

To: NOW Board of Directors

From: Linda Berg and Bonnie Grabenhofer

Date: June 6, 2016

## Political Report

### Political Landscape

Make sure that you join Bonnie Grabenhofer, Ellie Smeal, Rep. Cheri Bustos and Linda Berg in a far ranging discussion on Friday morning at the conference about how we can take back the Senate and House so that we protect the judiciary and move forward on women's rights issues. This board report will be a condensed version of what will be a fascinating big picture feminist political analysis.

#### *The Senate*

Recent polling is very encouraging for those who want to make sure that Senator McConnell no longer leads the Senate. Although NOW is non-partisan we have come to the conclusion that only if the Democrats have a majority in Congress can we have any hope of reversing right wing extremist legislation and actually moving forward on our issues. And regaining the majority in the Senate is absolutely crucial to confirming Supreme Court justices who will protect our rights. Democrats need to win four (or five seats if the Republicans take the presidency) to take back the Senate. What is so exciting is that there is an arguable chance that Democrats will be able to take nine seats.

Of the 34 Senate seats up for election, Republicans have 24 seats to defend and Democrats only have 10. Pundits agree that eight out of the top ten Senate races most likely to change parties are held by Republicans and Democrats are only really vulnerable to losing the Harry Reid seat in Nevada. Senator Harry Reid is retiring leaving an open seat in which Catherine Cortez Masto (D), a former state attorney general, and Rep. Joe Heck (R) are leading contenders.

The only state that has a Senate seat in play that hasn't had its primary yet is **Florida**. Both parties have contested primaries but depending on who wins the primary, at worst this state is a toss-up. In **Ohio**, the incumbent, Senator Rob Portman, is trailing the Democratic candidate, former Governor **Ted Strickland**, and this is considered one of the best pick up opportunities. In this case although Strickland is so much better on our issues than Portman, he is not endorsable because of questionable positions he has taken on reproductive justice in the past. In Pennsylvania, NOW PAC endorsed candidate **Katie McGinty** is polling only slightly behind Senator Pat Toomey, but now that a divisive primary is over expect McGinty's poll numbers to improve.

In Arizona, NOW PAC endorsed candidate Representative **Ann Kirkpatrick** has a big challenge as she probably will face Senator John McCain in the general. However, McCain has a primary challenge on his right and his action recently endorsing Trump shows that he thinks he's vulnerable. NOW PAC endorsed

Representative **Tammy Duckworth** is challenging Senator Mark Kirk in Illinois in a race that is considered to be a toss-up by some pundits and a leaning Democratic race by others. This is considered to be one of the two most likely seats to change parties and Nate Silver rates Duckworth's chances at 77%. Another toss-up Senate seat is in New Hampshire, where NOW PAC endorsed **Governor Maggie Hassan** is taking on the incumbent Senator, Kelly Ayotte. Hassan is a popular governor, but so far Ayotte is doing better than Trump in that state in polling. However, if Clinton wins New Hampshire, chances are good that she will bring Governor Hassan with her. Some say that the purest toss-up race in the country is in Wisconsin where NOW PAC endorsed former Senator **Russ Feingold** is challenging Republican Senator Ron Johnson to retake his seat. This one will go down to the wire, but Nate Silver is giving Feingold an 85% chance of winning. Another state where Democrats have a real shot at winning, if Hillary carries the state in the general, is North Carolina where ACLU attorney **Deborah Ross** is challenging the unpopular Republican Senator Richard Burr.

### ***The House***

Dare we hope that we might again see Speaker Nancy Pelosi gaveling the House into order? Pelosi thinks so, "If the election were held today we would win." Other Democrats are also beginning to say it out loud. Representative Cheri Bustos put it best when she said "Donald Trump has been our best recruiting tool." Despite the optimism, picking up 30 seats will be tough. Most believe that to change the majority Clinton must win in a landslide and many House candidates will have to separate themselves from Trump. NOW PAC is very busy endorsing scores of wonderful feminists for Congress, and we will see more than a few of them in congress next year. Just a few of the notable feminist women candidates are **Emily Cain** (ME), **Carol Shea-Porter** (NH), **Susannah Randolph** (FL) **Zephyr Teachout** (NY), **Colleen Deaon** (NY), **Lucy Flores** (NV), and **Pramila Jayapal** (WA).

### **The Conference**

The NOW PAC is presenting two workshops at this year's conference. The first, mentioned earlier, will examine the political landscape from a feminist perspective and the second will focus on how we engage a new generation of political leaders. The PAC Brown Bag lunch is going to be fabulous and center on Hillary Clinton's historic presidential race. This session will feature, among others, key staffers from the Hillary campaign to give us insight into how we ensure a victory in November. On Saturday night, please join us as we celebrate NOW activism in the MsPresidentNOW campaign to elect Hillary in the NOW PAC poster session and silent auction reception. Come share political primary war stories and be ready to bid and help fund our political efforts. We are excited that this year's auction will feature many feminist historical items, jewelry made by talented NOW activists, and fabulous baskets and other items contributed by NOW state organizations.