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Women working to attain equality in politics

Teresa Olle
Wednesday, November 25, 2009

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While we certainly see a number of women running for statewide office in 2010, let's not throw a victory party for equal representation just yet.

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The California Legislature has only 33 women in its ranks - out of 120 legislators, that's less than 28 percent.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors has three women of 11, about 27 percent.

Unfortunately, these numbers have been relatively stagnant for years.

Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University ("The women of 2010," Nov. 23) makes compelling points about obstacles women face, the most salient being that women typically don't self-nominate; they need to be asked, and still they often believe they are not as qualified as male peers.

That's the main reason behind Emerge California and its mission to train Democratic women interested in running for office. By providing the necessary campaign nuts and bolts while demystifying the process, we give women what they need to run - and win, often at the local level.

These women fill the pipeline to higher office so that two decades from now proclamations about the Year of the Woman will be a distant memory, because women running for office will no longer be novel or newsworthy.

Teresa Olle of San Francisco is chair of Emerge California.

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Amazing, the amount of damage 28% is able to achieve...

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Bean counters. Is politics like a coed softball game where it matters how boys and girls there are? What a sophomoric and sexist way to view the world.

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It's a noble cause. We need more women in politics.

The GOP is not going to be the standard bearer in this fight. Most of the women who ARE in national elected offices are Democrats, including both California senators and the California representative who is Speaker of the House. Of the seventeen female senators (a record) fifteen are Democrats, and one of the two Republicans is the daughter of the former office holder. Of the 75 female representatives, only 15 are Republican (20%).

Sarah Palin has set the GOP effort back by decades.

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