

Looking for a few good women



Diane Mack

GUEST VIEWPOINT

“What do you think Washington would be like if there were more women in the Senate?” a CBS News interviewer asked several women senators this past summer.

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W. Va.) replied that more things would get done because the women are doers and want to see accomplishments.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) said that there would be less backstabbing and hateful language, noting, “We don’t have much trust right now among the members of Congress but we have it with the women senators.”

Maribel Balbin, president of the League of Women Voters of Miami Dade County, wrote in the May 6 Mi-

ami Herald, “There’s growing evidence that legislative bodies perform better when more women join the ranks. Aside from the type of legislation that both conservative and liberal women tend to agree on, they create an environment of collaboration even on the most disagreeable of policy matters.”

Developing the kind of working relationships that the women senators have built, fostering camaraderie, forming bipartisan coalitions to sponsor legislation, these do not make the headlines. Dysfunction, power politics, and partisan stand-offs are what we read and hear about constantly. Hence we find one of the great difficulties in persuading women to consider elected office as an effort worthy of their time, their skills and their vast energies.

What woman in her right mind would choose public service in Pensacola city government, for instance, over a leadership role in IMPACT 100, Gulf Coast Kid’s House, or ARC-Gateway where she can actually do

good and see the results of her work? That has been the politely veiled reaction of many women in this community as we at the Institute for Women in Politics have advocated for the necessity of electing more women to office.

Here is our answer.

The political system will not change, will not improve, until there are enough women of great intelligence, character, and integrity to form that critical mass that is required in order to change it. A voting minority of women can work to move us along, but they remain in a precarious position. Recall several years ago when Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) were attacked as “heretics” during their re-election campaigns for daring to work with members of the opposite party.

So we and other nonpartisan organizations like ours throughout the country are looking for, to borrow a phrase from our “First to Fight” Marines (Oorah!), a few good women,

women of courage and fortitude and fierce determination, to set aside personal feelings about the political system and run for office and help us break past the 25 percent and lower representation in which women have been stuck for more than two decades.

We are also looking for many good women (and men) to support our mission through membership. On Oct. 13, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. the Institute’s membership committee will host a membership social. Pensacola News Journal Publisher Lisa Reese and Executive Editor Lisa Nellessen-Lara will be our guests of honor. The event is open to members and invited guests. If you are interested in learning more about membership and would like an invitation to the event, contact us at contact@iwfflorida.org.

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