most of the organizations at the consultation have as one key goal the provision of financial support for progressive candidates. However, most also provide other benefits to endorsed candidates. Among the types of assistance available are volunteers, introductions to other funding sources or campaign service providers, technical assistance, and access to in-kind contributions.

The Women's Campaign Fund has been especially active in directing additional support beyond cash to its chosen candidates. As their literature states:

We also get the most out of our investment by supplying our candidates with the services of some of the nation's best political technicians: pollsters, media advisors, organizers, and fund raisers.

And our Washington office has rapidly become a national resource for women office seekers, helping them locate other sources of funds, issue and policy research, endorsements, and campaign professionals.

While WCF has raised and distributed a substantial amount of money (\$270,000 in cash and in-kind contributions in 1982), it has also given its candidates access to perhaps five times as much in services and in contributions from other PACs and individuals. After the 1982 elections, two women who ran for Congress estimated that WCF had given them access to \$30–40,000 each by setting up appointments with other funders.

Several groups also provide, or hope to provide eventually, campaign services or links to campaign professionals. The Texas women included one public relations professional who made a substantial contribution (valued at almost \$100,000) of her own services and time to the Richards campaign. The Committee of 21 hopes to offer technical assistance and in-kind support, such as help in setting up campaign offices. The East Bay and Sacramento groups also anticipate being able to provide campaign services; Lilly Spitz of the Sacramento group reported that they hope to provide consulting services to "maximize the resources of women who can work with women." The Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund, like some of the others, includes among its standing committees a technical assistance unit.

Many of the groups back their endorsements with volunteers. NOW and NWPC have been particularly active in this regard, encouraging their

We're attempting to maximize resources of women who can work with women.

Lilly Spitz

members to staff phone banks and pitch in at campaign offices. The Michigan Women's Campaign Fund allows potential members to join by making a contribution of volunteer time rather than money. Several other groups encourage their members to aid targeted campaigns.

The Hawaii Women's Political Action League is largely devoted to marshalling its cadres in the service of endorsed candidates (and officeholders in off-years). This will serve not only the candidates but also the volunteers, as Patsy Mink observed. As a result of HWPAL's work,

. . . we'll have a lot of competent women who'll be able to hold themselves out not only as candidates, but as managers, treasurers, counselors, advisors, strategists—a pool of people who have been in an active role as we have never had in the history of politics.

Next Steps for Women's PACs

A one-day meeting was clearly inadequate for the groups who came together at CAWP's consultation. A pervasive sense of excitement and eagerness to expand the dialogue was evident from the moment the invitations went out until the last visitor boarded her train. Several general themes arose out of discussions, suggesting directions for future study and action.

Too Little, Too Late

Perhaps the most common reaction of the women to what they heard at the consultation was that they could—and should—be doing much more. “We’re thinking too small, as women usually do,” said Janyce Degan of the Committee of 21. “We have to raise our expectations; we’re asking too little,” added Marcia Herman of the Women’s Political Committee. Particularly after hearing Jane Hickie’s reports of the phenomenal efforts on behalf of Ann Richards in Texas, the women decided that they could pursue big money, even while maintaining relatively open channels like Hawaii’s for broad participation: combining, as the group joked, “the Hickie hardball with the Mink model.” “Everything we’ve done has been on too low a level, and I’m going home to try to inspire our board to raise the ante,” concluded Ernesta Ballard of the Pennsylvania Women’s Campaign Fund.

So many political decisions are made six months before the campaign starts—so the knowledge of who’s going to be running where is a really important piece of the whole puzzle if you want to get someone elected.

Janis Berman

Beyond Contributions

Most of the women at the meeting agreed that their groups’ goals could not be limited to supporting women candidates for election. Grooming women candidates is a goal that all the groups share.

A key objective which will grow in importance is “networking,” a point stressed repeatedly by Janis Berman of the Los Angeles Women’s Campaign Fund, who said, “So much of politics is smoke and mirrors, and knowledge is power. As soon as you find out something, you can report back to the group, and the group can get behind a woman who’s going someplace.”

The groups hope to extend their networks to include other women’s organizations or groups with related political objectives. As Kathleen Ridder of the Minnesota Women’s Campaign Fund remarked:

We have made the decision that we are a political action committee. We have numerous other women’s organizations in the state. One of our concerns at the moment is, “How do we integrate other women’s organizations into the process of getting women elected?”

Still another objective for many of the groups is demonstrating a “women’s vote”; this may be related to, but not the same as, electing more women. Pam Harwood of the Michigan Women’s Campaign Fund commented, “What we are really trying to do in Michigan is demonstrate a woman’s vote, and the only way we can do that is if we elect Democratic women and Republican women and anybody of any other persuasion.”

In addition, many of the groups want to maintain links to women already in office for several reasons. One reason is to support women officeholders, a responsibility Patsy Mink considers very important:

. . . women candidates who are successful in an election are sort of dropped off there in limbo—you look around and you’ve got nothing behind you. You’re dangling, and you’re a target for every right wing group that wants to take a shot at you.

Another reason to keep ties with elected women is to use them as resources. Kare Anderson of the East Bay Women’s PAC made this point most clearly:

We have to encourage the climate where it’s not just getting elected to office—it’s a question of what you do when you get there, and there are some responsibilities to being a woman elected official. . . . One of the questions our PACs might ask of incumbent candidates is, “What do they do to help elect other women?”

Working Together

The women’s PACs see real value in communicating or “networking” with one another in particular. In California, there is talk of a statewide federation of women’s PACs. Lilly Spitz of Sacramento envisions such a group:

. . . not a coalition where we all have to agree, because we don’t want to put that kind of burden on anybody, but a federation where we share information, where we know what races are hot, who’s viable, and where we can talk about the possibility of grooming candidates early.

Ideally, the Californians hope to see a women’s PAC in every county.

On the national level, several groups concerned with women’s political participation are already cooperating in various ways, meeting informally and working in coalition to get out the women’s vote. The groups at the consultation expressed interest in tapping into these networks and also continuing discussions with one another. “We need stories so when we send out letters or get people together we can say in our state ‘Here’s what they did in Texas,’ ” commented Minnesota’s Kathleen Ridder.

Participants at the meeting talked about working together in some very practical ways. For example, representatives of state and local PACs thought they might share the cost of producing brochures about their

What we are really trying to do in Michigan is demonstrate a woman’s vote, and the only way we can do that is if we elect Democratic women and Republican women and anybody of any other persuasion.

Pam Harwood

groups and producing invitations to their fundraisers by jointly hiring an artist to design the “artwork” and then filling in the specific text about their groups.

Mainstreaming

Women at the consultation expressed mixed feelings about the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund, not because they disagreed with its objectives but because they felt that the major parties and other campaign contributors should support female candidates as readily and fully as they do male candidates, and should not need a special fund to back women. Most women at the consultation reported that funders still treat women candidates as separate and *unequal* when they distribute campaign dollars. Changing this pattern—perhaps making themselves obsolete—is clearly an important objective for the groups.

Learning More

Several people at the consultation cited issues which needed more research or observation. Jane Hickie felt that “donor profiles” would be useful—descriptions of types of women likely to have and to give large sums, and ways to identify potentially significant donors. As she put it, “We need to know why women who will knock themselves out raising money for cancer don’t understand the connection between cancer and government.” Others felt they needed more data on election processes and regulations so that they could channel local giving without running afoul of legalities. Many saw the need for more information which would help them to spot “comers” early and groom them for office; they need guideposts for identifying women likely to succeed in campaigning for and serving in elective office. While many research topics were identified, Arvonne Fraser of Minnesota cautioned that “we shouldn’t waste our ‘hard’ (non-tax deductible) money on things that can be done with soft money.” The groups look to CAWP and others to help them with data to back up their efforts. *

Changing the System

While their energies are currently directed toward raising political funding in ever-increasing amounts, the PAC representatives voiced the hope that the spiraling costs of campaigns could be stopped. There was much talk of spending limitations and public financing of campaigns. Lilly Spitz of the Sacramento Women’s Campaign Fund summed it up:

One of the things we need to think about is political reform, because there’s no way women are going to be able to compete at the spending levels we’re talking about.

* CAWP will include regularly a women’s PAC update in *News & Notes*, its publication about organizations of and for women officials.

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* At the time of the consultation, the Alabama women were debating whether to form a PAC or a nonprofit educational organization to encourage women to become politically active. They have chosen the latter as a first step.

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The Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) is the only research, education, and public service center of its kind. Established in 1971 with a Ford Foundation grant to the Eagleton Institute of Politics, the Center designs and sponsors a variety of programs aimed at developing and disseminating knowledge about women's political participation. CAWP encourages women's full and effective involvement in all areas of public life.

As a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, CAWP programs reflect Eagleton's long-standing interest in political institutions, political practitioners, and public policy in the United States. CAWP is supported by: Rutgers; grants and contributions from foundations, government, corporations, and individuals; consulting fees; and income from the sale of publications.

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