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Motherhood, Apple Pie and Politics

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It seems like there are a lot of women running for office in this election. Generally, I would celebrate this fact since women have been underrepresented in elected office for too long. Only 17% of the members of Congress are women, a number that falls far short of the more than 50% of the general population who are female. Efforts have been going on to encourage women to run for public office, efforts aimed at finding *qualified* women to consider running. The Women's Campaign Forum and WomenCount are bi-partisan groups seeking potential candidates with the experience needed to successfully win an election.

Indeed, there are quite a few very qualified and experienced women candidates on ballots this fall. However, as a woman, I am dismayed that many women running for office are being used by political machines - often associated with factions within the Tea Party movement - as "fall gals" for a conservative agenda. Some may win their elections because of the anti-incumbent fever rocking the nation right now and not because they are the best candidates for either their state or our country.

Women don't vote for women just because they are women. Being a mother does not uniquely qualify one for political office any more than being a father does. Being able to bake an apple pie has nothing to do with setting an agenda that will get people back to work or make our public school systems work effectively.

Don't get me wrong. We need to have diversity in our elected officials at all levels of government because we are a diverse country which benefits from the perspectives of everyone. Women can bring a unique perspective to office which is as needed as the unique perspectives that people of color bring, that persons with disabilities bring, and so forth. Lived experience is real and

the lessons learned from it are valuable ones which can affect good policy making for all the people, not just some of the people.

But I am uneasy when I look at some of the women candidates and wonder who put them up to this election. Some came out of nowhere and can barely articulate a position on anything let alone have a working knowledge of the Constitution. Their campaign coffers are flush and the television ads run repeatedly using the same template with the names changed depending on the particulars of the race.

When this happens to women candidates, I am especially disturbed. We have fought for too long for the right to vote and to be at the tables where decisions are made to be relegated once again to doing someone else's bidding. Toss the motherhood and apple pie out the window and listen to what is being said. Then decide who best can lead.

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