

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Dana Singiser, Senior Advisor for the Women's Vote
DATE: August 13, 2008
RE: Does McCain have a Woman Problem?

In early June, the McCain campaign bragged about its intense effort to win over women voters.¹ There's a good reason why.

Women have out-voted men in every election since 1964. In just the past two presidential election cycles, women have made up a growing majority of the electorate, making up 52% of the vote in 2000 (69.2 million voters), and 54% in 2004 (75.6 million voters). This percentage was dwarfed in the 2008 Democratic primaries with the women's vote hitting at least 59% in 14 states.² The high water mark was in Georgia where a whopping 63% of the voters were women. During the Democratic National Convention next week we will mark Women's Equality Day, the anniversary of women's suffrage in the United States. Eighty eight years after the right of American women to vote was written into our Constitution, the women's vote will make the difference in this election.

Despite his campaign's outreach efforts, McCain's attempt to bridge the gender gap has fallen flat. He fares worse among women than any presidential candidate since Bob Dole in 1996. In the August 13 Pew Poll, Obama holds a 51-38 lead among women over McCain. In the August TK Time Magazine poll, Obama leads 49-39. McCain's share of the women's vote is considerably below the 48% George W. Bush won in 2004 or the 43% he earned in 2000. Indeed, if McCain dips even a little, he is at risk of falling below Bob Dole's 38% share of women's vote in 1996, which is the lowest share of any major part candidate in the last 36 years. More than half the female electorate (53%) holds mostly positive views of Obama, while only 37% feel mostly favorable toward McCain.

Ultimately, the reason McCain cannot close the gender gap is twofold:

- 1) Women voters don't trust McCain because of his extreme positions on the key issues they care about. Obama leads McCain by ten points (42% vs. 32%) when it comes to which candidate women trust more.³
- 2) Women want change from the last 8 years of neglect for America's middle class families and women's economic security.

Given the remarkable contrasts between the candidates on the issues women care about, there is an even greater opportunity for Senator Obama's support among women to grow. Senator Barack

¹ The Washington Post reported: "...his most prominent female supporter, former Hewlett-Packard chief executive Carly Fiorina, will embark on a female-focused speaking tour in Ohio and Pennsylvania..." [[Washington Post](#), 6/12/08]; "As part of their outreach to women McCain's aides have started booking him on shows such as 'The View' and 'Ellen'..." [[Washington Post](#), 6/12/08]

² According to CNN exit polls, 62% of the voters were women in Maryland, Arizona, 61% in South Carolina, and 59% or 60% in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada (a caucus), Ohio, Tennessee.

³ "New Poll Reveals Where Women Voters Stand Post-Hillary," Lifetime Poll, 08/05/2008 (<http://www.mylifetime.com/community/my-lifetime-commitment/ewc/new-poll-reveals-where-women-voters-stand-post-hillary>)

Obama offers clear support for the challenges facing women and families. As president, he will expand opportunities for working women raising families and help make life affordable for stay-at-home moms. He will stand up for a woman's right to choose and for affordable birth control. He will prioritize economic security for all women by ensuring that women receive equal pay for equal work and protecting Social Security. With the growth of the women's vote, momentum is on Senator Obama's side.

Below is a brief look at some of these issues that matter to women voters and why they increasingly believe that John McCain is not on their side:

Equal Pay: In the wake of the Supreme Court's Ledbetter decision, 77% of women believe the next President should address the issue of providing women with the legal protections they need to get equal pay.⁴

- ✓ McCain has opposed legislation to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex.⁵ In addition, McCain opposed legislation to overturn the Ledbetter decision.⁶
- ✓ Obama believes that women receiving 77 cents for every dollar a man earns is unacceptable, and has supported equal pay laws in the Illinois State Senate and the U.S. Senate, including federal legislation to ensure that women facing the same pay discrimination that Lilly Ledbetter faced can be made whole.

McCain in his own words: On why women are underpaid: "They need the education and training, particularly since more and more women are heads of their households, as much or more than anybody else."⁷ In fact, 35% more women graduate from four-year colleges than men.⁸

In rationalizing his opposition to an equal pay law: "It opens us up to lawsuits."⁹ "I want to find clones of Alito and Roberts," McCain said, the very justices that rejected Lilly Ledbetter's pay discrimination claim.¹⁰ And just this weekend, during the Saddleback Presidential Candidates Forum, he was asked which existing Supreme Court Justices he would not have nominated to the court. Among the justices named by McCain was Ruth Bader Ginsburg – the justice who wrote the dissent siding with Lilly Ledbetter and working women who might suffer pay discrimination.¹¹

Health Care Costs: Only 27% of women are very confident that they will be able to afford health care for themselves and their families. Health care premiums have doubled in the last seven years and women, who are often in charge of the family checkbook, have felt the squeeze of skyrocketing health care costs. Because women are more likely to be in minimum wage or part time jobs, or be dependent on a spouse's health care plan which can be lost in divorce, there is a disproportionate number of women who are uninsured or in danger of losing their coverage. There are 21.5 million

⁴ "What Women Want in 2008," Hart Research Associates for the National Women's Law Center.

(<http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=3323§ion=infocenter>)

⁵ Senate Vote #203, 7/17/00

⁶ Associated Press, 4/24/08

⁷ Ibid

⁸ National Bureau of Economic Research: <http://www.nber.org/digest/jan07/w12139.html>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Baltimore Sun via The Swamp, 1/28/08

¹¹ Saddleback Presidential Candidates Forum, CNN, 8/16/08

uninsured women in this country, and women are more likely than men to delay or not get medical care because of high costs.

- ✓ McCain's health care plan "isn't expected to make a major dent in the number of uninsured Americans,"¹² and he would – for the first time in our nation's history – tax health care benefits.¹³
- ✓ Obama believes that every American should have access to quality health care, and that drug and insurance companies should pay their fair share. Barack Obama is committed to signing universal health legislation by the end of his first term in office that ensures all Americans – including the 21.5 uninsured women – have high-quality, affordable health care coverage. His plan will also improve health care quality for the 25 million "underinsured" Americans – those whose nominal health coverage does not insure them against catastrophic health costs and who are nearly as likely to go without medical care as the uninsured. Expanding coverage for uninsured and underinsured is particularly important for women, who are disproportionately represented. In total, 45 percent of women in 2007 were uninsured or underinsured, compared to 40 percent of men. Woman-owned small businesses grow at twice the rate of all businesses, and Barack Obama will create a Small Business Health Tax Credit to provide small businesses with a refundable tax credit of up to 50 percent on premiums they pay on behalf of their employees. And he certainly believes that the current 3 million children without health care should be covered.

McCain in his own words: McCain said President Bush's veto of legislation to expand SCHIP, a program designed to ensure that low-income children have quality health care, was the "right call."¹⁴

Women's Reproductive Rights: 62% of women believe that *Roe v. Wade* established a constitutional right. In fact, 14% more of independent women support Barack Obama after hearing about McCain and Obama's positions on choice, and McCain's support among Republican pro-choice women drops by 9% after hearing these positions.¹⁵

- ✓ McCain is pro-life, and has bragged about consistently receiving a zero rating from NARAL throughout his 25-year voting record.¹⁶
- ✓ Obama strongly supports a woman's right to choose as established in *Roe v. Wade*, and has received a 100% rating and the endorsements of NARAL and Planned Parenthood.

McCain in his own words: "I have a 25-year pro-life record in the Congress, in the Senate. And as president of the United States, I will be a pro-life president. And this presidency will have pro-life policies. That's my commitment. That's my commitment to you."¹⁷

Access to Contraception and other Family Planning Services: 61% of women strongly support putting more emphasis on reducing unintended pregnancies, including access to birth control and other family planning services¹⁸.

¹² *Wall Street Journal*, 4/30/08

¹³ Associated Press, 4/29/08; Congressional Quarterly HealthBeat, 6/25/08

¹⁴ [CNN.com](http://www.cnn.com), 10/3/07

¹⁵ AP 4/24/08

¹⁶ National Review Online, 3/5/07

¹⁷ Saddleback Presidential Candidates Forum, CNN, 8/16/08

¹⁸ "What Women Want in 2008," Hart Research Associates for the National Women's Law Center.

(<http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=3323§ion=infocenter>)

- ✓ McCain has repeatedly voted against funding for family planning, accessibility of contraceptives for women, and ensuring that sex education is scientifically accurate.¹⁹
- ✓ Obama believes that women should have access to affordable family planning and believes that our children should have access to comprehensive age-appropriate sex education.

McCain in his own words: Following his women’s ambassador Carly Fiorina discussing whether insurance companies should cover Viagra but not birth control, McCain ducked a question about whether he supports health insurance to cover birth control: “The normally voluble Senator John McCain found himself at a loss for words Wednesday when he was asked aboard his campaign bus on its way to Portsmouth, Ohio, whether he thought it was fair that some health insurance companies covered Viagra but not birth control. ‘I don’t usually duck an issue,’ he said, ‘but I’ll try to get back to you.’”²⁰ He never did.

Economic /Retirement Security: 75% of women believe there is a long way to go for their families to have the economic security to afford their current needs and plan for retirement.

- ✓ McCain supports extending the Bush tax cuts for the super-rich and said he supports Bush’s plan for privatizing Social Security.²¹
- ✓ Obama believes that our nation’s seniors deserve security in retirement. In 2006, 45 million working women – sixty-one percent of women in the workforce – lacked any employer sponsored retirement plan. As a result, the typical female worker near retirement has only half the retirement savings of her male counterpart. Obama plans to give a \$1000 tax credit for working families, which would benefit 150 million workers. Obama opposes the privatization of Social Security and would eliminate all income tax for our seniors earning less than \$50,000 a year. His Automatic Workplace Pension program will offer working women left out of the retirement savings system an easy, automatic and productive way to build wealth for retirement.

McCain in his own words: McCain himself admits to not understanding the economy: “The issue of economics is not something I’ve understood as well as I should.”²² As far as Social Security is concerned, McCain plans to follow President Bush’s lead on privatization: “As part of Social Security reform, I believe that private savings accounts are a part of it -- along the lines that President Bush proposed.” In fact, McCain told the Wall Street Journal, “I’m totally in favor of personal savings accounts. . . I campaigned in support of President Bush’s proposal and I campaigned with him. . .”²³ To make matters worse, McCain’s campaign says he would consider raising the retirement age and reducing cost of living adjustments as options for reducing the growth in benefits expected over the coming decades.²⁴

¹⁹ House Vote #147, 6/18/85; Senate Vote #119, 4/28/88; Senate Vote #254, 7/25/88; Senate Vote #252, 9/25/90; Senate Vote #298, 10/19/90; Senate Vote #246, 11/7/91; Senate Vote #254, 10/1/92; Senate Vote #28, 2/8/94; Senate Vote #561, 11/1/95; Senate Vote #231, 7/23/96; Senate Vote #105, 4/28/98; Senate Vote #169, 6/30/00; Senate Vote #45, 3/11/03; Senate Vote #180, 5/15/03; Senate Vote #267, 7/9/03; Senate Vote #430, 10/30/03; Senate Vote #75, 3/17/05; Senate Vote #83, 4/5/05; Senate Vote #214, 7/25/06; [NARAL Fact Sheet](#), 8/17/09

²⁰ New York Times, 7/9/08

²¹ Fox News Sunday, 2/3/08; [Wall Street Journal](#), 3/3/08

²² [Boston Globe](#), 12/18/07

²³ [Wall Street Journal](#), 3/3/08

²⁴ Ibid