

THE ILLINOIS ANTI-HARASSMENT, EQUALITY  
AND ACCESS PANEL'S REPORT ON

# ADVANCING WOMEN IN POLITICS AND ADDRESSING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS



Anti-Harassment,  
Equality &  
Access Panel



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I.

# INTRODUCTION

After so many brave women came forward to share their stories of sexual harassment in Illinois politics, the Illinois Anti-Harassment, Equality and Access (AHEA) Panel was formed in spring of 2018 to develop a series of recommendations that could serve as a roadmap for all political parties, operations, and campaigns to address a decades-long culture that's allowed sexual harassment to pervade this system.

If we are to change culture and behavior in the long term, then we need accountable processes and procedures in place to ensure that women today, and future generations, are no longer subject to treatment that left them feeling alone, shamed or fearful. Treatment that either ended or stunted careers. Treatment that allowed generations of women, especially women of color, to think that no one would believe them if they were to speak out.

## THOSE DAYS ARE OVER.

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Women deserve to work in an environment free from all forms of harassment, including sexual, while being supported to pursue a successful career that guarantees her a seat at the table.



## MEET THE PANEL MEMBERS

MELINDA BUSH  
State Senator  
31st District

SUSANA A. MENDOZA  
Illinois State Comptroller

CAROL AMMONS  
State Representative  
103rd District

## I. INTRODUCTION CONT.

As a non-partisan organization, we set out to engage women working in politics throughout the state to inform our recommendations. In July of 2018, we embarked on a six-stop listening tour that included Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, Rockford, Edwardsville, Springfield, and Carbondale.

The culmination of those Listening Sessions has been compiled into our report, *Advancing Women in Politics and Addressing Sexual Harassment in Political Campaigns*. The report is being shared with leadership across political parties and political campaigns throughout Illinois. It is our explicit hope and expectation that they will embrace the recommendations covered in this report to create workplaces and campaigns that are safe, dignified, and free from sexual harassment and other misconduct. While at the same time committing to advancing women to leadership positions throughout their organizations and, finally, putting their full efforts behind electing more women, people of color, LGBTQ, and people with disabilities to state, county, and municipal offices.

The AHEA Panel does not have any investigatory powers, and therefore does not have the ability to address specific past sexual harassment cases. However, our report and recommendations can make an impact on the future and that is what this report focuses on – a future that includes diverse people at every level of leadership across political campaigns and organizations, working in environments free from all forms of harassment where we have equal parts men and women representing the people of this great state at all levels of elected office. The process set forth in this report holds perpetrators of sexual harassment accountable and provides women

with an opportunity to report such experiences free from retaliation via an independent entity that is not beholden to political leaders.

We urge all political leaders, from the statewide parties to county and municipal level entities, to campaign managers and staff everywhere, to take this report into serious consideration and adopt the tenets of it in order to make an impact on the culture of their organizations. Women today and future generations are eager and committed to engaging in our political process and deserve nothing but the full support of our leaders and to do so in a way that is fair, consistent, and deliberate.

Finally, we would like to thank the hundreds of women who participated in this process, our staff, and advisers who collectively donated hundreds of hours of their time towards this effort. To all the women and underrepresented people of every background, we say please do not lose heart – please continue to participate and engage in our political process. We need your voices and your leadership. Our representative democracy depends on it.

We remain incredibly hopeful for the future knowing that there is a roadmap in place to bring real change. There is an opportunity to bring equality to our elected offices and to leadership roles throughout political organizations and campaigns. Let this serve as an opportunity to unite Democrats, Republicans, and all parties around building a better future for everyone who raises their hand to participate in our democracy.

II.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the question on the Panel website “have you experienced or witnessed discrimination in Illinois politics,” one respondent from Champaign wrote, “As women, we all have, haven’t we?” The women we heard from on our statewide Listening Tour confirmed the old boys’ club culture, a product of decades of institutionalized sexism and racism is alive and well in Illinois politics.

As a Panel of three female elected officials, including two women of color, we have experienced this toxic culture firsthand, and we recognize that true change and progress requires a fundamental change to the culture of Illinois politics. When we joined this Panel we knew the only place to start was with listening to the women of Illinois, asking them what they saw as solutions, obstacles, and barriers to addressing widespread sexual harassment in the political workplace. Discrimination, sexual harassment, gender disparities in politics and leadership, and marginalization based on gender and race do not have to be “business as usual,” and they shouldn’t be. We can and must change the culture.

The report starts by identifying barriers that women face when entering politics and provides our recommendations as a Panel for recruiting women to run for office, electing more women, and advancing women into leadership positions. The report also addresses sexual harassment in the context of political campaigns, identifying the unique features of a campaign that make it different than a traditional employer and makes recommendations that should be implemented by the state political parties to limit sexual harassment in the campaign context and effectively and appropriately address sexual harassment in campaigns when it does arise. Note that even though we recognize current state and federal laws are inadequate for addressing the problem of sexual harassment in campaigns, this report does not propose legislative changes for addressing the problem.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rather, we make recommendations and propose best practices that the state parties, political leaders, and campaigns can take voluntarily to achieve the culture we all strive for, including:

### INTENTIONAL WORKPLACE CULTURE CHANGE TO CREATE SAFE, DIGNIFIED WORK ENVIRONMENTS THAT ARE FREE FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND OTHER MISCONDUCT

- ✓ .....● Adopt **clear and non-negotiable policies** that go beyond the law
- ✓ .....● Provide **anti-harassment training** to everyone involved in campaigns
- ✓ .....● Tie party **funding and resources to campaigns** adopting policies and participating in training
- ✓ .....● Provide independent reporting avenues for **reporting potential misconduct**
- ✓ .....● **Establish an Independent Body** to receive and investigate complaints
- ✓ .....● **Conduct** fair and thorough **investigations**
- ✓ .....● **Prohibit retaliation and provide support** services for victims of sexual harassment
- ✓ .....● Prohibit non-disclosure agreements and **mandatory arbitration clauses**
- ✓ .....● Craft reasonable policies for **consensual romantic relationships and alcohol use**

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# ELECT MORE WOMEN TO OFFICE IN ILLINOIS AND PROMOTE MORE INTO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS THROUGHOUT POLITICS

- ✓ ..... ● **Commit to a concrete goal of women filling 50% of the seats in Illinois' General Assembly**, as well as all state, county, and municipal offices
- ✓ ..... ● **Hire a manager-level Director of Diversity** in the state parties to recruit more diverse candidates to run for elected office and for top-level staff positions
- ✓ ..... ● **Invest party money in training women, developing their talent, supporting their races,** and promoting women into leadership positions in campaigns and political organizations
- ✓ ..... ● **Require diversity in the pool** of applicants or candidates considered for every political vacancy and leadership position
- ✓ ..... ● **Establish an Advisory Board** to oversee these changes

This report is a starting point, a baseline of changes that need to be implemented immediately if party leadership is truly committed to ending sexual harassment in the workplace and embracing diversity to improve workplace culture. These policy recommendations can apply to any state or local campaign, to any party, in any state, and at any level of politics.

III.

# RECOMMENDATIONS





IV.

# INTENTIONAL WORKPLACE CULTURE CHANGE



*The power disparities in politics generally, but particularly campaigns, are extremely stark. On campaigns, you have certain leaders, lobbyists, elected officials, candidates, and donors that can achieve near celebrity-status, and the people that work for them are often at the opposite end of the spectrum – volunteers, independent contractors, with relatively no power, who are vulnerable based on the disproportional power imbalance. Our culture has put the power-rich on a pedestal and often above the law, and there are countless stories of these men believing they can disregard the law and act with impunity.*

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-PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM SPRINGFIELD LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

On our Listening Tour, we heard story after story about encounters in the campaign environment that made women feel uncomfortable, undervalued, disrespected, or excluded based on their gender. Some of these encounters rise to the level of illegal and some do not. Regardless, their universal nature and the resulting impact on women say something about the culture and that culture is exclusive, demeaning, and does not embrace diversity – including women, people of color, members of the LGBTQ community, and people with disabilities. So we must change the culture.

However, campaigns have unique characteristics that can be obstacles to changing culture. Notwithstanding these challenges, candidates and party leadership can and should make clear the kind of behavior that is not acceptable, including behavior that may not rise to the level of illegality.

## IV. INTENTIONAL WORKPLACE CULTURE CHANGE

**First**, campaigns rely heavily on volunteers, consultants, and independent contractors, who are not protected by federal and state employment discrimination laws,<sup>1</sup> and many of the smaller campaigns do not qualify as employers under the law.<sup>2</sup> The laboring force of volunteers and independent consultants often lacks power in other ways as well, due to their positions within campaigns, and sometimes age and inexperience.

The current campaign structure gives the candidate, campaign management, and key donors disproportionate power. The party culture of idolizing the favored candidates or those within the inner circle can lead to a belief that those in power have a license to prey on the more vulnerable people in the campaign. To complicate things further, individuals with significant power or authority can be volunteers or not employed by the campaign. And sometimes, campaign workers do not know who their boss is, making reporting misconduct even more difficult.

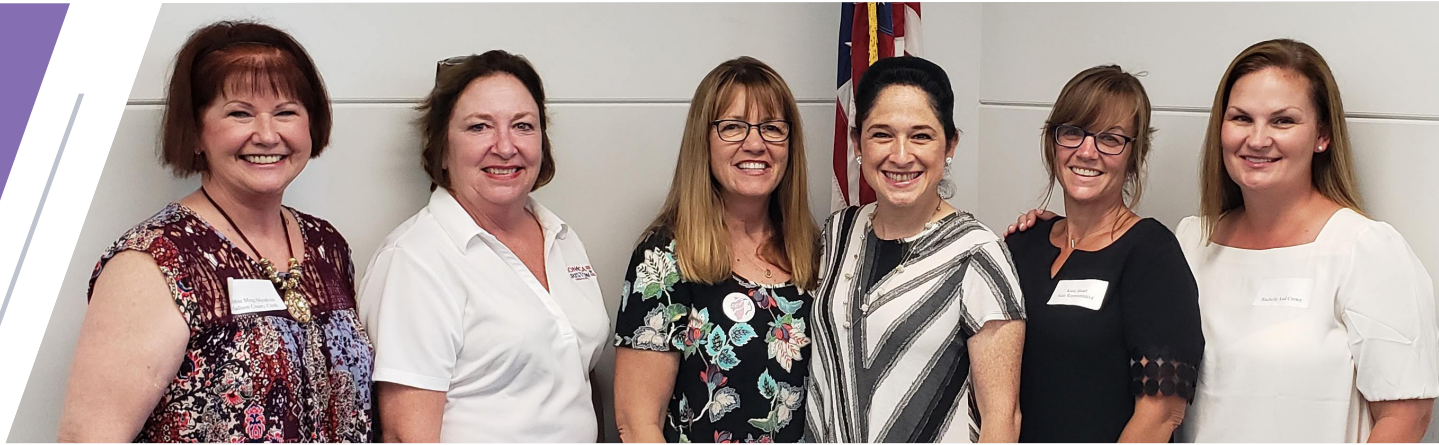
**Second**, campaigns are transient or temporary with limited resources. The financial reality of politics is that most campaigns prioritize their time and money on persuasion, not hiring full-time campaign employees or creating the infrastructure required for a positive workplace culture, including formal anti-harassment policies, training, reporting mechanisms, or investigation procedures. The time and money factors might also encourage taking the path of least resistance when addressing complaints about workplace culture, which may have the effect of penalizing the victim or perpetuating the problem by not fully resolving complaints and allowing other organizations to rehire the accused.

**Third**, campaign workers work rigorous hours pursuing a cause they believe is worthy and important. As one participant from the Chicago Listening Session put it, the intensity of a campaign makes people forget about the larger issues. Campaign workers and volunteers dedicate hours of personal time and energy to the cause. This creates a sense of loyalty to the candidate and a desire to protect him or her from any negative press. The investment and all-consuming nature of a campaign can make people singularly focus on the ultimate goal of winning the election, at the expense of other principles.

**Finally**, campaigns have unique geographical and environmental factors that can lead to risk. Campaign work can sometimes be isolating, giving workers little contact with co-workers or with anyone other than a direct supervisor. Communication may be performed at odd hours, on personal devices, blurring the lines between private and work communications. The social nature of campaign work may lead to an environment of tolerating or encouraging alcohol consumption.

1. See 775 ILCS 5/2-101(A); *Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co. v. Darden*, 503 U.S. 318, 323-24 (1992) (applying the “common law test” for determining who qualifies as an “employee” versus an “independent contractor”).

2. Many smaller campaigns are also beyond the reach of federal law because they are not technically employers under the law, which defines an employer as having 15 employees for 20 weeks of the current or preceding year. 42 USC 2000e(b). While the Illinois Human Rights Act has a lower threshold for discrimination charges based on sexual harassment (requiring an “employer” to only have one employee), the reality is that most campaign workers are not protected and would be reluctant to utilize the formal reporting process anyway, particularly for anything but the most egregious violations, due to fear of retaliation, loyalty and protectiveness to the campaign, short reporting timeframes, and the perception that certain reporting entities like the Legislative Inspector General lack sufficient independence.



➤ Edwardsville

A.

# CLEAR, NON-NEGOTIABLE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Despite the fact that it has been 30 years since the United States Supreme Court made clear that sexual harassment in the workplace is a violation of federal law, we are seeing that sexual harassment remains prevalent. In the political context, it is clear that just adhering to existing state and federal employment laws is not enough. In addition, there are many forms of toxic, bullying, and harassing behavior that is not barred under existing laws, yet have no place in our political parties, campaign and leadership.

Therefore, **in order to improve workplace culture on campaigns, we believe it is imperative for all Illinois political campaigns, regardless of size and budget, to adopt anti-harassment, anti-discrimination, anti-bullying, and anti-retaliation policies that go beyond the applicable state and federal law.** The policies should be written toward the inclusive and accessible culture campaigns and parties strive to have, not the legal limits of the law. Including, for example, bystander protection and prohibitions against non-race-based and non-gender-based bullying.

## A. CLEAR, NON-NEGOTIABLE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

The **state parties must lead the effort in getting campaigns to adopt clear and comprehensive policies** regarding anti-harassment, anti-discrimination, anti-bullying, and anti-retaliation that go beyond the applicable state and federal law, provide protection to all campaign workers, including volunteers and independent contractors, **by drafting model policies, and requiring campaigns to adopt them by tying party funding and resources to their implementation.**

The women of Illinois will no longer tolerate the parties giving lip service to the issues of creating an inclusive workplace that is accessible and not structurally stacked against women and minorities. The most effective way to change the overall campaign workplace culture is for the state parties to lead the effort by providing the policies and trainings and requiring their implementation before offering campaign resources and support.

**Accurate, comprehensive policy development should not be left to individual campaigns but be provided by the state parties in an annually updated format.** Policies, like the example available on our website ([www.aheapanel.org](http://www.aheapanel.org)), should include the following key components: a clear statement of the purpose of the policy; a statement that the policy protects volunteers and independent contractors, regardless of the source (even non-campaign employees); real-life scenarios to demonstrate the application of the policy; a clear statement prohibiting harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, and retaliation, as well as a plain English definition of each of those terms; a description of the role of bystanders and protection for them; and a description of the reporting options for suspected violations, investigative process, and potential outcomes for violations of the policies. Note that our model policy covers vendors. We recognize the difficulty of extending protection and obligations under the policy to vendors, but we believe we should be expansive and ambitious in order to achieve widespread change.



> Carbondale

B.

# TRAINING

“Check-the-box” training that focuses on minimizing the liability of the employer is ineffective at addressing the underlying problem and it only perpetuates the “power protecting power” dynamic. Campaigns should hold anti-harassment training multiple times throughout the year that addresses “sticky issues” and should include realistic examples of things that really happen on a campaign.

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-PARAPHRASED COMMENT FROM SPRINGFIELD ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENT



## B. TRAINING

We recommend that the state parties provide anti-harassment training and workplace culture training to everyone involved in the campaign, from the candidate to the volunteers; that all campaigns and candidates prioritize this training; and that the training should cover strategies for handling difficult and realistic hypotheticals as well as bystander training.

The state parties should offer these trainings on at least a quarterly basis, and should provide enhanced training for candidates and supervisors, emphasizing their reporting roles. Again, the state parties should enforce participation in training by conditioning funding on complying with the training requirement. As it becomes more commonplace for candidates and their campaigns to commit to participating in training, voters will start putting pressure on other candidates and their campaigns to do so as well. No one in a campaign apparatus should be exempt from attending the training at least once per year.



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*Workers on my campaign were required to complete two sexual harassment trainings. The first was completed online and a co-worker joked about doing other tasks at home while the training was running on his computer. I found the second training, which was in person, to be more effective.*

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-PARAPHRASED COMMENT FROM CHAMPAIGN LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT



➤ Womens March, 2018

C.

## REPORTING

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*I didn't report for so many reasons. It happens too frequently to report. I want a career. I want to be invited into the room where things get decided, and you don't get there by being a bad sport. I also didn't think people would believe me, and even if they did, what's the purpose of reporting something? Is anyone other than me going to feel the impact?*

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-COMMENT FROM CHICAGO LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT

## C. REPORTING

“Expecting campaigns or parties to handle harassment internally during a campaign may be unrealistic because everyone, including the victims of harassment, is trying to win the election. This desire to win may be a deterrent to reporting because victims may worry it would hurt the campaign.”

- PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM SPRINGFIELD LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

One of the most resounding pieces of feedback from Listening Session participants and online survey respondents was the need for an improved reporting structure because misconduct often goes unreported because victims are terrified to report out of fear of retaliation. Other reasons that misconduct may not be reported include sense of loyalty to the cause/campaign, unsure of whether the conduct is legally permissible or whether the law protects the victim, unsure of who to report to, unable to report to a neutral party, belief that conduct has already been condoned by superiors, skeptical that anything will be done, and concern about ruining victim's own career or the career of the perpetrator.

**We recommend that campaigns provide workers with multiple discrete avenues for reporting suspected policy violations.** The avenues should be internal to the campaign in order to create the opportunity to report without damaging the campaign. There should be at least two internal options for reporting concerns, as some staff may not be comfortable reporting to the campaign manager or other assigned person because he or she might be close to the perpetrator.

Campaigns must post the contact information for reporting violations of the anti-harassment policy in a noticeable, accessible location at the campaign headquarters and ideally on their website. The posting should make it clear that retaliation of any kind will not be permitted.







“ Oftentimes, there is no clear instruction about who misconduct should be reported to or the only option for reporting harassment is to the perpetrator himself or a friend of the perpetrator. A clear and trusted avenue for reporting needs to be provided.

-PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM CHICAGO LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

D.

# INDEPENDENT BODY

**State parties should establish an Independent Body, which is independent of party leadership, to receive complaints of misconduct, whether from their own staff or from campaigns, and to promptly investigate and resolve all complaints.**

Listening Session participants described a profound lack of trust and skepticism in the investigation process and whether campaigns would do anything to address reported misconduct. To gain trust and facilitate appropriate responses to founded misconduct, we call on the state parties to establish an Independent Body to act as a reporting avenue for campaign workers and to properly investigate any reported misconduct. The Independent Body should be made of experienced leaders who are not part of party leadership and should be appointed in a way to ensure independence from the party and leadership.<sup>3</sup> In addition to receiving complaints, the Independent Body must neutrally and fairly investigate any allegation of misconduct, regardless of the severity. The Independent Body should establish and use clear guidelines that outline the investigation process, including timelines for completing an investigation, and interim milestones.

3. The independent reporting and investigative function could also be housed elsewhere, including the State Board of Elections, but the parties would be able to achieve this function more nimbly and without legislative changes.

E.

# INVESTIGATIONS

Listening Session participants reported concerns about being smeared or discredited in the investigation process. **The Independent Body should conduct investigations that are fair and thorough**, and the investigations should be focused on determining the veracity of the complaint, not attempting to undermine or discredit the victim. When the allegations require interim protective measures (i.e. reorganizing duties and responsibilities to keep the victim and perpetrator apart), steps should be taken to ensure that the victim is not adversely affected.

After an investigation is completed, the state party's Independent Body should be as transparent as possible with the complainant and the accused of the outcome of the investigation, recognizing the potential tension with defamation liability. The Independent Body should inform the individuals that a thorough investigation was completed; whether a violation of the policy was found; and if a violation was found, the remedial action that will be taken in response to the violation.

“*After I reported a sexual harassment incident, the investigation and interrogation that unfolded was traumatic and the worst experience of my life. It felt like the investigator was investigating to see what I did wrong, not the perpetrator of the harassment. I was constantly worried that if I said something, the predator would hurt me and purposely harm my career. I felt attacked.*”

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-PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM ROCKFORD LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT



## E. INVESTIGATIONS

Where possible, **all campaigns and state parties should respond to founded violations with just and fair outcomes.** Sometimes a campaign or state party may not have a remedial mechanism because the offender may be a volunteer or the campaign may be over by the time the investigation is done, but where possible, offenders must be disciplined with remedial measures that are proportional to the seriousness of the offense, with repeated offenses receiving increasing discipline. These measures must be applied consistently and must be undertaken against any offender, regardless of his or her identity. Considering these parameters, the Independent Body should prepare a matrix of possible outcomes that should be used to respond to prohibited conduct, which lays out proportional responses and escalating disciplinary measures for repeated offenses. As with any interim protective measures, steps should be taken to ensure that the complainant, or any bystander reporting a violation, is not punished or retaliated against for coming forward and speaking up.

Campaigns and state parties should also provide support services for the victims of sexual harassment. As an initial step, we recommend that the Independent Body work with existing advocates like the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) to identify and make available appropriate services.



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*Retaliation, or the fear of retaliation, is a huge barrier to people coming forward. All policies and infrastructure around reporting and investigations should include ways to ensure retaliation does not occur.*

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- PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM CHICAGO LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS



› Chicago

## F. NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS/ MANDATORY ARBITRATION

**State parties should not use themselves and should prohibit campaigns from using, non-disclosure agreements or mandatory arbitration clauses in any employment agreements.** A key way to improve the workplace culture in politics and campaigns is to attack the culture of silence that keeps sexual harassment and other misconduct shrouded in secrecy, so state parties should not use non-disclosure agreements or mandatory arbitration clauses in employment agreements and should prohibit campaigns from using them as well.<sup>4</sup>

4. National Women's Law Center: 10 Ways Your Company Can Help Prevent Harassment in the Workplace, available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/10-ways-your-company-can-help-prevent-harassment-in-the-workplace/>

G.

# ONE ASK RULE

Crafting feasible and effective policies regarding consensual romantic relationships on campaigns is challenging. Consensual relationships between peers are not inherently problematic. In fact, many campaign workers are drawn to campaign work in the first place because of the close camaraderie and fellowship among co-workers. However, romantic relationships that are coerced or lack consent are always illegal, and problems can also develop when relationships involve a disparity in power positions, which is a typical feature of campaigns.



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*As a field organizer, I often reach out to volunteers and invite them to working coffee meetings. A volunteer misunderstood one of these invitations as an invitation for a romantic date. I was put in the difficult position of having to decline his repeated attempts to turn the coffee into an evening dinner date while knowing that it was my job to get him on board with the campaign and that I would have to keep working with him.*

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- PARAPHRASED STORY FROM CHAMPAIGN LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT

## G. ONE ASK RULE

Over-regulation of this issue may discourage the friendship and camaraderie that is a hallmark of a well-run campaign and may be impossible to enforce, but ignoring the potential problem can breed poor workplace culture and may be an obstacle to women advancing in politics.

**The comprehensive policies from the state parties should establish a rule or policy that is a one-invitation policy:** campaign workers and volunteers are allowed to ask co-workers out one time, but if the invitation is declined, the inviter is not permitted to ask again; and strongly discourages dating relationships between superiors and direct reports. We stop at recommending an outright ban because of the fluid organizational structure that is prevalent in campaigns.

Facebook has adopted a one-invitation policy, and has clarified that if the response is “ambiguous” – like “I’m busy” or “I can’t that night” – that counts as a “no.”<sup>5</sup> One ask policies are becoming more prevalent in corporate workplaces and are a reasonable balance between appropriate behavior and preventing harassment.



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*Union leaders and supervisors hit on the only women in the campaign, and the women feel like they have no other choice but to be nice about it.*

- PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM CHICAGO LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

5. Koh, Yoree and Feintzeig, Rachel (Feb. 6, 2018), “Can You Still Date a Co-Worker? Well, It’s Complicated,” Wall Street Journal, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/can-you-still-date-a-co-worker-well-its-complicated-1517913001>.

H.

# CAMPAIGNS SHOULD MONITOR ALCOHOL USE

We recommend that campaigns consider the risks that alcohol consumption can present and adopt a policy acknowledging that alcohol use is not banned at work-related events or among co-workers, but prohibiting consumption to the extent it interferes with a campaign worker's ability to perform his or her job or exercise proper judgment.

For example, Google's Code of Conduct states "Consumption of alcohol is not banned at our offices, but use good judgment and never drink in a way that leads to impaired performance or inappropriate behavior, endangers the safety of others, or violates the law," and it permits managers that have a "reasonable suspicion" that an employee's alcohol use may be impairing his job performance or endangering others to request an alcohol screening.

Regardless of the exact policy language, alcohol use should never be used to justify harassing and inappropriate behavior or used to discredit a victim.

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*A well-meaning male friend of mine recently asked whether he should have intervened when he witnessed a male colleague inappropriately touching a female colleague. "YES, OF COURSE," I responded. I think even male "allies" may not feel they have the permission or the necessary tools and strategies for effectively intervening to stop sexual harassment.*

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-PARAPHRASED COMMENT FROM CHAMPAIGN LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT



v.

# **ELECT MORE WOMEN TO OFFICE IN ILLINOIS**

**AND PROMOTE MORE INTO  
LEADERSHIP POSITIONS  
THROUGHOUT POLITICS**



## V. ELECT MORE WOMEN TO OFFICE IN ILLINOIS AND PROMOTE MORE INTO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS THROUGHOUT POLITICS

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*Even when men and women have similar political backgrounds and experience, men will be viewed as “political whiz kids,” while women with similar accomplishments will not be taken as seriously. Even if men and women candidates have families, usually only the women consider their families as potential obstacles to running, due to lack of childcare, the stigma associated with mothers voluntarily taking on the grueling hours of being a candidate, and concerns about how her family and children will be scrutinized. Men typically do not need any encouragement to run and will enter races without being formally recruited. Women, on the other hand, may need to be actively recruited and encouraged to run, in order to overcome the obstacles she sees: family obligations, lack of contacts, lack of financial resources, old boys’ club. These are some of the reasons why men win so many seats while women never get off the sidelines.*

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- PARAPHRASED COMMENTS FROM SPRINGFIELD LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

The key to improving the culture for women in politics is to engage more women in politics and advance them to leadership positions. Even though Illinois’ percentage of female legislators at 35.6% ranks comparatively well among other states, women, particularly women of color, are still underrepresented throughout the ranks of Illinois politics, including on legislative staffs, on the local level, and in party leadership. For example, of the female legislators in Illinois in 2017, only 23% were Black women, or 8.5% of Illinois’ total number of state legislators.<sup>6</sup>

## V. ELECT MORE WOMEN TO OFFICE IN ILLINOIS AND PROMOTE MORE INTO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS THROUGHOUT POLITICS

The initial step toward growing the number of women involved in all of Illinois politics is committing to a concrete goal so that we can develop policies to achieve the goal, measure our progress, and hold ourselves and our parties accountable. We recommend that **political leaders across Illinois come together and adopt a collective goal of increasing the number of female state legislators as well as all state, county, and municipal officeholders in Illinois to at least 50%**, and towards similar goals for other diverse candidates.

To achieve this goal, we need buy-in from all the state political parties, and we need to build the pipeline of qualified female candidates by effectively recruiting them, training them, and supporting them when they run, as described with more specificity below.

On the staff level, women accounted for only 22% of staff-level research and policy positions in the General Assembly.<sup>7</sup> On the local level, only 21% of the mayors in 2017 of U.S. cities with populations of 30,000 and above were women and only 14 of those 286 female mayors were in Illinois.<sup>8</sup> It is well-documented that the culture and outcomes for women are improved when more women are in leadership positions. It is crucial that our male allies be equally invested in the overall mission of improving culture for women and play an active role in recruiting, developing, and supporting women to run for election.



6. Black Women in American Politics: 2017 Status Update, Center for American Women and Politics, available at [http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/bw\\_2017\\_status\\_update.pdf](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/bw_2017_status_update.pdf).

7. The #MeToo Movement Should Look Beyond Lawmakers to Change Springfield's Culture, available at <https://mailchi.mp/ilcampaign/rauner-reports-38-million-in-the-bank-after-3-point-primary-win-52005>.

8. Women in Elective Office 2017, Center for American Women and Politics, available at <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-elective-office-2017>.

A.

# PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY

We know women are qualified to fill elected positions and that they want the opportunity to run, but in practice, women are less likely to run for political office than their male counterparts. The reasons for this are complex and ingrained in society and women themselves. Regardless of the source of the problem, many women need to be expressly recruited and encouraged to run in order to actually enter the race. The state parties need to respond to that reality and organize targeted recruitment efforts to overcome the real and perceived obstacles that prevent women from running. Specifically, the state parties should dedicate top-level staff to working on recruitment of women and other diverse candidates, including people of color, members of the LGBTQ community, and people with disabilities.



## A. PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY



The state parties can address the lack of support for women candidates by being cognizant of the bias women face and acting intentionally to counter it. To do so, the parties **must assign a manager-level staff person to act as a Director of Diversity, who is responsible for working with the party chair and leadership throughout the ranks of the party with the goal of recruiting and developing diverse candidates, with a focus on female candidates, for General Assembly spots as well as local level elected positions.** These recruitment efforts should not stop at the candidate level. The Director of Diversity should also work on recruiting diverse candidates, particularly women, for top-level staff, campaign management, and board and commission positions.

Listening Session participants expressed a sense that the parties did not support women candidates on the local level, particularly if they are diverse or outside the “inner circle,” and certainly not before women candidates have demonstrated an ability to win. Instead, the parties perpetuate the old boys’ club mentality. The rules in local politics allow for party leadership to have significant control in determining who will run, who will get resources, and who will ultimately prevail and the parties give those opportunities disproportionately to white men. Women reported that the party decision-makers may point to conflicting or sexist standards regarding their race, age, and/or children, as reasons women should be precluded from running.

Women of color face even more barriers, as reflected in their numbers in elected office, and efforts to engage more women in politics often ignore the double-bind women of color face. For example, Illinois did not elect any women of color to a statewide executive office until 2014, when it elected Evelyn Sanguinetti as lieutenant governor,<sup>9</sup> and nationwide, women of color only account for 24.3% of the 1,879 women state legislators or 6.2% of all state legislators.<sup>10</sup> Socio-economic status also creates additional burdens of discrimination, especially where there remains prejudice against women who do not meet the right standards of pedigree or income level. All women, not just white women, deserve the opportunity to run and be supported by their party.

9. See <https://www.genderwatch2018.org/democratic-women-running-statewide-illinois-women-color-heres-thats-noteworthy/>.

10. See <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2018>.

## A. PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY

Among the hypocritical standards that women are subjected to is their age. First, women are considered too young or inexperienced to run, but as they rise through the ranks and gain more experience, they are considered too old to run. A Champaign Listening Session participant recalled being referred to as “young lady” and being told that she “looked too young for this work,” while another Champaign Listening Session participant described being neglected by the party because she was too old to fit the party’s demographic vision.

Women candidates are also criticized for having children, and on the flipside, for not having children. Women with children may be perceived as distracted or unable to commit the time required for candidacy, while unmarried women without children may be regarded suspiciously as well. While these views may sometimes be expressed by actual constituents, often they act as roadblocks constructed by party decision-makers as reasons women candidates should not run or should not receive party support.

In one particularly striking example of this, a Listening Session participant in Rockford described the pushback she and her sister received. One sister was married with no children, and she was told she should have children to improve her political palatability, and when she said she didn’t want to have children, she was told to consider adoption. The other sister was single and a college athlete; she was told she needed to make statements against the LGBTQ community so that constituents wouldn’t get “the wrong impression” of her.

Assertiveness is another trait that women candidates are judged more harshly for than men. One Listening Session Participant from Edwardsville said that sometimes ambitious women are viewed as too outspoken or too opinionated, and a Listening Session participant in Champaign similarly observed that women were labeled as “too aggressive,” if they exhibited assertive traits.



➤ *Womens March*



B.

# INVEST IN CHANGE



*Women candidates are only supported by the statewide party once they win, not before.*

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-PARAPHRASED COMMENT FROM CHICAGO LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT

## B. INVEST IN CHANGE

While there are existing organizations like Illinois Women In Leadership (IWIL) and Lake County Democratic Independent Women (LCDIW) that train women to run, the parties have the resources and the platform to expand and build upon the missions of those organizations in a way that would reach more women and initiate and enhance connections between potential female candidates and their parties.

The state parties should set aside dedicated funds to train and develop women to run for office, should facilitate mentor relationships with women already in politics, and allocate further resources to support female candidates once they have joined their races. In short, the parties need to put their money where their mouth is.

The parties' training should teach potential candidates about the rules for running, effective public speaking, fundraising, and building confidence. Women fundraisers, who work in this field on a daily basis, should be recruited to provide training and guidance on how women can most effectively raise money. And, when parties start dedicating more financial resources to female candidates, that show of support may empower women to be more effective fundraisers.

The training should also work on instilling confidence in female candidates and dispelling the notion that several Listening Session participants expressed that women feel the need to be more qualified and prepared than their male counterparts. Women need to appreciate the value of what they have already accomplished and recognize that they are worthy participants in politics, and efforts dedicated to the sole goal of preparing women to run is a key component of that learning process.



> Champaign-Urbana

## V. INVEST IN CHANGE



The parties should also train women who want to pursue careers as campaign managers and other key campaign staff, who may mature into running as candidates or provide the necessary support to women candidates. As women at the Springfield Listening Session pointed out, not every woman wants to be the candidate, and efforts that provide training for women who help other women run are equally important.

The state parties should provide further training and support to female candidates by connecting them with women political leaders who can act as mentors to offer practical advice and exposure on everything from running a successful campaign, to fundraising, to bolstering confidence.

The state parties should also allocate resources to hosting implicit bias training and making it broadly available to engage political participants in conversations about how to identify their own biases and strategies for eliminating them.





c.

# REQUIRE DIVERSITY IN POOL OF APPLICANTS OR CANDIDATES

We want to increase the number of diverse people – particularly women – at every level of politics. Therefore, **any political leader or staff member with the power to fill vacancies – from a position on the board of the public library or a city council vacancy to statewide commission positions to appointed positions within the state parties and everything in between – should require that the person be selected from a slate of diverse candidates.** This rule should also apply to any hiring decisions for paid staff positions on campaigns and elected official's staffs. Although similar to the "Rooney Rule" adopted by the NFL requiring a single diverse candidate to be considered for all head coaching jobs, our recommendation goes beyond that to require several diverse candidates to be considered for all hiring or appointment opportunities. This is a concrete measure for overcoming the age-old excuse of a lack of qualified female or diverse applicants. Beyond requiring a diverse pool of candidates, political leaders should also require that those handling the interview process and hiring/appointment decision are also diverse.

“ *Black women endure sexual harassment and racism disproportionately but receive very little attention and support from white female peers. I think women of color are too often underrepresented in these discussions.* ”

-PARAPHRASED COMMENT FROM CHICAGO ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENT

D.

# ADVISORY BOARD TO OVERSEE CHANGE

**Each political party should establish an Advisory Board to implement the policies described above and hold the party accountable to the participation, funding, and culture goals it aspires to.**

The Advisory Board should collect, retain, and monitor demographic data regarding recruitment, hiring, and promotion of employees within the party. Based on that data, the Advisory Board can assess the party's progress towards its goals, hold the party accountable, and adjust its policies based on the actual outcomes in terms of the number of diverse candidates running for office, winning office, and holding leadership positions within political offices and campaigns.

The Advisory Board should also lead outreach efforts to engage younger women, including high school students to be more active in politics and to promote more confidence in women, which may help undermine the notion that women candidates need to be more qualified, more prepared, more polished, more funded than their male competitors. Outreach should include women elected officials so that young women can see people with whom they can identify in government.

The Advisory Board should also lead efforts to coordinate the state parties with their national and state counterparts to encourage broader implementation and to promote recommendation sharing between the states and on the national level.





VI.

# CONCLUSION

The Anti-Harassment, Equality, and Access Panel was initiated because brave women throughout the state were coming forward to demand an end to the sexual harassment they were experiencing. You may read our final report and wonder why it's not primarily about addressing sexual harassment. That's because as women in politics, we know sexual harassment is not the root problem. We know it, the women who attended the Listening Sessions know it, and now you know it.

What we heard on the Listening Tour made it clear that the women of Illinois want to have more seats at the table and want to be valued in Illinois politics. The report provides a roadmap for starting to create the culture we want in our campaigns, political offices, and political parties. We hope that everyone who cares about Illinois politics and our democracy reads this report, *believes what these women had to say*, and takes our recommendations to heart.

**A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS AND CONTRIBUTORS WHO HELPED MAKE THIS PROJECT A SUCCESS! WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU.**

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### **LISTENING SESSION CITIES**

Champaign, July 1st  
Chicago, July 8th  
Rockford, July 8th  
Edwardsville, July 15th  
Springfield, July 23rd  
Carbondale, July 26th

### **PARTNERS AND LISTENING SESSION CO-HOST**

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Illinois Association of County Board Members  
Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership (IWIL) Training Academy  
Men4Choice  
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