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Building a Bench to Lead the Way A study on the effectiveness of political organizations and political parties in electing women to local office on Long Island

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Building a Bench to Lead the Way

A study on the effectiveness of political organizations and political parties in electing women to local office on Long Island

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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Abstract

Since 2016, there has been a growing movement to increase the number of women in government leadership roles. Political organizations have developed with the interest of recruiting and training more women to take these positions in public service. However, despite the growing number of organizations working to engage women in public office, their efforts fall short when organizing women for local public office. This study will review the effectiveness of political organizations and parties in successfully supporting and training women to run for local office.

Ultimately, this study has revealed that of the political organizations that are active in New York politics, specifically the ones that are focused on getting women elected, none of them engage or support women running for local office in Long Island.

Executive Summary

Over the past few years, political organizations and parties have exerted an extensive amount of resources to recruit, train and elect women to run for various offices. These new aggressive efforts have proven successful in the 2018 elections for Congress and Senate. Democrats took the house with the most significant number of women to serve and have launched many candidates to the national stage. Individuals like Stacey Abrams, Beto O'Rourke, and Andrew Gillum have become household names despite their unsuccessful races. O'Rourke is a contender for the 2020 presidential election, and Abrams has openly stated that she will consider the opportunity. Political organizations that formed to help train women to run played a vital role in the 2018 elections. They helped fundraise, provided volunteers, or help with mailers. As an example, EMILY'S List spent over five million dollars in the 2018 election cycle (Opensecrets.com 2019).

Since 2016, Long Island has received much political attention. President Trump has talked about Long Island in the context of MS-13 and using the region to propel his agenda against immigration. This national political attention has brought some renewed political resources to the region. New York City has consistently been the place where all candidates come to fundraise. However, Long Island has grown in importance for both political parties in terms of candidate recruitment and fundraising.

In 2017, Nassau County had a successful year in electing women to local offices. Nassau elected a woman to be the first Democratic town supervisor and the first woman to serve as County Executive. These local offices serve in overall capacity, representing all the residents in their respective jurisdictions. These successful elections received attention from all over the state. Precisely, because of who was running and why. The indication in these races meant that

the Island was changing politically and in how they wanted the region to respond to national attention. In 2018, Long Island delivered the State Senate to the state Democratic party, catapulting the Nassau County chairman to become the state's Democratic party leader. The Republican state party chair was asked to step down after these significant losses.

The importance of local offices allows both political parties and organizations to test out their models for electing candidates, expressly, women to run for office. Local public servants are also school board trustees, village trustees, council members, and library board trustees. Long Island has a plethora of public offices that could serve as the drawing board for political training and areas of recruitment. Local offices allow a candidate to build their base of voters and donors at a level that is more directly accessible. Local municipalities also have a more direct effect on voters when legislation is passed from all governments. The problem, however, is that society is just now focusing on making sure that the number of women elected reflects the percentage of women living in the country, state, and county. In some areas on Long Island, library board trustees are appointed, school board candidates go unopposed, and there is no driven effort to make sure that women are involved in these races. A woman serving at this level of government is not as daunting as if they decided to run for Congress or State Assembly.

One of the significant differences in local government and federal or state government is the amount of money that political parties and organizations invest in them. Local races are often low turnout and not always on a voter's radar. The media provides little coverage of local officials unless the official garners attention through scandal or commenting on a particularly heated topic. They also do not produce the financial incentive that would help a political party or organization be sustainable long term and quickly. Political organizations tend to build their profile on the success of national and state races. These races grow not only the profile of these

organizations but also their financial profile. If a political organization can claim they were part of a successful candidate's campaign, its national profile rises, along with their membership and donations or contributions.

I conducted interviews with female elected officials in various levels of local government to study their races. I analyzed how these women first decided to run for office; who encouraged them, what were the reasons for deciding to run officially? I asked what trainings they went to, how involved in politics were they before running. These questions would provide background information about the candidate and help decipher their interactions with politics, political parties, organizations on a local level versus national.

I wanted to record from a firsthand perspective the level of involvement of political parties and political organizations in these local campaigns. My interviews revealed that of the political organizations that are active in New York politics, specifically the ones that are focused on getting women elected, none of them engage or support women running for local office. They will provide training that is general and cover most topics in a broad-brush manner for women candidates. However, after that training, if a woman is running for school board or village trustee, those organizations are not able to provide any support. They end up turning candidates away from their future programs that are because they do not provide campaign assistance in any form.

My recommendation is to increase investment in local politics and races. If political organizations invest in more female candidate recruitment in smaller races, they build a list of recruits and have built and invested in their success. This action will expand an organization's ability to get more potential female candidates to join their membership and training. The organization can also build their reputation from the ground up and ensure that when these

candidates run for higher office, they have not only the necessary tools but the practice, loyalty, and support from an organization that invested in them early on in their career. The financial return and growth will be more fruitful.

Introduction

The trajectory of the American political landscape has changed vastly since the Presidential elections in November of 2016. Since the election of Donald Trump, there was an eruption of organizations looking to build the next generation of political leaders. These new organizations target the groups that were deemed unworthy of positive mention at Donald Trump's campaign rally. These groups were the minority; Hispanics, African Americans, and immigrants. Women became more involved after Trump's election because there was a significant threat to issues women care most about, health and education.

Since hearing Trump's locker room talk of women allowing themselves to be grabbed by anyone who seemingly had some form of authority; women have become energized and mobilized. The result of said "locker room talk" has resulted in the catapulting of women's rights issues and the total demand for more women to run for office. The next election that became the focus of achieving the goal of electing more women was the congressional election in November 2018. This would be the year that men and women would prove their disapproval of Trump, his allies and policies. The more women that were elected, the larger the rebuke of Trump and indirectly, republican backed policies.

November 2018 was an astonishing year. More women are serving in one of the most influential houses in American government. The 116th Congress is a class full of firsts. The first African American women to represent Connecticut and Massachusetts and the first Muslim Americans elected to Congress. The first native Americans and Native American women. The youngest African American and Latina elected to serve. The 116th Congress is the youngest, and most educated class Americans have ever elected in United States history. Some of these newly

elected officials were poised and expected to run, and some were complete surprises — none failing to comprehend their most vital task ahead of them representing the people of our nation.

How did they get there? Were these individuals groomed for this role in federal public office? Who decided they should be the candidate? Where did they come from? What was their political experience and training?

It is my experience in politics, that although some races seem as though the candidate is a surprise choice, many are not. Many candidates have a history in some capacity, of community engagement. Either they were members of organizations or even held positions, or they were elected already and had the name recognition to help carry the weight of fundraising and door-knocking. I have had the privilege of working in government and politics for six years now and almost all those years; I have worked for women either as their campaign field director, campaign manager, legislative aide, or chief of staff. I have also served on the board of an organization dedicated to helping Democratic women run for local office positions.

My thesis will review the various organizations currently focusing on electing women for public office. My specific focus is on how effective these groups are in getting women elected to local offices. In studies about gender and politics, the focus is directed to the obstacles that women face as a gender. If there were questions about it before, the race in 2016 certainly clarified that sexism and misogyny still exist. Racism is still a prevalent issue for candidates. Some studies do evaluate the recruitment level by political parties, but these studies are also based on gendered biases. Political party leaders looking to recruit candidates will look in their inner circles first, which if you are a male, tends to be male-dominated. Women are often not in these circles, and if they are, there is a man considered as a potential candidate than they are.

However, a critical missing factor in these studies is the capability to train women to run adequately.

Studies tend to miss the influence that these newly formed organizations have on women candidates. Researchers do not often mention how political organizations play an essential role in helping political parties locate and train women candidates. Even less mentioned is the capabilities of both political parties and local organizations have in order to aid women candidates running locally. Scientists rarely focus on the intentions to get women interested in running for city council or library board trustee, but those are often the most important races to be involved in. All candidates start their service at a local level.

Very rarely is the first office any woman decides to run for, let alone even thinks about, as dominant a position as the United States Congress. There are very few women who even feel comfortable being so forthright and confident in saying, “Hi. My name is X, and I am running for Congress...”. Women will not comfortably assert themselves to such a spotlight without being able to tout her experience or activism as a local leader in some capacity.

Every candidate starts somewhere. For female candidates, that start looks like the school board, or the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), or the Library board, or even engaging in Civic Associations. There is a direct correlation between a female candidate’s success in running for higher office and the positions she holds and the name recognition she has at the local level — her first step.

Democratic Congressional candidate Liuba Gretchen Shirley ran against incumbent Peter King in 2018. Before her decision to run for Congress, she was President and lead organizer of a group called the 2nd District Democrats. A mainly online social media group, the 2nd District Democrats would regularly corral its membership and visit Peter King. They ask him to support

legislative efforts they cared about most. Their request would include support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA, single-payer healthcare, and stricter gun laws. While Congressman King remained a staunch supporter of President Trump and policies adverse to that of this democratic constituency group, Gretchen-Shirley was getting more name recognition. It was through her grassroots mobilization that the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) began to pay attention to who could potentially be a viable candidate against Peter King. They chose Gretchen-Shirley.

In this instance, the Democratic Party at the national level, is paying attention to the women running things locally, but to what extent are other organizations realizing that if women are active and organizing locally, they can translate that local influence into leadership nationally? Congressional races of 2018 were a big year for the Democratic Party. The Democratic base was energized and mobilized, almost too much because there were primaries in safe blue districts. An example of this is the Justice Democrat candidate and self-proclaimed Democratic Socialist, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez who ran against Joseph Crowley. Crowley was set to be the most potent ranking leader in the Democratic Congress. Especially with the new majority, Democrats had no interest in losing this seat or candidate. However, Crowley's district has become increasingly diverse, and he was drawn out of his district in 2010. These factors were strong and prevalent in unseating the Democrat with a 27-year-old Hispanic woman. The youngest Hispanic female to serve in Congress.

Ocasio-Cortez came from an activist background in some of the same ways Gretchen-Shirley did. She was involved, engaged in her community, and a good listener. What about her stood out to the Justice Democrats, the organization that picked her as their champion? What were her beginnings? Was it her lack thereof that made her an ideal candidate?

The two organizations picked their candidates for federal public offices after they were able to confirm they had some experience in organizing or community engagement. However, what are these organizations doing to elect women at a local level? If most candidates come from or have some public service experience, what efforts have been made to groom these candidates earlier in their careers?

A new wave of political operatives has surged since the 2016 election. There are increased efforts to make sure that various levels of government truly represent the people that live in the district. This effort to elect more people that represent their constituents, individuals that look like where they come from and understand the difficulties of that life, has mainly been on the federal and state level.

After President Obama's election in 2008, the Republican Party started to focus on state and local offices and wanted to increase the diversity in the party nationally. This new initiative was called the Growth and Opportunity Project. Their strategy was to elect more Republicans to state offices in 2010 and flip congress. The National Conference of State Legislatures also keeps data on which party controls most of the state legislative chambers. According to their website, in 2009 the country's legislative chambers were divided evenly with some states being completely Republican, or Democrat or split with one party having one house and the opposing party the other. After the 2012 presidential election, the stet legislatures start to change and become solid Republican or split where there were solid Democrats (National Conference of State Legislatures 2019). This strategy worked most effectively because in 2010, the U.S. started Census efforts and in 2011, with a mostly Republican majority, districts were redrawn to grow the Republican base for another ten years. In my opinion, this was crucial to the Republican party building a bench for candidates that wanted to seek higher office from 2010 to 2016. These

candidates already had experience in government and were able to build a reliable voting block base in their local district. The Republican strategy led us to the many state governments that today are majority Republican, white, and male. After realizing this trend, hyperlocal groups started to form with the interest of getting Democrats and women elected to office.

In comparison to a man deciding to run for office, a woman takes much longer to consider that decision. When most people think about the public office, they think of the federal offices, not those of village trustee or Library board. If there is more focus on training women to seek positions in local public service actively, there would be less stigma associated with a woman deciding to run for higher offices.

As a resident of Long Island, New York, I interact with at least four different government officials' offices a day and rarely are any of the state or federal offices. I have had the privilege of working in government and politics for six years now and almost all those years; I have worked for women. Either as their campaign field director, campaign manager, legislative aide, or chief of staff. I have also served on the board of an organization dedicated to helping Democratic women run for local office positions.

Organizations must also build their brand. This often means that the more high-profile candidates they train, the larger their membership, and potential fundraising base grows. However, that does not seem to be the focus for most organizations. Trainings that are provided are very general, but not as in-depth as they need to be for new candidates. Most organizations focus on the more national races for the reasons mentioned above, but, if studies suggest that most female candidates have experience in local politics, why not focus on the local races to build a bench for the national races? Thus, increasing the potential for successful candidates, races and more membership.

Organizations such as EMILY'S List, Higher Heights for America, Emerge America, Eleanor's Legacy and the like saw an incredible surge in the number of female candidates signing up for their training in the past four years. None of these organizations specify which office their training is for, which quite frankly one race is the same as the rest if you have an adequate understanding of fundraising. However, there is a specific question of resources. Are these groups providing the candidates that attended their training, but are running for school board, on their radar to build their network? Alternatively, is the candidate able to build on the network they have been granted access in order to build their campaigns?

This thesis will review the various organizations currently focusing on electing women for public office with a specific focus is on how effective these groups are in getting women elected to local offices. I hypothesize that the newly established organizations realize that local races have become more critical to "building a bench" of successful candidates. However, their reason for not providing increased attention to those races is because their structures for success do not leave room for what they identify as "small" or low turnout races. Also, the need for a steady stream of income restricts the amount of energy and finances that organizations have available to focus on such races.

To conduct this study, female candidates at various levels of local government were interviewed as well as the heads of some of these organizations in New York. Research has conducted comparable studies that review women's involvement in politics, why they decide to run, how they are recruited, and how organizations provide resources to their campaigns. I expect the first person, firsthand experience to be very telling for my research, especially since they are all candidates that have either started in local government positions, currently running for a local race, or serving as a local public official.

I expect my thesis to show that the number of resources both political parties and political organizations have will undermine their ability to support and elect women to local government effectively.

Politics on Long Island

Regardless of your stance on Trump, his positions have people paying attention and wanting to know what the government does, how it works, and more importantly, how politics and politicians fit into the system. This has led to increased voter participation in the political system on both sides with voters often reviewing their local government officials. Local offices are more accessible for voters to access which means that they can better understand and hold accountable their elected officials. In Long Island in 2017, there were over 300 local offices in which candidates were running for election or re-election (New York State Board of Elections 2019). Unfortunately, there were not a record number of women winning more seats; women ran to keep seats that were already held by men. We even lost some positions to men including influential positions.

Former Presiding Officer Norma Gonsalves represented the 13th Legislative District from 1997 to 2017. Her peers voted her in the Legislature as the Presiding Officer in 2012 and served in that position until her retirement. When she stepped down, the Republican party nominated Assemblyman Thomas McKeivitt to her seat, and Legislator Richard Nicoletto was elected by the legislature to fill her position as Presiding Officer. Despite my disagreements with Mrs. Gonsalves views, she was an essential powerbroker in the County Legislature. This is a key instance in which building the bench would have allowed Gonsalves's position to be filled by another Republican Party female candidate. Norma was active in creating and organizing Civic groups and remains an active member to this day. Now that Monica Martinez is a New York State Senator, her legislative seat became available, the Democratic party nominated Samuel Gonzales to fill her seat for the special election.

Both parties have announced their 2019 candidates for Nassau and Suffolk County legislatures and townships. An example of the lack of recruitment efforts for these races is that most often the Republican party on the island re-issues candidates that lost a previous race but have served in government for years.

These two occurrences serve as real examples to the issues with the lack of recruitment efforts for women candidates. Since party leadership on Long Island is predominantly white males, it leaves very little space or the possibility of women candidates being considered for elected positions. In terms of appointments, there is a more significant issue of including women in the process. The pool of candidates is even more limited when choosing them for an appointment. Appointments commonly occur under the circumstance of a legislator being elected to another office or resigning or when the term of the position is cut short. Political and municipality leaders often prefer appointments because it saves money on having a special election when there is likely to be another one in a few months or a year. There is also the issue of the parties making it easier for their candidates to win an election because they have greater name recognition. The Republican party does this often in Nassau County. In the case of both Gonzales and Martinez, the Democratic and Republican Parties selected candidates to run for their seats but did not find women to run.

Also, when running for local offices, candidates often do not specify their party. Candidates will create their own slate and run as unaffiliated to a political party. This gets a voter to focus on the issues and learn about the candidate. Not to mention, because it is a local race, win or lose the candidate will have name recognition, which will build their platform if they decided to run again.

The problem with running as a woman

Over the last three decades or so, there has been a growing determination to get women to run for office. Before 2016 there was an obvious discrepancy between women and men electeds. Political parties and organizations alike have had to convince women that they were qualified to run for office. However, since so much evidence was – and still is- needed to convince a woman to run, most recruiters would lose interest. Sabonmatsu interviewed political leaders, activist, and electeds about effective ways to recruit women to public office. One recruiter lamented, “one of the most difficult things is convincing women to run or getting women to run...often times what I hear is, ‘I could never do that,’ ‘I don’t know how,’ ‘I don’t know enough,’ ‘I’m not smart enough,’ or ‘I’ve never been involved in politics.’... I think that is the biggest stumbling block to get over.” (Sabonmatsu 126)

Women often do not respond positively to recruiters and need to be asked numerous times. Not only did a female candidate need to be persuaded, but they also had to be asked a certain way and by certain people that they respect to consider running seriously. In my interviews with elected officials, many of them stated that when they first ran for office, they did not think their skillset would qualify them to run for office.

In addition to women needing to be “coerced” to consider running for office, recruiters tend to be male or predominately male. Often this presents an adverse effect on potential women candidates. Recruiters tend to look for specific characteristics in potential candidates, and that can often translate to gender bias especially since most recruiters look to their immediate networks, which can be gender exclusive.

Also, women who are not engaged in the political party would not take a stranger too seriously unless they had plausible and tangible connections to a close friend of the female candidate. Jessica Robinson Preece, Olga Bogach Stoddard, and Rachel Fisher researched the factors that were determined to encourage more women to run for office from both political parties, although Republican women are less likely to respond positively to recruitment efforts than Democratic women. In their study, “Run, Jane, Run! Gendered Responses to Political Party Recruitment,” they indicate that “political elites who are interested in increasing women’s representations, will likely have to take extra steps to recruit women beyond those they use to recruit men.” (Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher, P.563) When discussing candidate selection on the local level, party cues are often considered the most important.

Before 2016 women have always had a struggle with getting issues, they care about recognized. Issues like women having the right to vote and having control over their bodies are regularly debated in politics. Unfortunately, the individuals driving the debate are not female. This is one of the more substantial reasons that women have become more engaged in policy and politics. They recognize that without a seat at the decision table, many discussions conclude without having heard from the people most affected by them. As of 2018, there are a total of 127 women serving in the federal government; 102 in Congress and 25 in the Senate (EMILY’s List, Eleanor’s Legacy, VoteRunLead). This is the most significant number of women to have ever served in congressional history.

Most of my research into gender and the effect women have on policy shows that female public officials handle issues differently compared to men (Vengroff and Fugiero; Fox and Schuhmann). Also, issues that matter most to the female demographic, like education and healthcare receive more considerable attention. An increased dialog with focus on resolving

these issues come to the forefront when women are at the table to have the discussion. Sometimes just advocating for something while on the outside of a system, does not translate to the change an advocate wants to see. Sometimes, you must do things yourself to make sure they are done right. Hence the increased attention to attracting women to run for office. Many activists, former Obama administration staffers, and former military have successfully run for office in 2018. Their dissatisfaction of the current office holders empowered their interests along with the results of the 2016 election —, especially women. Trump's continuously paraded sex tapes and insulting comments have encouraged women specifically to consider running for office seriously.

As an example of an activist whose passion has turned in to a run for office and the birth of another political organization, I review the political timeline of Liuba Gretchen Shirley. A stay at home mom of two young children, Gretchen-Shirley has become a household name on Long Island. She was approached by the Democratic Committee for Congressional Candidates (DCCC) because they had identified her district as a possible to flip from Republican to Democrat in 2018. However, Gretchen-Shirley's name recognition also came from her activism. She started a local political organization called the Second District Democrats. She worked on the campaign of a friend of hers for state assembly. She was coached and trained and quickly on the way to building a real race and becoming a real candidate with the help of a team formed by the DCCC. It is essential to acknowledge, that her name recognition was from her relentless activism as a constituent of Congressman King. She garnered national recognition during her race after the primary. That recognition grew after she won a lawsuit, allowing her and any future female candidate the use of campaign funds for childcare.

The significance of her case is that family is often the sole reason why women chose not to run for public office. Stereotypes of being a career woman or a politician, even in this era, are still frowned upon. In their study, “Why won’t Lola Run? An experiment examining stereotype threat and political ambition”, Scott Pruyers and Julie Blaise, discussed how negative views of women in politics, significantly reduce the percentage of women willing to consider running for public office. In their study, men and women were asked if they had or would consider running for office. Test participants were then showed negative stereotypes of women and men running for office. The results stated that the negative information provided about female candidates not only made women less interested in running but made voters less interested in supporting a female candidate. Men were more likely to respond positively to questions about if they had considered running for office, regardless of if they felt qualified enough to do the job. Blaise and Pruyser found that negative stereotypes are only part of the reason why women decided not to run. There were also discrepancies in how women were recruited and represented in politics that served as deterrents.

However, 2017 and 2018 were great years for female candidates. 2016 mostly showed women that if someone like Trump can get elected why can’t you? On Long Island, the first test of this newfound confidence was in 2017 during local races in the county and town. In Nassau County, the first female county executive was elected along with the first Democrat female supervisor. During Democratic primaries, there were more women challenging men than before, especially in local races.

That was a big year for Democrats in Nassau County but also for women. In addition to the county executive and the town supervisor, two state senate seats were flipped by women of color. Senator Anna Kaplan an Iranian immigrant and Senator Monica Martinez, a Hispanic

woman, not only flipped seats but are part of what is now called the Long Island Six; a regional power block of Democratic senators representing Long Island. What is important to note about Senators Kaplan and Martinez is that they emerged from local politics. Senator Martinez was a Suffolk County legislator, and Senator Kaplan was a Town of North Hempstead councilmember. Their name recognition and community involvement were no doubt helpful to their running for office. In their more local positions, they were able to build essential relationships with the community, party, and donors to propel their careers. These are only a few examples of how vital local races are to build a bench for higher offices.

A short study by Angela Frederick reviews the narrative that women construct to make themselves more pleasing to their voters despite being a female candidate. Every candidate has to have a plausible answer to the question, “why did you run for office?” The narrative of women candidates, however, tends to vary depending on the woman running. Gretchen Shirley’s narrative was that she was a stay at home mom, who grew up with impoverished parents, and was humbled by that experience every day. Senator Kaplan and Senator Martinez, although women of color, did not use this as their primary source of votes. They were able to rely on their previous service as evidence enough that they are qualified for the job. Frederick’s study provides three types of narratives that are used to fit the female candidate into a stereotype that the voter will identify, thus placing the woman in a category that suits the idea of the stereotype and the type of political candidate the voter recognizes. The narratives Frederick says female candidates use are

- “accidental leaders”; women who have “downplayed their political ambition [and entered politics through] forces beyond their control”,

- efficacious leaders; women who outright stated they wanted to run and were encouraged by the failure of current political leaders, and
- ambivalent leaders; a woman that includes both the accidental and efficacious narratives, saying that they were interested in public office, but some outside cause had to occur to get them involved, such as working in public office, or that they weren't positive of their chances of success (Frederick 2014).

I found some of these narratives in my interviews with elected officials.

I interviewed current local and state electeds to understand their interaction with their political party, political ambition and what resources were made available to them while running their local race. All of my interviewees stated that when they were first approached to run, there was one individual or group of close friends that encouraged them to run. Various responses followed that bit of encouragement, lack of interest is the most common. Also, the respective political party of the elected did not play a significant role in their final decision to run for local office. Whether it be that the party opposed them or that their party supported them, political resources were scarce during their races. The individuals that suggested the person run for office were not all-party members. Most of the support to run came from close friends and family, that knew the candidate's values well enough to suggest with confidence that they were a good match for a specific office. In addition, most of the candidates were suggested races for school board as a starting point.

In my discussions with local elected officials, many of them stated either a close friend encouraged their decision to run, or the Democratic party. Only a handful of women received assistance from political organizations that help women run for office. A few attended trainings, but since their first races were local, there was not much that the trainings could offer in terms of

whom to connect with. Most of the electeds that did attend a training were already being advised by their campaign manager that was supplied by their respective parties. I have compiled the data that shows which organizations provided what services to the best of the electeds recollections. The charts are divided to provide a bio of the elected official, any trainings the elected participated in and an overview of the support they received during heir campaign. Tables 1-3

See Table 1 – 3 below.

Name	Party	Year of Election	Position	Elected
Subject A	D	2011	School Board	Y
		2014	Legislator	Y
		2015	Legislator	Y
		2017	County Executive	Y
Subject B	D	2011	Legislator	N
		2017	TOB Council	N
Subject C	R	2014	TOH council	N
		2015	TOH Council	Y
Subject D	D	2010	School Board	Y
		2014	Legislator	Y
		2015	Legislator	Y
Subject E	D	2015	Long Beach Council	Y
Subject F	WFP	2019	School Board	-
Subject G	D	2019	School Board	-
Subject H	R	2015	School Board	Y
Subject I	D	2013	Library Board	Y
Subject J	D	1995	Mayor	Y

Table 1: Biography

This table provides a biography of the subjects. It clarifies what year they ran for certain local elected positions.

Name	Knowledge of Political orgs	Training	Helpful	Attend again	Organization that trained
Subject A	Y	N	-	-	-
		Y	N	N	WFP
		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	EMILY's List, Eleanor's Legacy
Subject B	Y	Y	Y	N	EMILY's List
		N	-	-	-
Subject C	Y	N	-	-	-
		N	-	-	-
Subject D	Y	N	-	-	-
		N	-	-	-
		N	-	-	-
Subject E	Y	Y	Y	N	Eleanor's legacy
Subject F	Y	Y	Y	Y	New American Leaders, WFP
Subject G	N	-	-	-	-
Subject H	N	N			
Subject I	Y	Y	Y	Y	EMILY'S List
Subject J	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yale Campaign School, EMILY's List, Eleanor's Legacy

Table 2: Election Trainings

Table 2 provides the details of which subjects took trainings and which of those trainings were hosted by POWS or other campaign programs.

Name	Family	Friends	Party/member	Additional Party Support	Outside party and POW support	Run party support w/o
Subject A	Y	Y	-			-
	Y	Y	Y			N
	Y	Y	Y			N
	Y	Y	N/Y	WFP, Independents		N
Subject B	Y		Y	WFP, Dems		
			N/Y	None	Long Island Activists, NYSUT	N
Subject C			Y	N	N	N
	Y	-	N	None		
Subject D	Y	Y	Y	-	N	-
	-	Y	Y	None	N	Y
	-	Y	Y	None	N	Y
Subject E	Y	Y	N	None	N	Y
Subject F	-	Y	-	-	N	N
Subject G	-	Y	-	-	N	-
Subject H	Y	Y	-	-		-

Subject I		Y	-	-	N	
Subject J		Y	-	-	-	-

Table 3: Campaign Survey

Table 3 describes how effective and resourceful the POWs were to the subject’s campaign after taking a training. Here, the support system is broken down based on party support, family and friends, and if third parties and non-POWs helped the candidate.

Even after her loss, Gretchen Shirley launched an organization call Vote Mamas, with Hillary Clinton as a headliner for one of her fundraisers and at her launch event in early March. Vote Mamas is an organization dedicated to training and helping moms run for office. Organizations are created to fill a need that is not being satisfied. Although there are political organizations focused on getting women elected to office, there is no special attention paid to moms, who have a different mindset of their responsibilities.

Another factor that tends to deter women from running is the financial aspect. It takes the right amount of money to run for any office. Often more money than the candidate has lying around. For most school board races, campaigns tend to raise \$5,000. The bills go upward from there. To be clear, barely ANYONE likes fundraising, mainly because the most effective way to fundraise is through call time. This is when the candidate sits with their phone and a spreadsheet of some kind and calls through their contact list. No one truly enjoys calling their friends to say, “I’m running for office, could you donate \$500?” All campaign managers will advise a candidate to max out the individual they are calling. If you think Aunt Sue can donate \$300, double that number and walk the donation amount down from there. There are always strategies and coaching terms that managers and fundraisers will use to help the candidate, but most women hate doing it. It takes a while to get used to calling someone you haven’t spoken to since high school or college, to ask them to donate to your race. Especially if the said friend does not even

live in the state, this ends up being a significant deterrent for women candidates. The financial price tag of running ends up being a significant deterrent for women candidates.

One important factor to mention is that all the women I interviewed stated that the quality of the woman is more important than the quantity of female candidates. This was interesting because it was reminiscent of Hilary Clinton. Although she was a woman, and a white woman with a plethora of experience, she was not the right woman. Which begs the question, if a woman who was secretary of state, a Senator representing New York, First Lady, a lawyer with an ivy league law degree, was not qualified to run, who is? Moreover, when is the time to draft that woman for her first elected office?

Political Organizations: Structure and recruitment of female candidates in Long Island

On the national level in 2018, there was a record number of women running for state or federal office. More women signed up for trainings through either their political party or with a political organization for women (POW) like Eleanor's Legacy or EMILY's List. This year was the year for women to do something more than just march. Donations to POWs increased significantly, building capital for POWs to expand their reach (OpenSecrets.com, Eleanor's Legacy, EMILY's List, Voterunlead). In some circumstances expansion meant to be in more states, but not necessarily assisting candidates in more races.

It is also important to mention that the number of organizations that help women run for office is often ideologically and politically aligned on specific issues. Organizations like EMILY'S List and Eleanor's Legacy are politically left-leaning organizations. There are establishments like Run for Something, Higher Heights, and even Raising Voices that try to be more moderate in ideology, but after 2016 their membership tends to be more liberal. However, there is a short supply of organizations that are likely to support Republican female candidates.

This is important to note because my data is skewed to more liberal candidates, electeds and organizations. Although my questions to organizations are focused on women candidates, these organizations tend to have a "liberal" membership. This makes my results more representative of Democratic female candidates than of just female candidates. It also increases attention to an essential part of my study that emphasizes the lack of support for local female candidates in Long Island. If the groups that exist have a more Democratic membership, they can encourage more Democratic women to become candidates and engage in the political system. In addition to these POWs being more Democratic in nature and membership, Republican women

are generally not aware of any groups that would support them in their decision to run for office. Many of the Republican women I interviewed were not aware of groups that specifically train women to run for office.

Many of the POWs like Dare to Run, Run for Something and Vote, Run Lead formed before or around the 2016 elections as a result of Trump's election. The older groups already with an established membership, received serious upticks in donations and membership now that people were interested in getting more women in office to represent their interest. Individuals who want to run or want to support women running would be interested in contributing to an organization that would serve as a change agent to make those scenarios possible.

The work that many of these groups are doing should not be a surprise; neither should how the system work or how people work within the system. Individuals should understand the basics of politics and government; it was incorporated into the public education curriculums for most students in this country.

Many of the electeds I interviewed, went to trainings, but because their race was local, did not receive support from POWs. I asked the officials to define what support meant to them. All of them specified money, volunteers, and endorsements as various forms of support. They expected at least one or all these options but received none. The female county executive candidate received emails of support and endorsements, but as per state election law, was not made aware of it. The reason I know this to be valid is that I received the emails from organizations that I support. There was no mention of the women legislative county candidates or town candidates in the 2017 election. Another female elected stated that she went to a training and found the information to be helpful. However, when she asked for support, they stated that her race was too hyper-local for them to offer her much.

POWs	Party Affiliation	Address	Endorse	Train	Fundraise	Volunteer
EMILY's List	D	1800 M Street NW, Suite 375N Washington, DC 20036	X	X	X	
Eleanor's Legacy	D	PO Box 20293 Greeley Square Station New York, NY 10001	X	X	X	X
Dare to Run	NP	2520 Batchelder Street Brooklyn NY 11235		X		
Higher Heights	NP	-	X		X	X
Women's Public leadership Network	R	-		X		
Women's Campaign Fund	NP	718 7th St. N.W., Second Floor Washington, D.C. 20001	X		X	
She should run	NP	DC		X	X	X
VoteRunLead	NP	-		X		
Emerge America	D	-		X		

Table A: Bio of Political Organizations for Women

Table A provides a breakdown of a few of the organizations dedicated to helping women run for office in New York. This data chart specifies which organizations provide what service generally to their training alumnae.

The structure of most political organizations includes an executive director, a board and an advisory board, and committees for fundraising, recruitment, regional development, partnership, and membership. Each part of this structure is meant to serve a particular purpose that benefits and builds the organization. In order to compete with the atmosphere here in New York, a political organization needs to build its fundraising base while also creating its own space for candidate recruitment. All while making sure that the new space being created works hand in hand with the political party the organization aligns with and not stepping into any spaces already being filled.

Emerge America is an example of an organization dedicated to getting Democratic women elected to office. What is unique about them however is that they focus on local offices. When EmERGE America was building their affiliate in New York, there were volunteers to help

lay the groundwork for their official launch. Emerge touted having run over 400 successful candidates. Emerge used women like Kamala Harris, and others to help build interest in their mission. Volunteers held fundraisers and used their connections to introduce emerge members to the political scenes throughout the state. When Emerge New York launched in 2018, the organization had almost \$100,000.00 in their account. The money would be used to pay for an executive director, information palm cards and, materials and items to share during events.

The volunteers and board members were predominately women from the city and engaged in city and state politics. This meant that most of the relationships being built were city-centered instead of on Long Island. Volunteers also worked to establish relationships with the political parties and organizations that existed in the State. After relationships were established, Emerge New York launched and began building its committees and started preparing for its training. One thing that always happened was fundraising events. These fundraisers were to grow the financial pot further and then it was expected that after having successful candidates and trainings, members and parties would become more financially invested. These types of political organization have an overhead that has to be paid for including, if they have it, staff.

Similar to political parties, political organizations will work together if one group's mission is not exactly similar to the others. This is in order to build membership and financial stability and candidate success. Emerge New York faced some resistance from the leadership of Eleanor's Legacy during the first few months of Emerge's official launch. This was despite many of the board members of both organizations knowing each other and having personal relationships in the political/professional world. Eleanor's legacy launched The Baker's project around the same time Emerge was beginning to build momentum, which crowded the field of capturing potential successful candidates. The Bakers project was a local training provided by

Eleanor's Legacy to encourage women's participation in running for local office. Higher Heights is an organization founded by two African American women in Brooklyn, who wanted to see more women of color on the national stage. In New York, they partner with Eleanor's legacy to provide trainings and networking sessions to their members. Higher Heights will tout their support for candidates that have run successful races in order to grow their fundraising potential as an organization.

Most POWs must generalize their training so that it fits any race. The basics include finding your base, fundraising, and knocking on doors. However, because these POWs do not have a secure connection or relationship to Long Island, they do not have more specific details to provide to potential candidates. Essential questions like - who is my party leader? Who is my zone leader? - Often go unanswered unless the candidate pulls the individual aside to ask one on one. The general training facility does not work for local races because it means you must get much more personal.

A school board candidate would generally need to raise \$5,000 for their race. However, that money does not need to pay for staff, access to a compiled list of registered voters. That money pays for visibility: signs, a website, palm cards, and maybe a robocall. Raising \$5,000.00 for a school board race is not as daunting as raising \$250,000.00 for a state assembly race. It is much more manageable for women to raise. However, if you can only raise \$5,000, your ability to raise more than that is less likely.

The structure of any organization or specifically a 501c4 must incorporate some fundraising model or mechanism. The fiscal stability of any 501 c 4 is what determines their political future. In a state like New York, the political landscape is drenched with money, candidates, and POWs. There is an election every year for something in this state, and a 501 c 4

must be able to enter this landscape without stepping on anyone's toes all the while finding a place to harness their energy and focus their attention. This also means that these POWs are all tapping into the same source of funding in New York City. 501 c 4s tend to struggle because they are trying to make space for themselves in the crowded field of New York City. If POWs redirected their attention to "purple" areas like Long Island, that gives them a bit more of an edge that will provide them with an untapped funding source and political playground.

Of all the political organizations in New York, only Eleanor's Legacy has an event in Long Island during any given election cycle. Even though an event is on Long Island, most of the events are held in Suffolk County. This is because there is not much event space available in Nassau and not at all because there is a lack of political potential. Since POWs are political, they are not often welcomed in schools, churches, and libraries. POWs tend to use union halls for their event space, but in most circumstances, you must pay for it. Add to the fact that if you are newly formed and your members are not able to bring an active fundraising component, you do not have much support.

Location availability is essential as most individuals, specifically on Long Island would prefer to attend events in their respective counties. Going to a candidate training in Nassau is more beneficial if you are running because of the networking capabilities. The same goes for people running for office in Suffolk. Long Island is an ideal playground for a POW to organize and grow its membership. Higher Heights offers some of its training programs online. This is a cheaper way to access potential candidates but limits any networking abilities and still does not always address the specific needs of local candidates. There are over 200 positions for any individuals to run for, not including school and library board. Including positions like school, library, and even fire chief, the number jumps to over 1,000 elected positions.

Most political organizations form from the realization that a need is not being explicitly filled related to a lack of representation. Vote Mamas formed to help train mothers to run for office and support them. Run for Something, She Should Run and Emerge America was formed to encourage women to run for any office that held an election. Higher Heights was formed to help women of color to run for office.

One thing all these organizations have in common is that they all have a strong base in New York City, the political fundraising capital of the nation. If you are a Democrat and want to run for higher office like Congress, U.S. Senate or a state office, you must smooth over the donors in New York City. This goes the same for political organizations as they also need a source of financial stability. Unfortunately, if you are a candidate running for local office, these funding sources are not available to you unless your party, POW, or friends make them accessible for you.

Of the school board candidates that I interviewed, almost all of them had not heard of women run political organizations that help women run for office. Three of them attended a training but were informed they could not receive any support in terms of endorsements, money or volunteers. These three women had built a network that supported them, which is helpful to strategize and bounce ideas with. Ultimately the key to any political race is money and precisely how much you have.

Below is a table reviewing the funds of each organization that helps women run for office. The table shows how much money they had in summary from 2019 to 2017. I further broke down the amounts to document what money was spent on Long Island. The data table shows that most of the money these organizations raised was spent on races in Long Island but for state offices. Eleanor's legacy was the only organization that did donate to two local races in

2018. \$500 each for a Long Beach City council race and a Nassau County legislature seat. Other than Eleanor's legacy, the other POWS did not provide money any support for local races in 2017 or 2018. See table below

POWs	Money in 2019	Year	Amount Spent	\$ Spent in LI	race
EMILY's List	-	2018	20,400	7,400	NYS Senate
		2017	4,650	4,400	NYS Assembly
Eleanor's Legacy	142,023.25	2018	68,247.52	1,000	Local races
		2017	7,950.30	\$500	NYS Assembly
Dare to Run	-	2018	-	-	
		2017	-	-	
Higher Heights	\$225	2018	717.25	\$0	
		2017	-	-	
Women's Public leadership Network		2018	-	-	
		2017	-	-	
Women's Campaign Fund		2018	-	-	
		2017	-	-	
She should run		2018	-		
		2017	-		
VoteRunLead		2018	-	-	
		2017	-	-	
Emerge America**					

Table B: Financial Accountability of POWS

Table B depicts the financial habits of POWs in New York state and what money was spent on local races in Long Island. Many of these organizations did not report their finances for the January filing. This could mean that either they did not have anything to report, or failed to report during an odd number year, when the races that are up for elections are local races. Most organizations commit to fundraising year-round in order to sustain their overhead expenses. As captured here, it seems most POWS working in New York do not. (Data source: New York State Board of Elections; Opensecrets.org.)

****Emerge America is included was not officially active to fundraise in 2017 and 2018.**

As was mentioned earlier, organizations need also to cover the cost of running their programs and most importantly, pay for their staff. Much of the money that I was able to document between these years was spent on paying expenses that the organizations incurred

rather than spending on local races. Ultimately, these finances show that most of the POWs focused more on providing training than providing financial support.

Political Parties and their recruitment efforts on Long Island

The fact that there is a lack of recruitment of women on the part of leadership reinforces a concluding fact that Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher found political parties will have to do more than just find the women and ask them to run, there needs to be an intense effort to make women feel more comfortable running with their respective party's support.

People should demand to know what goes on under the hood of political party machines, to decide whether to support particular politics or demand changes to them. Especially in the case of women and other marginalized groups, there should be increased attention and interest in the work that political organizations do, how they commit to turn out individual voters rather than others. How they pick candidates and provide support to them and shut out the opponents. Unfortunately, politics and government have received such poor press on television, books and other sources of media consumption. Many people are not interested in investing the time required to understand a very complicated system. A system intended to be complicated to stop certain infractions from occurring.

On Long Island, both political parties provide the most resources during local races. The Republican party, with the promise of jobs and raises, can bring out an extensive network of volunteers and donors. The Democratic Party provides positions in newly gained seats or experience on running a campaign. A follow-up study to that of Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher is one conducted by Butler and Jessica Robinson Preece. They found that party recruitment is not the only thing needed to garnish momentum in empowering female candidates. Those candidates also must receive the support of the party in terms of access to databases, donor lists, and campaign staff or volunteers. Generally, candidates and my interviewees were doubtful that the

party would assist them in races that have low voter turn-out. Since women have endured gender bias in other platforms for years, it is not surprising that they would expect less from politics. Especially since, like most platforms, politics was predominately male-dominated industry. Why would women expect their arrival in this man's world, be different in removing barriers to women seeking public office or interested in pursuing a politically driven career?

An interesting point to note from Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher is that in areas that are heavily Republican, Democrats tend to have more politically ambitious women. Their study was conducted in Utah, a red state with mostly Republican men and women participating. However, it was revealed that despite the high possibility of losing, Democratic women were still more interested in running than Republican women. Overall the study showed that Democrats were less politically ambitious than Republicans, but Democratic woman had more interest in running for office. This result was because of a lack of recruitment efforts for women and that women do not always respond positively to recruitment. This proved that the win/lose factor was not a deterrent for female Democratic candidates. It is an interesting trend that repeated the 2016 election in which time state and federal offices were predominantly Republican. After the 2016 elections of President Trump, there is a surge of Democratic women motivated to run for office.

During my interviews with electeds, when we discussed their recruitment, it was a friend or relative that suggested they consider running. In very few instances these friends were well connected to political party leaders.

Although party support is an important factor for female recruits to consider running for office, it does not mean that without party support the female candidate won't continue the race. I found this to be true in some of my interviews, especially with women of color candidates. There are a few races in which the party did not support the female candidate or have suggested

that they will not support the candidate in future races. Even with the individual being an incumbent, the party made mention that they would withhold their support or that they are considering other potential candidates. Since I am focusing on female candidates on Long Island, this is significant because the candidate I was interviewing was an incumbent Democrat in an evenly split area. To compare, when Senator John Brooks ran for re-election in 2018, the Nassau County Democratic Party did enormous volunteer outreach and recruitment. The Senator is an incumbent running in a Republican district as a Democrat. The efforts to keep a Democrat in a seat, Preece, Goddard and Fisher mention the level of influence party support to a female candidate can be, especially since that support comes in various and necessary forms. Political parties have more access to money, volunteers, and databases, all resources that any candidate would need even to try to run a successful campaign. In addition, the county can provide campaign managers, connections to donor lists and assist in printing campaign materials.

In addition, women who are not engaged in the political party would not take a stranger too seriously unless they had plausible and tangible connections to a close friend of the female candidate. Jessica Robinson Preece, Olga Bogach Stoddard, and Rachel Fisher researched the factors that were determined to encourage more women to run for office from both political parties, although Republican women are less likely to respond positively to recruitment efforts than Democratic women. In their study, "Run, Jane, Run! Gendered Responses to Political Party Recruitment they indicate that "political elites who are interested in increasing women's representations, will likely have to take extra steps to recruit women beyond those they use to recruit men." (Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher, P.563) When discussing candidate selection on the local level, party cues are often considered the most important.

Political parties on Long Island are not different in their lack of ability to recruit female candidates. The leadership of both parties is predominately male. It was not until 2017 that women were in the highest echelons of the Nassau County Democratic Party. One of the women became vice president but has been involved with the party for years. One major upside is that the Democratic Party has increased the number of women running. There are at least a majority of women running on slates for townships and county seats.

The county parties are involved in local races for townships and county. However, there is limited involvement in the village, city, school board or library board races. If these positions are included in potential candidate training, parties would be able to grow their bench for higher races exponentially. There is a particular reason that parties do not, and probably should not get involved in these races.

School and Library board races are very limited in political activity. With the climate as such relating to both political parties, there are some benefits to not getting involved in such hyperlocal races. Things get very heated when people talk about their children. It is ill-advised to add fuel by adding political ideology in the school curriculum. There are of course individuals involved in these more local races that are operatives or active members of political parties. These persons act of their volition and not with the full resources of the party. That does not mean that the party cannot refer candidates to trainings that would help them prepare for these local races.

Local politics on Long Island is also not just between Democrats and Republicans as it is on the national stage. There are a significant number of residents registered to the Independents Party, Working Families Party, Green Party, and the Conservative Party. Both Democrats and Republicans will work with the smaller parties to get their respective candidates cross-endorsed.

Democratic candidates will work with Working Families, and Independents because there is more cross over in ideology. The Green Party runs its candidates, and the Republican Party will cross-endorse with the Conservative Party.

Some of the Democratically elected officials that interviewed mentioned that they did take a training with the working families party in 2014 and 15. At that time, WFP was organizing its branch and working closely with Democrats to increase diversity among candidates.

These smaller third parties need the support of the larger parties and those parties' candidates to establish themselves as legitimate in the State. A candidate must successfully run on a third-party line and be voted for by the registered voters of that party to provide them legitimacy. This is often the reason why third parties support candidates running on one of the two major party lines. It helps build their party's recognition and membership base while reserving resources to further their establishment. When running for local offices, candidates often do not specify their party. Candidates will create their slate and run as unaffiliated to a political party. As mentioned earlier, the school board and library board trustees will not specify their party because it does not serve in a positive outcome to their chances of success.

Conclusion

There is a new wave of women running for office — women with more support from a growing source of political organizations. There is an ever-growing interest in politics since the 2016 election and women are leading the charge. However, the interest in building a bench of female political leaders is not growing at the same pace of interest. Economic importance plays a crucial role in ensuring the lifespan of a political organization.

The best way to build political leaders for higher office is to elect those leaders to local government positions. The training and practice any elected needs are best learned by running for a lower position. The work of a school board member, librarian, or village trustee is all vital to the proper functioning of local communities. People in today's political climate are very hostile to federal politicians.

Potential female candidates do generally not decide their first office should be in the house or the Senate. Women candidates that decide to run those races usually are prepped and have access to significant financial resources and support from the national Democratic party. As my study has shown, female candidates are more likely to run for local races to build up their name recognition and credibility before running for a higher office. In addition, I have shown that although more organizations have formed to help women run for office, these organizations do not provide the resources to help a candidate run for local races. There is a direct correlation between an organization's ability to maintain financial stability, the types of candidates they support, and the levels of government they focus on.

On Long Island, the focus of building a bench has not been a goal until the 2017 election. When women proved successful in their campaigns for seats like county executive and town supervisor

it became more apparent that women can run and win. However, even for the Democratic party on the island, electing more women was only an option for state offices. Such was the case for Monica Martinez and Anna Kaplan. However, all these women that ran for higher office started in local government. The support they received before deciding to run for these headline-grabbing firsts, they were local leaders in their community.

All these women have made incredible sacrifices to commit to serving their community. There were no resources made available to them, or organizations around to support them. They build support for their first race for office by talking to their friends and family. No party, no organizations. If these women had received the support that is being provided to them now, they would be more helpful in building a bench for future female candidates interested in running for office.

In addition to these women not being supported earlier in their career, there is a lack of support Republican women receive while running for office. Most organizations that support women running have specific ideologies that are more left or Democrat-leaning. Organizations like Eleanor's legacy and Emily's List are interested in supporting pro-choice women. Emerge specifies in their mission that they are interested in electing Democratic women.

This study focused on women running for local office and the support they did or did not receive while running from political parties and political organizations. On Long Island there are specific obstacles that women are running for local office must face in addition to not receiving the resources or support. I chose not to focus on women of color, immigrants, women under the age of 36 or if these women were mothers. Most of them were. Future studies could include the differences women of color face while running for local office and children of immigrants and immigrants.

In addition, researchers should study the positive and negative impact of political parties getting involved in local races. Would it be more helpful to have that type of involvement in a race that directly affects the voter? Would party interference build a real candidate and political leader or a political puppet that can just run for higher offices?

Local races genuinely are the building blocks to any political career. The importance of local races, however, seems to be lost on political parties and political organizations. As mentioned earlier in my writings, the way to end the stigma of women running for office is to train them to be experts in the local office. The current organizations in New York that focus on supporting women that want to run for office should view Long Island as the ideal starting place to test their theories and strategies.

Despite these negative misnomers, how can we encourage participation in government and politics on the local level? What should occur in order to dispose of the negative stigmas around women running for office and the gendered obstacles that they face if they decide to run for higher office?

My proposed solution to these dilemmas is to encourage political organizations to switch their focus on more local races and use Long Island as their largest testing board. In addition, political parties and organizations alike should invest in hyperlocal elections and training for women candidates. The increased investment in this particular political engagement could result in the rebuilding of politics in America; building a bridge between political parties, polarizing topics while simultaneously ending the stigma of women running for higher office.

Local elections play a crucial role in government relations with the general public. Data analysis in 2015 by the Pew Research Center stated that only 1 in 5 Americans trust our government which roughly translates to 19 percent. PRC continued their research this year in 2019 stating

that since the 1960s, American trust in government has steadily dropped from 77 percent during President Kennedy's term to 17 percent during President Trump. (Pew Research Center 2019)

Americans are now heavily invested in what the Federal government is doing with their tax dollars and how. The importance of local government is that local agencies must execute federal and state laws. This means that the policies instituted by the higher governments are only as effective as the local government that implements them. In some cases, local law can supersede a federal or state law if the local government has already had a successful implementation of legislation. Alternatively, if the higher government's legislation is already in effect at the local level through their legislative enactments.

This means that local government builds a closer relationship with the people it represents because any policy change implemented is directly sometimes immediately felt within the represented area. In addition, the local government is easy to access. Local legislators do not have security details and build a base of supporters by going to community events, which is easier to attend when you are not in Washington or your state's capital. The difference between a representative in Washington and a representative in Glen Cove is that a resident can easily reach the latter through issues of circumstance. Many times the women I represent are stopped in the grocery store or the park because their constituent feels comfortable meeting with them. It is much more likely that you will encounter your village trustee than your congressman at the grocery store.

A local official is one that can attend public meetings, host community events, and shop at the local grocery store, all in-person. A library or school board trustee in Long Island cannot avoid running into the public. However, the conversations, tend to be less hostile because of the

insignificance of the position and the proximity. The real, in-person interaction between a local elected and resident, helps build trust between the two.

Local government is less intimidating, to both the candidate and those being represented. This makes it an ideal playground for women to consider starting a political career. Running for the local school board and library board is areas in which being a Democrat or Republican does not matter. Neither party engages in these hyperlocal races, and as many of my school board interviewees mentioned, you do not want politics to affect the work negatively. However, just because parties do not get involved, does not mean that women interested in running, cannot attend a training hosted by political organizations.

Organizations that support candidates for state and federal offices are often late to the race. As my study has shown, rarely do POWs support candidates out of the blue; candidates with no community ties, experience in advocacy or community organizing. Although POWs may provide trainings for women candidates who express interest, they are not actively engaging the candidates after these trainings, if the candidate is running for a local office. This means that they are falling short of their overall mission, which is to bring more women into the local office.

If POWs truly invested in Long Island and getting women elected to offices like school board, the village may, city council, etc., there would be an overall increase in confidence and self-certainty to run for higher office. As mentioned earlier, POW trainings go over the basics of running any campaign. They are generalized to fit any race, but after the training, when the women come back for increased investment in their political future, POWs turn them away. This should stop. POWs should not only invest in a woman candidates' interest to run for office, but they should also consider it the most promising building block for future political aspirations. For a candidate to need their help or find their resources dire. As mentioned earlier, a woman

that has run for school board and done the work on her own would appreciate the assistance but ultimately have the built-in skillset of knowing how to run for any office. When I asked one of my interviewees about this circumstance, she mentioned that if she decided to run for higher office in Long Island, she would accept the help from political organizations but would also know that it is not the only help she would need.

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