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Scorecard on Women's Issues

Lessons in division

It was not that long ago that Democrats and Republicans shared common ground on many critical matters, including issues important to women. They may have differed on many of the details, but they still managed to work cooperatively within a common frame of reference. Today, however, the two parties are oceans apart in their policies and decades apart in their views.

A simple scorecard on which party will protect and expand women's basic rights makes it clear. When it comes to issues relating to women's health, women's well being, and women's rights, the extreme views held today by the Republican Party not only differ dramatically from the Democratic Party and the views of the vast majority of women, but they stand in stark contrast to many of the historic positions of previous Republican Party leaders.

Below is a brief list of critical issues.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Issue: Women's Access to Health Care

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – PROTECT WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), some 32 million more individuals will gain access to health care coverage. Insurance plans now have to cover preventative care, without requiring a co-payment, including mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, prenatal care, and contraception.

Because of the ACA, young people can remain on their parents' health insurance plans until age 26. Women cannot be denied coverage for a preexisting medical condition, such as a C-section, and insurance companies cannot drop people when they get sick.

✗ HOUSE REPUBLICANS – REPEATED EFFORTS TO TOTALLY REPEAL THE ACA

From day one of the 112th Congress, House Republicans have made repealing healthcare a top priority. House Republicans have voted 31 times to repeal or defund the Affordable Care Act, stripping protections for millions of Americans.

✓ THE HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – EXPAND HEALTH COVERAGE

One of the pillars of the ACA is the individual mandate requiring all Americans to have health insurance. This is an idea that was originally pioneered by The Heritage Foundation, a right-leaning think tank and supported by former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. The individual mandate is also at the heart of Massachusetts's universal healthcare plan, which was signed into law by former Governor Mitt Romney.

Issue: Health Insurance Discrimination

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – END WOMEN'S HEALTH INSURANCE INEQUITY

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) ends blatant discrimination against women by insurance companies, who, through the process of "gender rating", charge women an extra billion dollars every year. The ACA also requires maternal health coverage in all insurance plans. Currently 62% of all individual market enrollees do not offer any maternity coverage at all. In 25 states, not a single plan on the individual market covers maternity services. It is simply not available, leaving women with no choice, no coverage, and no options.

✗ HOUSE REPUBLICANS – BRING BACK GENDER-BASED INSURANCE COVERAGE

House Republicans have voted 17 times to strip protections that prevent health insurance companies from discriminating against women. In states that have not outlawed gender rating, 92% of insurance plans charge women more than men.

✓ HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – PREVENT PREGNANCY-RELATED INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION

In 1978, Congress passed The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which made it illegal for employers to discriminate because of or on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. Under the legislation, employers over 15 workers who provide health insurance must cover pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions in the same manner as other employees with similar abilities. This legislation received strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate at the time.

Issue: Access to Family Planning

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – PROMOTE ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

Family planning centers supported by Title X saved taxpayers \$3.4 billion in 2008 -- or \$3.74 for every \$1 spent on contraceptive care -- by helping women avoid unintended pregnancies. That is why President Barack Obama requested \$372 million for family planning in his FY 2012 budget.

Access to affordable contraception and the ability to space and time their children has a huge impact on the health of millions of women. Knowing this, House Democratic leaders have opposed all Republican efforts to take away from women the right to make their own health care and contraceptive choices.

X HOUSE REPUBLICANS – ELIMINATE TITLE X PROGRAMS

At the beginning of this Congress, House Republicans voted to eliminate all funding for the 40 year-old Title X program dedicated to family planning assistance. Title X saves billions of dollars by reducing unintended pregnancies and has been responsible for improving the quality of women’s health and lives. This program under the Public Health Service Act is the only federal program exclusively dedicated to providing comprehensive family planning and related preventive health and reproductive services. For many women, particularly low-income women, Title X clinics provide the only basic health care they receive.

In addition, the House Republican Majority repeatedly has tried to defund Planned Parenthood Federation of America, an organization that each year provides nearly one million lifesaving screenings for cervical cancer and 830,000 breast exams, and its health centers also provide contraception to nearly 2.5 million patients and nearly four million tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

✓ HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS

When Title X Family Planning was originally enacted in 1970 it was signed into law by Republican President Richard Nixon. In his signing statement President Nixon said, “It is noteworthy that this landmark legislation on family planning and population has had strong bipartisan support. I am confident that by working together-at Federal, State, and local levels--we can achieve the goal of providing adequate family planning services within the next 5 years to all those who want them but cannot afford them.”

Issue: Access to Birth Control

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – SUPPORT ACCESS TO ALL SAFE AND EFFECTIVE BIRTH CONTROL METHODS

Birth control is inextricably linked to issues of women’s health. The Affordable Care Act requires health insurance plans to offer individuals access to the full range of FDA approved methods of birth control, regardless of their employer, and without co-pays or deductibles.

X HOUSE REPUBLICANS – DENY WOMEN FULL RANGE OF CONTRACEPTIVES

Republicans in the House and in state legislatures across the country have proposed a “Personhood” amendment, which would effectively criminalize some widely used forms of birth control, such as the IUD. Congressional Republicans repeatedly have acted to make it even more difficult for women to obtain contraceptives.

✓ HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO EXPAND ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTIVES

When the idea of federal funding to ensure access to birth control was proposed initially, it had broad bipartisan support. Both sides of the aisle expressed concerns that low-income women were not able to get access to family planning services. The chief sponsor of the original family planning bill was Representative George H.W. Bush. He said at the time: “We need to make population and family plan-

ning household words.”

Issue: Medicare

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – PROTECT AND PRESERVE MEDICARE

Democrats in the 112th Congress have continued fighting to preserve and protect Medicare. This year we celebrated the 47th anniversary of the enactment of Medicare. According to the National Women’s Law Center, Medicare is “critically important to preserving the health and well-being of our mothers and grandmothers.”

✗ HOUSE REPUBLICANS – SLASH MEDICARE AND RAISE COSTS FOR SENIORS

Republicans have supported the Ryan Budget Plan to turn Medicare into a voucher system. According to a CBO analysis of this plan, by the time a woman who is 55 today is ready to sign up for Medicare, the Republican plan would cost her an additional \$6,350 per year. According to an analysis by the Center for American Progress, under the Republican plan, those turning 65 in 2023, would face a total increase of \$59,500 in Medicare costs during their retirement. The Ryan budget also makes extreme changes to the Medicaid program, cutting the program’s current funding by \$800 billion over the next decade,

* HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – WEAK SUPPORT FROM THE START FOLLOWED BY NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS TO CUT BENEFITS

When Congress created Medicare in 1965, 70 House Republicans and 13 Senate Republicans at the time supported the final plan. However, since then, Republicans have made numerous attempts to weaken Medicare and take away its vital support benefits for our nation’s senior citizens. Throughout the 1990s Republicans attempted to slash Medicare benefits and raise costs to seniors, including their out of pocket costs. Then, in 2006, a Republican president and a Republican Congress enacted the Medicare drug benefit that was not paid for and which critics said was a give-away to the drug companies. It added approximately \$1 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years.

WOMEN’S WELL BEING

Issue: Nutritional Assistance and Food Security

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS –JOHN F. KENNEDY SAID IT BEST, “If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

Democrats in Congress and the Presidency have led the way on establishing programs to improved nutrition and food security for low-income households. The benefits provided by the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) can make the difference between going hungry, and putting food on the table. In the economic downturn, SNAP helped to keep 3.9 million Americans, including 1.7 million children, above the poverty line in 2010.

X HOUSE REPUBLICANS – CUT PROGRAMS THAT KEEP WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM GOING HUNGRY

Under the new Republican majority, the House has voted seven times, over the objections of most Democrats, to make deep cuts to programs that provide nutrition assistance to women, infants and children, supporting cuts that could immediately remove food assistance for millions of women and their families. The House Republican budget authored by Representative Paul Ryan would make the deepest cuts to the SNAP program in its history, slashing over \$130 billion from the program over the next ten years, a cut of more than 17%.

***** HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – A MIXED HISTORY

Republicans have a mixed history when it comes to combating hunger and poverty. In 1977, Senator Bob Dole teamed with Senator George McGovern to create today's modern food assistance program, now known as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). However, Republican leaders also have denigrated the poor and repeatedly tried to reduce funding for the program formerly known as food stamps. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan severely cut funding for social welfare programs, including food stamps, leading to an increase in hunger.

Issue: Violence Against Women Act

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – PROVIDE PROTECTIONS FOR ALL

A government has no greater responsibility than to keep its citizens safe. In 1994, after three years of investigation and hearings, the Violence Against Women Act, authored by then-Senator Joe Biden, was passed with strong bi-partisan support. It has been re-authorized twice, always with strong bi-partisan support. Democrats recently introduced a re-authorization of the bill in the Senate. The bill expanded and improved on VAWA's scope and would extend protections to women and men in the LGBT community, Native Americans living on reservations and other disadvantaged communities.

X HOUSE REPUBLICANS – DENY SOME COMMUNITIES PROTECTIONS

House Republicans passed a version of the Violence Against Women Act that actually rolls back key protections in current law for many domestic violence victims, making them less safe. The Republican version also rolls back protections that safeguard battered immigrant victims of sex trafficking, torture, and rape, and fails to include key provisions that were included in the Senate-passed bill to protect the LGBT community. It says in effect, there are some we will just not protect; there are some, who are less than equal.

✓ HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – WORKED ON A BIPARTISAN BASIS TO SUPPORT

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Issue: Equal Pay in the Workplace

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – FIGHT TO END GENDER PAY DISCREPANCIES

Women are paid roughly 77 cents for every dollar paid to a man for doing the same work. That is one of the reasons why, in 2009, the first bill that President Obama signed after taking office was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Passed by Congress in 2009 over the objections of most Republicans, the law gives those who have reason to believe they have been discriminated against a chance to have their day in federal court. In this Congress, Democrats introduced the Paycheck Fairness Act (S 3220/HR 1519 in the 112th Congress), which would help close the wage gap by prohibiting gender-based pay discrepancies and banning workplace policies that prevent employees from sharing their wages with each other.

✗ HOUSE REPUBLICANS – BLOCK PAYCHECK FAIRNESS

Republicans in this Congress have consistently opposed legislation that would give those who reasonably believe they have been discriminated against an opportunity to make their case before a federal jury. House Republicans blocked the critical Paycheck Fairness Act from being voted on. Since women tend to be primary or co-earners, when women are underpaid, both they and their families suffer. In 2010, in nearly two-thirds of families (63.9 percent), a mother was either the main breadwinner or a co-breadwinner, earning at least a quarter of the family's income. When women earn less because of gender discrimination, their families' earnings are drastically decreased as well.

✓ HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

In its 1976 platform, the Republican Party proudly claimed it had been the first to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment, way back in 1940.

In 1994 Congress passed the landmark Family and Medical Leave Act with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Because of the bill, millions of Americans have taken up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave from work to care for a new baby or to care for a spouse, child under age 18, or parent who has a serious health condition.

Issue: Reproductive Choice

✓ HOUSE DEMOCRATS – PRESERVE A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

House Democratic leaders have worked to preserve a woman's right to choose and have fought against attempts by House Republicans to limit reproductive choice.

✗ HOUSE REPUBLICANS – JEOPARDIZE WOMEN'S HEALTH BY RESTRICTING ABORTION COVERAGE

Throughout the 112th Congress, House Republicans have tried to impose their extreme views on access to abortions. In 2011, House Republicans supported HR 358, the so-called Protect Life Act – or, as opponents called it, the “Let Women Die Act”. This bill would eliminate the private insurance market for abortion coverage. It also would have weakened women’s emergency treatment by allowing hospitals to refuse to perform abortions, even if one was necessary for the health of the woman. They have tried to restrict access to abortions in the District of Columbia, with no protections for a woman’s health.

*** HISTORIC REPUBLICAN POSITION – ALLOWED PRIVATE CHOICE**

The Supreme Court has ruled that there is a right to marital privacy that is so fundamental and inextricable from the precepts of personal autonomy and human liberty that it pre-dates the constitution. In their 1976 platform, the Republican Party acknowledged: “There are those in our Party who favor complete support for the Supreme Court decision which permits abortion on demand.”

CONCLUSION

Recently, Rep. Henry Waxman and the Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee issued a report detailing how the Republican-controlled House “has cast 55 votes for anti-women policies that undermine women’s health, roll back women’s rights, and defund programs and institutions that provide support for women.”

That means there have been 55 debates, 55 votes, 55 times when Congress has had to focus its full and complete attention on attempts to constrain women’s choices, diminish their opportunities, and slash their services.

There have been 55 times when those on the other side of this great divide chose to ignore their own history, ignore the needs of women, ignore the wishes of the majority and ignore the crying need for Congress to focus its attention, laser like, on the economy.

There have been 55 times when House Republicans have attempted to divide this nation even further. Overall, they may have accomplished comparatively little in this session of Congress. But they have managed to teach us a lesson in division. And it has been a terrible one indeed.

Scorecard on Women's Issues

✓ = SUPPORT

✗ = OPPOSE

* = MIXED

	Democratic	Republican	<i>Historic</i> Republican
Women's Access to Health Care	✓	✗	✓
Health Insurance Discrimination	✓	✗	✓
Access to Family Planning	✓	✗	✓
Access to Birth Control	✓	✗	✓
Medicare	✓	✗	*
Nutritional Assistance	✓	✗	*
Violence Against Women Act	✓	✗	✓
Equal Pay in the Workplace	✓	✗	✓
Reproductive Choice	✓	✗	*