

TO: NOW National Board

FROM: Linda Berg, Political Director and Bonnie Grabenhofer, Vice President

Re: Political Report

Date: February 29, 2016

### **Brief Election Analysis**

2016 is perhaps the most pivotal election year in our lifetimes. Our challenge is immense. Not only do we need to elect the first woman president in history, but we must work to elect a congress that will work with her and not try to thwart everything she tries to accomplish. Once again, electing a majority Democratic Senate is crucial. Even before Antonin Scalia died it was apparent that there would be a number of Supreme Court Justice vacancies. Not only does the existence of Obamacare, Roe v. Wade, and all practical access to abortion and birth control lie in the balance, but there are and will be challenges to every feminist issue for which we have fought that will reach the Supreme Court in the next few years. As we have been reminded by current events, the President nominates, but the Senate advises and consents on judicial nominations. There are three possible scenarios, only one of which is acceptable. The first is that one of the current Republican candidates for president who are all right wing zealots gets elected. If that happens the best we can hope for is that a Democratic Senate can limit the damage and reject the most egregious nominees. With a Republican Senate we have no hope of saving the Supreme Court. The second scenario is that a Democrat (hopefully Hillary) is elected president, but that the Senate remains in Republican hands so that the only nominees that could be confirmed will be those that betray our values. After seeing President Obama dangle the name of anti-choice Gov. Sandoval as a possible Supreme Court nominee, we can't automatically assume that the next president would not compromise our values in order to get a confirmation. Third, and the best possible solution, is a Democratic President and a Democratic Senate. This is our only chance to move our issues forward judicially.

Currently there are 44 Democrats, 54 Republicans and two independents (who currently caucus with the Democrats). Assuming that Hillary wins and Bernie returns to his seat, we need 6 pickup Senate seats. Fortunately, this year Republicans have the most seats on the line. The toss-up seats in 2016 include Rubio's open seat in Florida, Mark Kirk's in Illinois, Harry Reid's in Nevada, Kelly Ayotte in New Hampshire and Ron Johnson's in Wisconsin. There are feminist candidates such as Tammy Duckworth in Illinois and Russ Feingold in Wisconsin running in each of those seats and the only Democratic seat at risk is Reid's. Other vulnerable Republican Senators include Richard Burr of NC, who we expect will face feminist former NC ACLU director, Deborah Ross; Pat Toomey of PA who, after the primary, will face one of two feminist candidates, and Rob Portman of OH. And, if it is a wave election year – like if Trump becomes the Republican candidate and is soundly rejected by the voting population – other Democrats

who could ride that wave to victory would be Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, challenging John McCain in AZ, and Jason Kander who is challenging Roy Blunt in Missouri. So, there are many paths leading to a possible Democratic regaining of the Senate.

Much of our focus has been on the presidential race and working to get out the vote in the early primary/caucus states through our Ms. President NOW project. (You will receive a separate board report on those activities.) For those of us who have dreamed of a woman president, this last month was nerve wracking. However, after the results of the Iowa and Nevada caucuses plus Hillary's seven-state win on Super Tuesday we believe that Clinton has answered the doubters about her electoral viability, and she is strongly positioned for the general. We look forward to the Democratic Party convention in July when Clinton makes history by becoming the nominee of the Democratic Party.

### **NOW PAC Endorsements**

It is early in the cycle, but we have begun to endorse candidates. Thus far for Senate NOW PAC has endorsed Kamala Harris, who is looking to take Barbara Boxer's seat ; Pam Keith who is running an uphill battle in the primary for the Rubio seat; Jason Kander who is challenging Roy Blunt in Missouri; Brian Schatz who should retain his Senate seat from Hawaii; Donna Edwards who is fighting to win her primary to take Barbara Mikluski's seat in MD; and Patty Murray who should retain her seat from Washington.

In addition, we have endorsed 14 fabulous candidates for the House. Please see the [www.nowpac.org](http://www.nowpac.org) for the evolving list. The current lineup in the House is 188 Democrats and 246 Republicans, making it a much more daunting challenge to regain the majority. Still, if we can elect some of the many strong feminists who are running for a house seat, it will make a huge impact on helping to stop the destructive right-wing agenda that the House is so set on advancing.

We urge board members to check in with the state organizations in your regions and urge them to move on endorsement recommendations as soon as possible. In states where there is no NOW leadership, the PAC can act to endorse feminist candidates without a local recommendation. However, it is our practice to hold off on making endorsements within states where there is an active NOW state organization. Please contact Linda Berg at [elections@now.org](mailto:elections@now.org) for more information or to submit endorsement recommendations.