

OUR DISTRIBUTION PARTNER

GOOD

TOPICS™ CONTRIBUTORS™ FUN STUFF™ PARTICIPATE™



Join Sign In

POPULAR: GOOD EDUCATION · NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM · WALKING IN L.A.

GOOD Blog

Search good.is

http://www.good.is/post/why-don-t-we-have-more-women-politicians/



HOW WOULD YOU DESIGN CHANGE?
Nau's \$10,000 Grant for Change | nominate. vote. learn. nau.com




FOR PEOPLE WHO GIVE A DAMN.
GET GOOD

Why Don't We Have More Women Politicians?

GOOD Blog > Andrew Belonsky on June 9, 2010 at 3:30 pm PDT

3

Mark it good

f Like 10



Women are more visible in the political realm than ever before: Sarah Palin, Nancy Pelosi, and Hillary Clinton have all made it to the top of their profession. To a casual observer, it may seem as though American women are breaking the proverbial glass ceiling. They're not.

Despite our status as the world's premier democracy, the United States ranks 74th in the world when it comes to female lawmakers, behind Venezuela (71), Austria (27), and Angola (10). Sure, other nations have quota systems to help women in the political ranks, but the United States, with all its ideals, shouldn't need such things.

Perhaps sexism's to blame, and family and child rearing is an obvious social barrier. Women remain the primary caregivers and can find it difficult to balance children with a career, not to mention a campaign staff. But familial obligations aside, plenty of women simply don't feel competent enough for public office. "A man and a woman can have the same exact resume, but a woman won't feel like she has the qualifications to run for office," says Andrea Steele, whose organization, Emerge America, trains Democratic women how to run for office. "This is an idea that we have to go out and debunk." Women focus on the qualifications they lack, and those prerequisites include an iron stomach.

GOOD BLOG

Daily postings from the editors of GOOD.


More in this series:

About the author:




Andrew Belonsky


TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT HEALTH.



EXPLORE >



imagination at work



MOST DISCUSSED

1. California Bans Plastic Bags
2. Kids' Meals Should Come With Healthy Toys
3. Where the Smart People At?
4. Startup Redesigns the Textbook
5. @GOOD Asks: Which Up-and-coming Musicians or Bands Do You Have Your Eye on?
6. Is Your Sunscreen Safe?
7. This Guy Wrote the World's "Most Beautiful Tweet"
8. What Rush Hour Could Look Like: The Glorious Bike Traffic of Utrecht, Holland
9. Farming the Desert

"A lot of women find the mechanics of politics daunting and distasteful," says Steele. "They say, 'I have to fundraise? They're going to probe into my personal life?' The whole arena is off-putting." Erin Vilarde from the nonpartisan White House Project also used the word "arena," telling me, "When politics become partisan, uncivil, it turns women off. It doesn't look like an arena where you can get something done." Other times women just don't feel wanted in political expeditions.

According to the [Center for American Women and Politics](#), women are more likely to go into office after being recruited. "Most women state representatives ran for their first elective office because of encouragement, which echoes the findings of recent studies of candidates and potential candidates," write the researchers in their report, "Poised to Run." San Francisco School Board member Rachel Norton told me that she ran because a friend suggested it, and New Mexico State Representative Karen Gianni said the same thing. Even after being asked, however, sometimes women want a helping hand.

There are dozens of organizations, networks, and PACs dedicated to training and electing female lawmakers. Republicans have groups like [the Wish List](#) and the National Federation of Republican Women, and Democrats have their own groups, such as EMILY's List and Steele's Emerge America. Women who enroll will learn the same standard skills men would learn: How to speak concisely, lessons on community organization, and tips on messaging—but from an entirely different perspective. "We look at it through a gendered lens," says Vilarde of the nonpartisan [White House Project](#). As Steele mentioned above, fundraising proves to be quite the foible for female politicians. In most circumstances, women are fantastic fundraisers; when it comes to asking for themselves, they buckle.

Education	
Environment	GOOD is working
Food	Microsoft to help distri
Health	GOOD content to the I
Media	audie
Politics	The GOOD website
Technology	GOOD Worldwide I
Transportation	

[Look](#)

[Picture Show](#)

[Q&A](#)

[Video](#)

COMMUNITY

[Community Board](#)

[Member directory](#)

SOCIAL

[Twitter](#)

[Flickr](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[StumbleUpon](#)

[Foursquare](#)

[Buzz](#)

MAGAZINE

GOOD

[Current issue](#)

[What is GOOD?](#)

[Back issues](#)

[Make GOOD better](#)

[Get the magazine](#)

[Renew/Service](#)



Buzz

