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To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

From: Stan Greenberg and James Carville, Democracy Corps

Erica Seifert, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

Page Gardner, Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

## **The Women's Economic Agenda**

### **Unmarried women focused on critical economic issues**

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Last week, House Democrats released a new policy agenda called “When Women Succeed, America Succeeds.” Their agenda is divided into three broad policy areas—pay, work and family balance, and childcare—with policies in each category aimed at addressing fundamental challenges in women’s economic lives.

While the ways in which American families earn income has changed dramatically over the last 30 years, the laws, assumptions, institutions, and structures that govern the economy have not. This has left many women on the edge—or struggling to keep up with demands at work and costs at home.

A new survey by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps and Women’s Voices. Women Vote Action Fund confirms that a women’s economic agenda could not be more timely or necessary.<sup>1</sup> In this survey, we find that an agenda specifically focused on women’s economic issues is not only the right thing to do for American women; it is also good politics for Democrats.

The Democrats’ policy agenda is stronger and more motivating when it includes women’s economic policies. We tested a range of policies on pay equity, childcare, education, worker protections, and family leave. Those who heard the women’s policies are more likely than those who did not to say that Democrats are better on the economy, looking out for the middle class and looking out for women. This is especially true among key subgroups, including all women, unmarried women, and college-educated women.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey of 950 2012 voters (1150 unweighted) and 841 likely 2014 voters nationwide was conducted from July 10-15, 2013. It also included an oversample of 200 unmarried women to allow for more detailed subgroup analysis. Unless otherwise noted, overall margin of error= +/-3.18 percentage points at 95% confidence. The margin of error for unmarried women = +/-4.45 percentage points at 95% confidence.



## Key Findings:

- **The women's economic agenda has broad and intense support.** The top three policy areas in this agenda all have strong and intense support – as popular as Medicare – and set out new areas for winning broad engagement:

1. **Pay equity and make work pay:** Jobs don't pay, especially for women. Pay equity is very much an issue of raising pay at work and it has intense support. It is the top policy item among all voters, women, and unmarried women. When combined with policies to raise the minimum wage, it moves unmarried women.

Among all voters, 90 percent want to achieve pay equity by raising pay for women. Three quarters (74 percent) support it strongly. And among unmarried women, 95 percent favor raising pay for women, 85 percent strongly.

2. **Don't discriminate against working women who have children.** There is intense support for strengthening policies to prevent employers from firing or demoting women when they get pregnant or take maternity leave. Together with pay equity, all voters and women voters want to help working women manage their family choices. Work-family balance is a critical framework in the survey.

Among all voters, 91 percent want to protect pregnant workers and mothers from being fired or demoted, 70 percent strongly. And among unmarried women, 93 percent support this policy, 82 percent strongly.

3. **Scholarships to help working women:** With many women getting trained and in school to deal with new economy, there is big support, particularly among unmarried women, for scholarships to extend education aid.

Expanding scholarships for women and parents to get better jobs is popular among all voters—87 percent support this policy, 61 percent strongly. And among unmarried women, 91 percent support this policy, 76 percent strongly.

- **Democrats' policies more broadly popular than Republicans'.** The Democratic agenda as a whole – including protecting Medicare, raising the minimum wage, supporting green energy, and the women's economic policies – is stronger than the policy agenda currently offered by Republicans. In fact, the strongest Republican policies are only as strong as the weakest policies in the women's economic agenda.
- **The Congressional vote is now a dead heat.** Neither party has a clear advantage in 2014, and Democrats will need to advance the policies that matter most to voters in order to realize net gains in 2014.
- **Seniors are shifting to Democrats.** Democrats have held their margin among likely voters in the Congressional vote largely because of a big shift among seniors. We have been measuring a shift among seniors away from Republicans. In January 2013, Repub-



licans had an 11-point advantage among seniors likely to vote in 2014. That margin has dropped to just 5 points and is well below Republican margins in 2010 and 2012.

- **Democrats need this agenda.** Unmarried women, a key voting bloc for Democrats, are not as engaged as the general population and are less likely to report that they intend to vote in 2014. However, these women are moved by this agenda.
- **Turnout among RAE will be critical.** While Democrats are holding their margins among much of the Rising American Electorate, these voters are less likely to turn out. Just 83 percent of minority voters and just 82 percent of unmarried women and youth who voted in 2012 are likely to vote in 2014—compared to 92 percent of non-RAE 2012 voters. As a result, Republicans have a 1-point edge in the vote among likely 2014 voters, while Democrats win by a 32-point margin (58 percent to 26 percent) among those not likely to vote in 2014.

### **An agenda that works for working women**

In this survey, we tested two Democratic agendas—one including women's economic policies and one without—against the dominant Republican agenda.

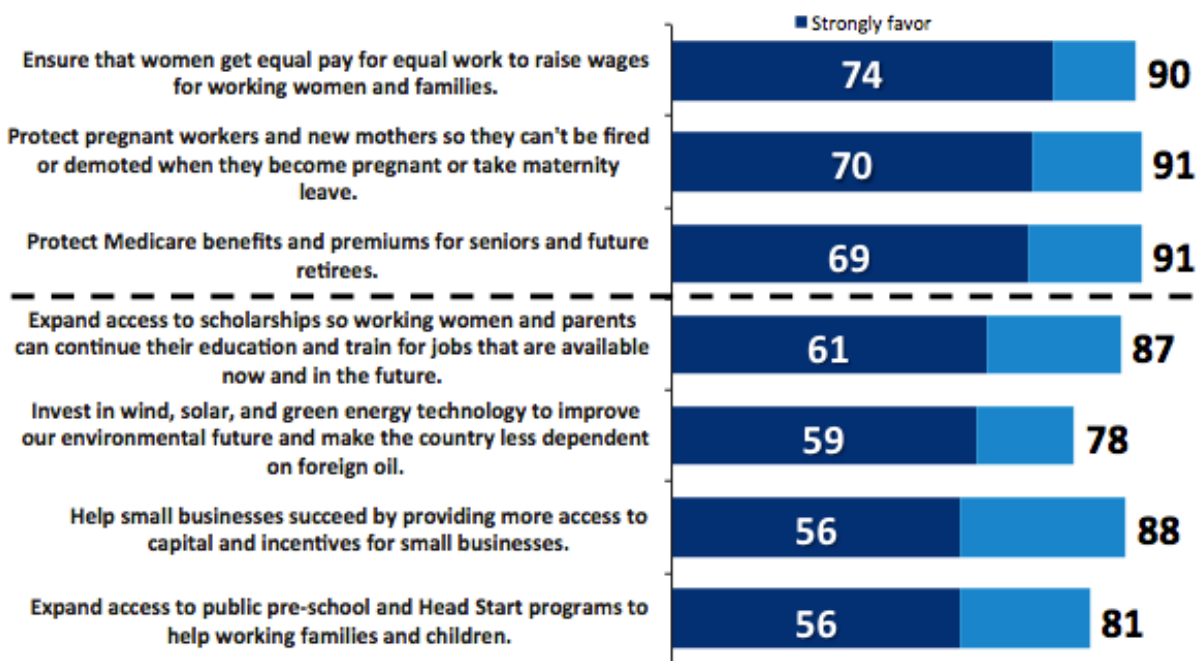
Among all voters *and* among unmarried women, three of the top 4 Democratic policies offered were part of the women's economic agenda (the fourth was Medicare, which is also central to women's economic stability). It is incredible to note that Democrats have not put these policies together as a package until now—given how strong they are among all voters and among the voters whose support they most need in 2014.

In short, a Democratic agenda focused on pay, opportunity, and support for working moms outperforms a Democratic agenda that does not include these policies—and far outperforms the dominant Republican agenda. Powerfully, it can move voters' perceptions of which party is better on the economy, better for the middle class and working people, and better for women. This is true among all voters, all women, unmarried women, and the Rising American Electorate. It is not only the right thing to do for women, children, and families—it is the right thing to do politically.



## Top-ranked policies: equal pay to raise wages, protect pregnant workers, but also Medicare

*Now I am going to read you some things being proposed by Democrats to deal with the financial pressures facing working people and to do something about the insecurities facing families. After each item, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose that policy.*



### Strongest Policies: Jobs that Pay

The single strongest policy we tested—among all voters, unmarried women, and the Rising American Electorate—would achieve pay equity by raising pay for women. While pay equity alone is strong, it is made more powerful when achieved by raising pay for women: “Ensure that women get equal pay for equal work to raise wages for working women and families.” Support for this policy is strong overall, and strongest in intensity. It is the most important policy for unmarried women.

Women’s share of “good jobs” rose exponentially from 1979 to 2000, but has since stalled—and declined since 2009. But while the recession stalled middle class women in “good jobs”, it has been especially devastating for low-wage women.<sup>2</sup> And with women as the primary or sole breadwinner in 40 percent of households<sup>3</sup>, raising women’s pay is central to lifting women and families economically. It is the cornerstone of this agenda.

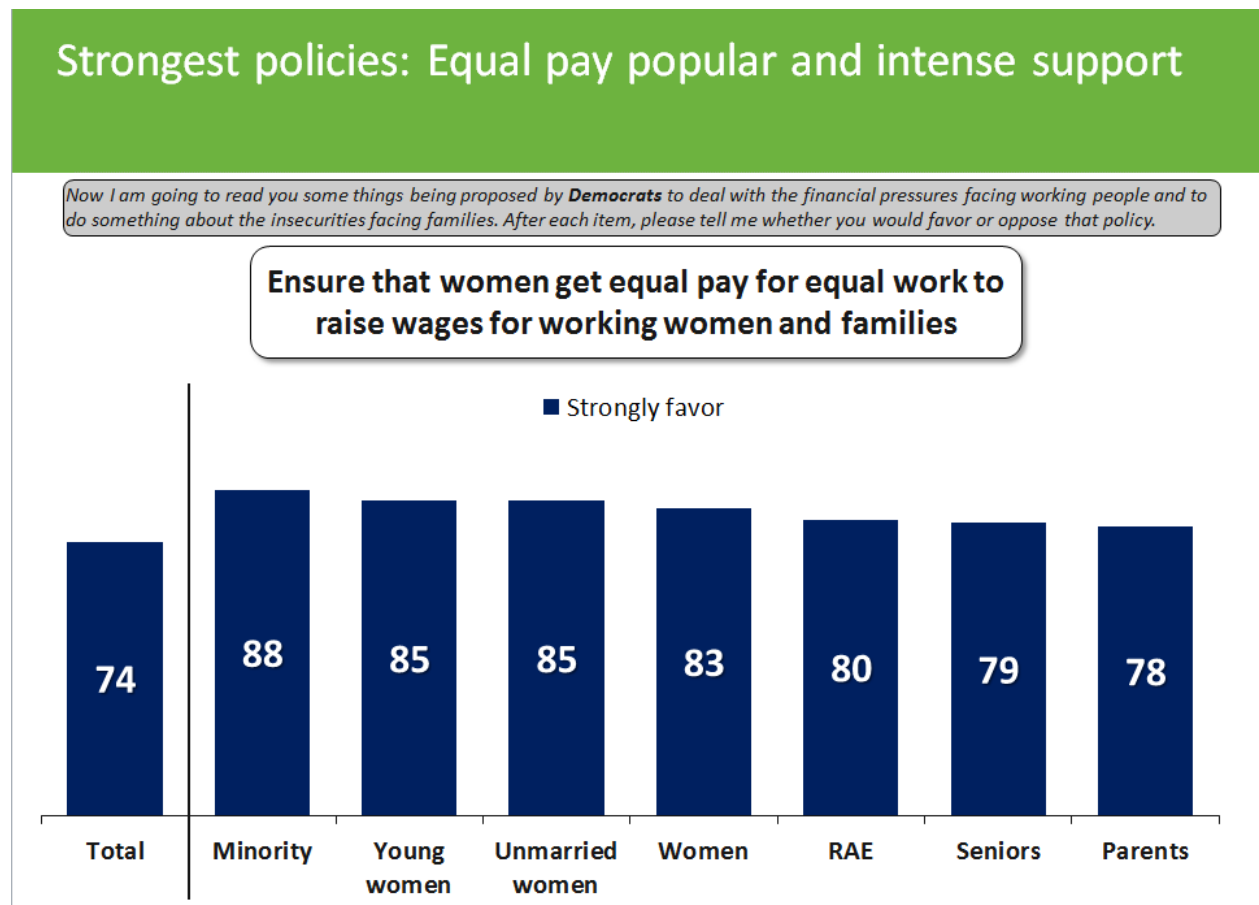
<sup>2</sup> The State of Working America. Economic Policy Institute, 2012. “Good jobs” are defined as those that pay at least \$18.50 per hour, provide health insurance where the employer pays at least some of the premium, and offer an employer-sponsored pension plan, including 401(k) and similar defined-contribution plans.

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Wang, Kim Parker and Paul Taylor. “Breadwinner Moms.” Pew Research Center: Social and Demographic Trends. 29 May 2013.



Included in this framework are opportunities for women and parents to continue their education to train for good jobs now and in the future. Among all voters, 87 percent support this policy, 61 percent strongly. Among women, 90 percent support this policy, 70 percent strongly. It is even more popular among unmarried women, for whom education has become an economic strategy. Among unmarried women, 91 percent favor this policy, 76 percent strongly.

This part of the agenda also includes entrepreneurship by supporting women-owned small businesses (81 percent of all voters favor this policy, 88 percent of unmarried women) and child tax credits (supported by 80 percent of all voters, 79 percent of unmarried women).



Expand access to scholarships so working women and parents can continue their education and train for jobs that are available now and in the future.	Strongly support	Total Support
All voters	61	87
All women	70	90
Unmarried women	76	91
Moms	69	91



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### **Strongest Policies: Jobs that work for mothers and parents**

As strong is a policy agenda to protect women's job security and make sure they have the support they need to be both mothers and workers.

A policy to protect pregnant workers and mothers from being fired or demoted when they become pregnant or take maternity leave is strikingly powerful. Among all voters, a remarkable 91 percent favor this policy, 70 percent strongly. Among unmarried women, 93 percent favor this policy, 82 percent strongly. This policy is also very powerful among seniors (95 favor, 77 strongly), young women (93 favor, 79 percent strongly), and parents (94 favor, 70 strongly).

Included in this agenda is also women workers' ability to be both workers and mothers. As a result, we find strong support for improving and expanding access to childcare and pre-school, which are critical to parents who work. Among all voters, 81 percent support expanding access to public pre-school and Head Start programs, 56 percent strongly. Among all women, 87 percent support such a policy, 61 percent strongly. And among unmarried women, 91 percent support expanding public pre-school and Head Start, 70 percent strongly.

This survey also finds strong support for making childcare more available and affordable, and it is particularly strong among suburban women. Among suburban women, 92 percent favor expanding access to high quality affordable childcare, 63 percent strongly.

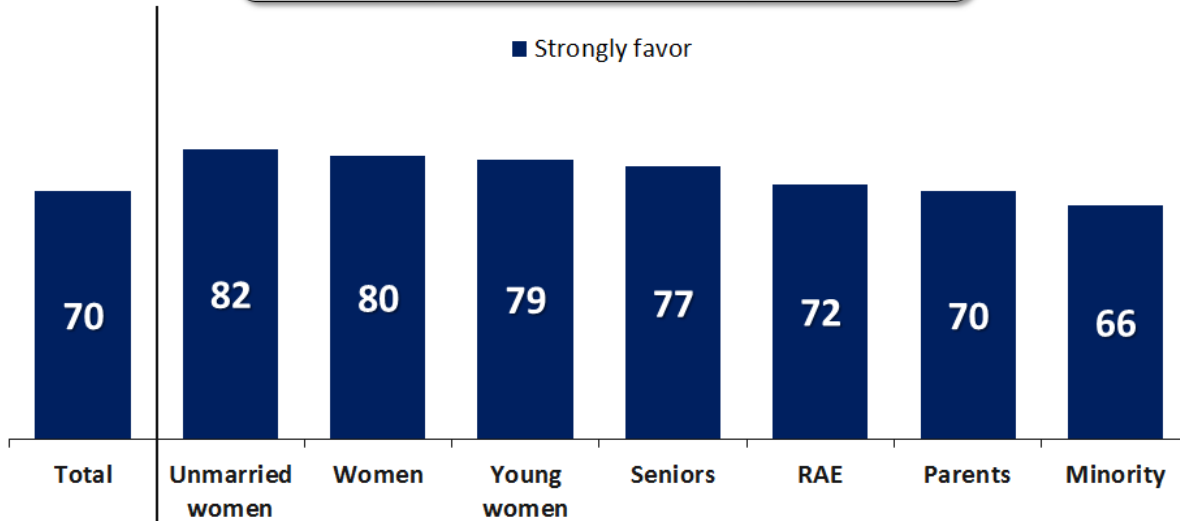
Also included in this agenda of supporting and protecting parents in the workplace is expanding paid family, maternity, and sick leave, which is strongly popular among all voters (72 percent favor) and unmarried women (86 percent favor).



## Strongest policies: Protecting pregnant workers broadly popular

*Now I am going to read you some things being proposed by Democrats to deal with the financial pressures facing working people and to do something about the insecurities facing families. After each item, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose that policy.*

**Protect pregnant workers and new mothers so they can’t be fired or demoted when they become pregnant or take maternity leave**



Expand access to public pre-school and Head Start programs to help working families and children.	Strongly support	Total Support
All voters	56	81
All women	61	87
Unmarried women	70	91
Moms	54	87
Expand access to high quality, affordable childcare for working mothers and families.	Strongly support	Total Support
All voters	49	75
All women	55	84
Unmarried women	62	89
Moms	50	77

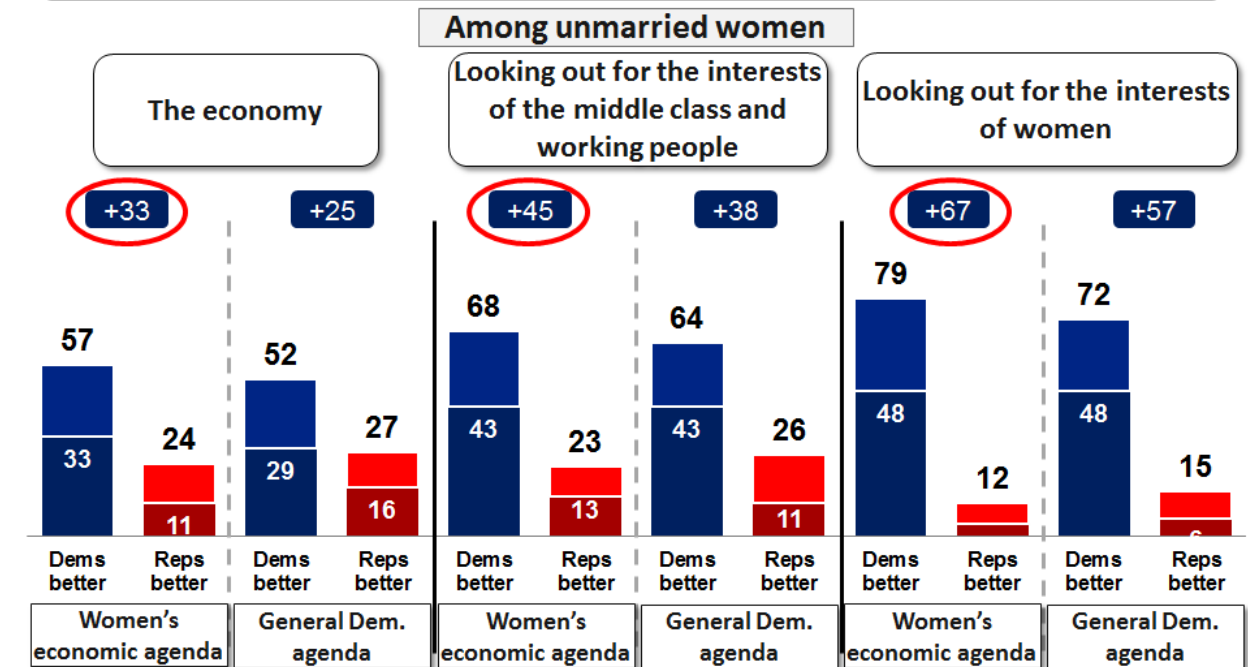


**Women's agenda makes a difference**

After hearing the women's policies, all women, unmarried women, suburban women, and moms prefer the Democratic approach more on the economy than those who heard the Democratic agenda without the women's policies.

**Women's economic agenda pushes unmarried women closer to Democratic approach**

*I am going to read you a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with each issue. If you do not know, just tell me and we'll move on.*



<b>Democrats better on the economy</b>	Agenda with women's policies	Agenda without women's policies	Difference
Women	43	37	+6
Unmarried women	57	52	+5
Moms	36	21	+15





<b>Democrats better for middle class / working people</b>	Agenda with women's policies	Agenda without women's policies	Difference
All women	60	58	+2
Unmarried women	68	64	+4

<b>Democrats better at looking out for women</b>	Agenda with women's policies	Agenda without women's policies	Difference
All women	66	61	+5
Unmarried women	79	72	+7
Moms	68	50	+18