

Political Report  
To: NOW Board of Directors  
From: Linda Berg  
Date: October 2017

## **Political Analysis**

### *The Senate*

We are just beginning to see how the 2018 elections may play out. Although the immediate aftermath of Trump's election caused a wave of women to throw their hats in the political ring, the cold hard truth is that the Republican gerrymandering and redistricting limits our ability to orchestrate the massive political shift that a failed presidency usually engenders. It was always going to be a difficult task to defend our seats in the Senate and try to add to our numbers. We just need two seats to shift if we retain all of our incumbents. That will be no easy task. Although NOW PAC is non-partisan there is no question that for women's rights to advance we need Democrats holding a majority. Therefore, this analysis will consider Democrats who are not always feminist supporters but whose election is crucial to our long term goals. In the 34 Senate seats up for election Democrats are defending 25 seats. There are only 4 toss up seats in the nation now; two held by Democrats, Claire McCaskill (MO) and Joe Donnelly (IN), and two held by Republicans Dean Heller (NV) and Jeff Flake (AZ). There are terrific feminists running in both Arizona (Kyrsten Sinema) and Nevada (Jackie Rosen). If Democrats took all four toss up seats and kept all incumbents we would have the majority.

Unfortunately however there are NOW PAC endorsed feminist Senators running for reelection in states that Trump carried like: Tammy Baldwin (WI) Sherrod Brown (OH), Claire McCaskill (MO), and Debbie Stabenow (MI). We also cannot take for granted that Maria Cantwell (WA), Dianne Feinstein (CA), Kirsten Gillibrand (NY), Mazie Hirono (HI), Amy Klobachar (MN) and Elizabeth Warren (MA) will not be targeted by dark money PACs and right wing Republicans. Not to mention the many other Democrats who are with us on many issues but not on all like Heidi Heitkamp (ND) Bob Casey (PA) and Joe Manchin (WV) whose states went for Trump in 2016.

### *The House*

Currently there are 241 Republicans and 194 Democrats (4 vacancies) serving in the House. With redistricting Republicans have a lock on 186 seats and Democrats on 175. There are 20 seats that lean Democratic or are toss-up and 54 seats that lean Republican or are toss-up. It is extremely unlikely but not impossible that Democrats can pick up the 24 seats they need. Two Democratic representatives that have been NOW PAC endorsed are in the toss-up or slightly leaning Democratic category – Carol Shea Porter (NH) and Ami Bera (CA). We will be watching them and keeping our eyes out for feminist challengers who can take advantage of the political climate. It is an interesting time since usually the party in power of the Presidency loses seats in the midterm and certainly Trump has strong unfavorables. However all that could get countered by the fundamental seat alignments which the Republicans so diligently engineered.

There has been a lot of concern that the Democratic Congressional campaign committee may support anti-choice candidates. There is no evidence of that at this point, mainly because the party does not usually get involved for candidates in the pre-primary stage and filing deadlines

have not yet occurred for 2018. According to Politico by early April the DCCC had already met with 255 potential candidates in 64 districts and that the emerging ideal candidate would be veterans with business experience, women, first time candidates and people with small children. Issues do not seem to be prioritized. We know what districts Democrats are targeting and which offer some hope (some slim) of takeover. Because of the concern voiced publicly by Toni and others that the Democrats may weigh in for anti-women's rights candidates, Lois Frankel has invited us and the Feminist Majority to a meeting with her and Rep. Ben Lujan who is chair of the DCCC at the end of the month. Lois, a former NOW chapter president and part of the Democratic Party leadership team should be a strong ally for us on this issue.

### *Governors and the 2017 Virginia Election*

There are currently 2 pro-choice women governors, Kate Brown (OR) and Gina Raimondo (RI). Five feminist women are running for governor in 2018: Stacey Abrams (GA), Gwen Graham (FL), Cary Kennedy (CO), Michelle Lujan Grisham (NM) and Gretchen Whitmer (MI). It is vital that NOW members in these states get involved in these important races. Redistricting will occur in the next gubernatorial term in most states. The importance of having strong feminist women as governors during that process cannot be overemphasized.

The elections in Virginia in 2017 will be seen as a bellwether for the nation, the first indication as to how the electorate will react to the Trump candidacy and Republican Congress. Among Virginia NOW PAC's endorsed candidates are Ralph Northam for Governor and Mark Herring for Attorney General. Both men have been strong defenders of women's rights. We are also so excited that Prince William County NOW President Hala Ayala won her primary. She faces a tough election and NOW will be organizing canvassing caravans and phone banking nights for her.

### **NOW PAC**

The new PAC, appointed at this board meeting, will need to quickly organize and prioritize our 2018 election strategy. We have a massive challenge ahead and must decide where to concentrate our resources and activists.

We had exceptional results from our conference fundraising which will net the PAC more than \$12,000 this year. However, for the second year in a row, the direct mail fundraising was far from a success. It will be important that the new PAC address this problem since we have so much work to do before the 2018 election.

As NOW leaders from all over the country you have the ability to identify emerging feminist candidates and help them navigate the NOW endorsement process. First time women candidates may be crucial to our taking back Congress and we would like to be involved at the earliest possible time. Many times, if we reach these candidates early in the process we can help them formulate strong feminist positions.