

An Open Letter to the Women Running in the 2018 Midterm Elections

Leading From Your Deepest Wisdom

Wow. We are awed that there are so many of you and that you are so diverse. We are excited and relieved to see that you are already doing politics differently. We feel a sense of urgency now to move beyond old boundaries of political, religious or ideological identity and discover a better way forward together.

Your candidacy gives you the opportunity to break out of old paradigms and breathe fresh air into our democratic process. Unfortunately, 'politics as usual' does not invite - or even allow - the kind of wisdom we need at this time. The old game is driven by power, money and fear. Imagine the impact if we could expect our political leaders to tell the truth, to be kind and curious and to rebuild our democracy by listening - not just to one another but also to their own inner wisdom and moral guidance.

How can you ground yourself to show up fully and authentically for the challenges ahead? We strongly recommend that each of you gather a small group of women around you. These women should not be political advisors or potential donors or representatives of important constituencies. These are 3-4 friends that you can trust to tell you the truth, to have your back and to hold space with you for your highest and best leadership to emerge. The intent is to gather regularly - at least once a month if possible - to talk and laugh and cry and tell each other the truth.

Sit in a circle, light a candle and place it in the center, to honor the oneness of the space. Pass a talking piece to assure that every voice is heard and every woman is valued. Listen to one another and to the inspiration and intuition that arises.

This circle of women will help keep you grounded. They will help you remember who you are and what you believe in when the seduction of being 'important' comes knocking at your door — and it will. These women will help provide a shield of protection when you are attacked by forces who want to bring you down — and you will be.

Circle practice may be our best hope for restoring our democracy and perhaps even discovering it for the first time. Sitting down in a circle with a group of your constituents and passing a talking piece is a simple approach to public engagement that allows democracy to emerge through respectful dialogue, deep listening and growing understanding. Senator Collins from Maine used a talking piece in the bi-partisan committee that finally hashed out the emergency funding bill in January 2018 to keep our government from shutting down. *Doing Democracy with Circles* by Jennifer Ball, Wayne Caldwell and Kay Pranis (2010) is an excellent resource if you want to learn more.

The simple truth is that women were not in the room at the birth of our democracy. Their voices were not heard in the conversations that shaped our nation. The first woman wasn't seated in the senate until 1922! What might be different today if women's voices had been heard from the beginning and their perspectives had been integrated into our constitution and our political process? What might be possible now if you risk changing

the centuries-old playbook to incorporate new practices that invite curiosity, listening and respectful dialogue?

You have the opportunity to live into these questions as you step into the political arena. You have the opportunity not only to take a seat at the table but to change the shape of the table. You have the opportunity not only to be heard but to change the tenor of dialogue in our country. Compassionate leadership can help all of us build bridges to restore and re-imagine our democracy rather than further deepening the divides that undermine our country.

We are so grateful that you have stepped up to bring your feminine wisdom at this crucial moment for America.

With deep respect,

Kathe Schaaf and Kay Lindahl

www.womenofspiritandfaith.org