

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH MARTHA BURK,
DIRECTOR OF THE CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT AT THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

MODERATOR:

ALAN BJERGA, MEMBER, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BOARD OF GOVERNORS

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 1:00 P.M EDT

DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 25, 2007

(C) COPYRIGHT 2005, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT AVE.
NW; 5TH FLOOR; WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY
REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS EXPRESSLY
PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION
CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION
LAW, AND FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL
REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT
AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS CLAIMED AS TO
ANY PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORK PREPARED BY A UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF THAT PERSON'S OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK GRAEME
AT 202-347-1400.

MR. BJERGA: Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press
Club for our speaker luncheon featuring Martha Burk. My name is Alan
Bjerga and I'm a reporter for Bloomberg News and a member of the
National Press Club's Board of Governors.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience
today as well as those of you watching on C-SPAN. We're looking
forward to today's speech, and afterwards I will ask as many questions
from the audience as time permits. Please hold your applause during
the speech so that we may have time for as many questions as possible.
For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear
applause, it may be from the guests and members of the general public
who attend our luncheons and not necessarily from the working press.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to
stand briefly when their names are called. From your right: Lisa
Lambert from Reuters; Denise Zeck from the National Women's Editorial
Forum; Audrey Hoffer, an editorial assistant for the Milwaukee Journal
Sentinel; Marilou Donahue, producer of "Artistically Speaking;"
Deborah Filamayo (ph), senior vice president for Hagerssharp (ph);
Eleanor Smeal, president of Feminist Majority and a guest of the
speaker. She is the publisher of Ms. Magazine.

On the other side of the podium, we have Angela Greiling Keane of Bloomberg News and chair of the Speakers Committee. Skipping over our speaker, we have Barbara Reynolds of Reynolds News Service and Speakers Committee member who organized today's event; Heidi Hartmann, president of the Institute for Women's Policy Research; Lynn Sweet who is the Washington bureau chief for the Chicago Sun-Times; and finally Allison Stevens of Women's eNews. (Applause.)

On to our speaker. In a society you will sometimes hear described as post-feminist -- a place where the battles for women's equality are something that have already been fought and feminism itself is defined by its opponents as something that went out with bellbottoms and songs about women being strong and invincible -- Martha Burk continues to show the world where women's equality has not been achieved and how being a feminist means being part of a vital process of social change.

As the co-founder and president of the Center for Advancement of Public Policy in Washington, D.C and as the immediate past president of the National Council of Women's Organizations, for more than a decade-and-a-half, Burk has been a fixture in Washington policy debates, working both behind the scenes and in the glare of the media spotlight to raise awareness and bring change to the rights and opportunities for women in the U.S. and in the world.

Burk, who grew up in Pasadena, Texas, was married after finishing high school at the age of 16, and had children shortly thereafter. The life of a 1950s and early 60s housewife was not for her. She returned to school and earned a master's degree and PhD in experimental psychology, only to find that in her job search men held distinct advantages.

Instead, she founded a company in Wichita, Kansas where she became head of the local chapter of the National Organization for Women. She left Wichita in 1990, but I can personally assure you she made her mark. As a reporter in Wichita later in the 1990s, I heard mention of how Burk had left Wichita and was making a difference in Washington, and how some in Wichita had mixed feelings about that. (Laughter.)

Her first marriage ended in divorce, and her second husband and life-long partner in activism Ralph Estes moved to Washington in 1990 and founded the Center, which has worked against prejudice, sexism and discrimination in the workplace, government and other organizations. She is the author of "Cult of Power: Sex Discrimination in Corporate America and What Can Be Done About It," published in 2005. She was also one of Ms. Magazine's women of the year in 2003.

But she may be best known for her protest about the Augusta National Golf Club's men's only membership policy, which led to a well publicized stand-off between Burk and Club President William "Hootie" Johnson in 2002 and 2003. The Club is still men's only and the National Council of Women's Organizations has been investigating claims of gender bias of corporations whose executives belong to Augusta National.

Earlier this month, this campaign became very expensive for Morgan Stanley, which agreed to pay \$46 million to settle a class action gender discrimination suit. (Applause.)

Her current project on corporate accountability arose from Augusta National and works for changes in companies that will level the playing field for women through class action lawsuits, shareholder resolutions and voluntary change. It also looks at other forms of corporate irresponsibility such as the making of misogynist video games, as well as urging the FDA to keep products, such as silicone breast implants -- dangerous to women's health -- off the market. Today, she brings her wealth of experience in the women's movement and the D.C. political scene to the National Press Club.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Martha Burke. (Applause, cheers.)

MS. BURK: Thank you. Thank you very much. It's wonderful to be here. I would like to thank the members of the National Press Club, Angela Keane, Barbara Reynolds especially, and the audience that is joining us on C-SPAN.

I would like to also thank the women. Where are you women? Oh, you're not in the balcony anymore. You're on the floor. Welcome. (Laughter, cheers, applause.)

This was not originally going to be part of this speech, but for those of you who are under a certain age, I think it's instructive on this day with so many wonderful women and wonderful men in the audience to read a little passage from my book.

"Until 1971, the National Press Club did not admit women as members. Female reporters, even Pulitzer Prize winners, were relegated to the balcony to cover the luncheon speakers and briefings by newsmakers, while male reporters, even the newest recruits, sat in the ballroom watching with the powerful. There were no chairs in the balcony, no food or drinks, and the women had to share the space with cameras, equipment, and technicians."

Nan Robertson, author of "The Girls in the Balcony," put it this way. "It was so hot. It was so hot in that balcony, all those bodies jammed under the eaves. It was hard to hear, it was hard to see. All this standing, it was like a cattle car. We could not ask questions of the speaker. You entered and left through the back door, and you'd be glowered at as you went through the club corridors. It was discrimination at its rawest."

Girls, welcome to the floor of the ballroom. (Laughter, applause.)

Don't worry, I'm not going to go through every one of these pages. But women got out of the balcony slightly before women became prominent in mainstream politics, and that's what I really want to talk to you about today is where are we now in terms of politics, our political clout, where are we going, and what kind of influence are women having.

In 1980, Eleanor Smeal, who is sitting on my left, identified a trend in voting that has not changed since, and that was called, as she named it, the Gender Gap. What Smeal discovered and made prominent in the political discussions was that women vote differently from men. Women have different priorities than men, and it does make a difference in who gets elected and in public policy. Today women are the majority not only in this room, but in the population in general. Women are the majority of voters, those that are registered and those that actually show up at the polls.

What does this mean? Well, it's very simple. Women can control any election.

In case there are any candidates out there, or watching on TV, or potential candidates, let me repeat that. Women are the majority. They can control any election.

And I'll add one more thing. No candidate can get elected without women's votes. A case in point is the last election, where the United States Senate turned over, as did the House. And what we learned in that election was that if only men had voted, the United States Senate would still be in the hands of the Republicans.

The last race to be decided, Webb versus Allen in Virginia, was put over the top by women, and African-American women led the way in that race. (Applause.)

I'm just going to go down the list, because it is striking what a difference women made in turning over the Senate -- and the House, I will have to say.

McCaskill versus Talent in Missouri, a 5 percent gender gap.

Tester versus Burns in Montana, 7 percent.

Whitehouse versus Chafee, 14-point gender gap.

Casey versus Santorum in Pennsylvania, 22-point gender gap. (Whoops, applause.)

And finally, Brown versus DeWine in Ohio, a 14-point gender gap.

So as we see, women do have different priorities. Women did put the Democrats back in office. Will they listen? That is something we're going to talk about today, too.

But to just give you a feel for how the parties are going right now -- and this a trend that started somewhere around 1980, and it really has not stopped since -- in this past election, 43 percent of female voters voted Republican, while 56 percent voted Democratic. Over on the other side of the gender aisle, 51 percent of men voted Republican, while 47 percent of them voted for Democrats.

So what we see is that the parties are diverging ideologically, certainly, but they also diverge on gender. The Republican Party has steadily for the last 20, 25 years become more and more a party of men. The Democratic Party is becoming more and more a party of women.

Women voted because they felt like there needed to be a change in Washington. The war, of course, was the overriding factor for all voters, but most especially women.

The scandals -- Abramoff, DeLay, Foley -- those played a part. Women said they would rather have people in Washington that could get rid of the scandals and put forth policies that move the country forward, rather than posturing on phoney values issues.

But that's old news, isn't it? I mean, after all, it was last November. (Laughter.) And we've moved on. We've had Anna Nicole since then -- (laughter) -- and lots of other things.

So we have to ask ourselves, where are we going now, and what is going to happen? We're all starting to be obsessed with the next election.

But before we can do that, I think we have to move back just a little bit in history -- not so far, but to 2004. And in 2004, a guy named Thomas Frank wrote a book, it was a best seller, titled, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" And what Frank said is Kansas is a microcosm for the country. The Republicans, the conservatives, have taken over Kansas. It is a permanent majority, and they did it with guns, gays and abortion. In other words, the so-called cultural issues have sunk the Democrats in Kansas, and they will sink the Democrats or any progressive candidate from now on. It's a permanent change, he said. And so what we need to do, if you want to win elections, is to abandon those issues and go for a progressive economic message, but forget about all those sort of messy things that are the so-called cultural issues. And the pundits loved it. Candidates embraced it.

In 2004, John Kerry, you would not have known he was pro-choice by listening to his answers in the debates. If you were not a beltway insider who could decode all the gobbledegook, you did not know the Democratic standard-bearer was pro-choice. Even though pay equity polled number one with John Kerry's internal polls, he would not mention it on the stump. Instead, the Democrats went for the white male warrior vote. Remember John Kerry "reporting for duty"? (Laughter.) He didn't get to report. What happened? They lost, they lost with that strategy, and they lost big, and they squandered the gender gap for the first time in 20 years. Kerry did prevail among women, but only three points more than the votes he got with men. So the gender gap was squandered, the Democrats lost once again.

Well, we learn from our mistakes, don't we? Not necessarily! (Laughs.) In walks two guys. They're going to straighten up this process. Their names are Rahm Emanuel and Charles Schumer. They are head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee respectively. And they felt like, well, we can fix this because we weren't conservative enough in 2004, so what we have to do is just get a little bit more conservative. We have to pick candidates -- and these are quotes, with "machismo." We want to get away from those "soft" issues that the Democrats have been identified with. We want to beef-up the warrior vote. We want veterans. We want evangelicals and we want anti-choice candidates.

So what did Schumer and Emanuel do? They got out and they recruited. And not all of their recruits fit that stereotype, but a good number of them did, and two particularly -- Casey in Pennsylvania. They pushed out a pro-choice woman who absolutely could have won that seat -- Barbara Hafer. But no, she did not suit their stereotype, so they pushed her out in favor of Casey, an anti-abortion candidate. Their poster boy in North Carolina was Heath Shuler, an athlete, an evangelical Christian who is also anti-choice. So that is how the Democratic party decided to answer the challenge of the defeat in 2004.

In 2006, they went further to the right.

Did it work? Well, they took over the House and Senate. But was it because of this strategy? No. No, it was not because of the strategy.

I want to go back to the poster state for Thomas Frank, Kansas. Remember? Kansas was permanently now in the hands of the conservatives. So let's look at Kansas. What happened in 2006? There was a revolution in Kansas, and it was a progressive revolution. (Cheers, applause.) Somebody I know pretty well -- she's standing here -- wrote about this in the current issue of Ms. Magazine. It's called "What's up with Kansas?" And we looked in depth about what happened here.

Just a few statistics. Pro-choice Governor Kathleen Sebelius was re-elected with a 58 percent majority. (Cheers, applause.) Lieutenant Governor Mark Parkinson changed parties. He had been a Republican Party leader. He changed parties to run with Sebelius as a pro-choice candidate and was, of course, elected. Pro-choice Paul Morrison won the attorney general's race with 58 percent of the vote against Phill Kline, who was a Rush Limbaugh clone, who tried to get women's private medical records from abortion clinics.

Moderates on the state school board, both Republican and Democrat, took the school board back. Kansas was tired of being the laughing stock over creationism, over the conservatives taking over the state school board. And finally, Nancy Boyda, a progressive underdog Democrat, took a House seat from five-term Republican incumbent Jim Ryun. (Applause.)

In short, Kansas stood up and said, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore," like the guy in the 1977 movie. The conservatives had hold of their state, the conservatives were sinking women, the conservatives were doing everything they could to put women back, and women and men, but women led the way, said, "We're turning them out. We are turning them out."

All right. Fine. But Kansas is a small state, right? So it can't really indicate what happened in the rest of the country.

Probably that conservative strategy was right, huh? Let's look.

Seven out of eight new senators are pro-choice, Casey being the single exception. Four more pro-choice governors were elected. The

abortion ban in South Dakota was defeated soundly in spite of the fact that both Catholic and Protestant churches poured millions of dollars into the state to keep women back. (Applause.) Abortion restrictions in California and Oregon were defeated.

The stem cell initiative in Missouri passed, and the stem cell issue swept many, many progressive candidates into office in the House and the Senate. There were six minimum wage initiatives on state ballots; six minimum wage initiatives passed.

Resulting in the largest caucus in the history of the U.S. House being the Progressive Caucus. (Applause.) So did that strategy work? I don't think so.

And how did women vote? And again, Ms. Magazine did an extensive analysis of this in their issue that came out right after the election. How did women vote versus men?

On the troops, getting the troops out, women, 55 percent said, "I want the troops out and I want them out now"; only 29 percent of men. A nine-point gender gap on Social Security, keeping it from being privatized. Why is that? Because women need Social Security for their retirement. Candidates seem to forget that. The same thing with health care, a 13-point generation gap. This is who said these issues are very important. Women said -- 46 percent of women said health care is very important and coverage, only 33 percent of the men, because men have more coverage. Men have more coverage.

The Democrats, in their wisdom, in 2004 had taken the Equal Rights Amendment out of their platform for the first time in 40 years. So how did the electorate feel about women's equal rights? Well, there's a gender gap on that, but not so much, because men are now in favor of women's rights as well as women. There's an eight-point gap, but 34 percent of women rated it important or very important that women be in the Constitution. The Republicans had taken equal rights out of their platform in 1980 when Ronald Reagan came in, but the Democrats decided in 2004 that was old stuff. The voters disagreed.

The minimum wage. Again, women are the majority of minimum wage earners. And I don't mean teenagers, I mean adult women. Thirty-one percent said that it was very important to pass the minimum wage and raise it, and the Congress did do that last night.

And there was a gender gap on how that vote came out, as well as the war vote, because women did not want to give Bush a blank check in the House of Representatives. And there was a much higher percentage of women in Congress voting against that blank check than men.

So we see that on the issues in the last election, women did make a difference. Women thought about it differently. But again, that was last November. How are women feeling now? Has anything changed? I know that the war rhetoric has cranked up out of the White House.

There is a lot more discontent among the electorate in general, women again leading the way. There is -- it's interesting that the biggest sort of difference between women and men on the war is parents -- parents. The women want their kids out of Iraq; the men not so

much, or they're behind women, the fathers are behind the mothers on that.

But what is stuck? Well, the Pew organization in March put out a report that is very, very interesting. They looked at 20-year trends -- 20-year trends in the electorate. And what they say is over the last 20 years, overwhelming majorities of women and men support equal rights for women, and that has not changed. Not only do high majorities want abortion to remain legal, 56 percent of the voters overall do not want any more restrictions on abortion. So the people are not with the parties when it comes to this issue, when it comes to the so-called cultural issues.

People are less religious when they consider how they're going to vote, and this was a surprise, because we keep hearing, well, you've got to affirm your faith and talk about your religious beliefs if you're going to be a candidate. And what Pew finds is that the voters are saying, yes, I'm religious, I have faith. But unless it's about helping the poor, I am really not taking my church into the voting booth. So people are voting less on the basis of what they are hearing from the pulpits, and we know what they are hearing from some pulpits.

In terms of the abortion issue, there is a big party gap; 40 percent of the Republicans do not want any more restrictions on abortion, and that is mostly women. Something very, very high that people don't think about: affirmative action. Now, there was an affirmative action vote in Michigan in the last election, and it did fail. We don't know why it failed, but Pew's data are very informative here. When you ask people, do you believe in affirmative action if it means better jobs for women and minorities, 70 percent say yes. (Applause.)

But what of going to the right? After all, Schumer and Emanuel took a lot of credit. There was a joke going around in Washington that the most dangerous place in the United States was between Charles Schumer and a TV camera -- (laughter) -- because they ran out and took credit. Their two poster boys, Casey and Shuler, had been elected, after all.

But what about the rest of them? They had first-, second- and third-wave candidates, and there's a very good analysis on the Web that I will give you at the end of the talk. But what they did was sort of what a lot of groups do. They had their first tier, they called it, first wave of candidates, and then, as the election went on and people were doing sort of well without their help, they decided, well, maybe we ought to add them to our list so we can take credit for those when the election is over. And wasn't that clever?

But let's look at their first wave. There were 21 races, and 10 did win, less than half, less than half. And a lot of people won not only without their help, but in spite of their giving no help and informally being worse than that. I've already mentioned Boyda in Kansas. Carol Shea-Porter in New Hampshire won an absolutely shoe-string race, no help from the party, lots of shoe leather, lots of grass-roots support door to door, and she ran as a feminist progressive candidate.

In the post-election analysis, we can look and see who gets the credit. Is it really the party boys who said, let's go more conservative? I don't think so. If you look at what happened, the net roots get a lot of credit -- progressives coming through the Internet giving to candidates, working for candidates, people like moveon.org. Howard Dean's 50-state strategy gets some credit, although I have a little problem with Howard Dean when he went on Meet the Press and told Tim Russert that he wanted to get the abortion discussion out of Democratic politics.

And Celinda Lake, a pollster for a lot of Democrats and certainly someone who knows what she is doing when it comes to the pulse of the electorate, has said, if the Democrats had talked more about abortion and not less about abortion, they might have one the election in 2004. The Democrats 50-state strategy did help, and that was Howard Dean against some of the other people in the party that thought it was a waste of money.

Progressive PACs made a huge difference -- the National Organization for Women, the Feminist Majority, Emily's List, People for the American Way and others -- who got out there and supported progressive candidates.

And finally, there were creation of new PACs on the Internet, such as ActBlue, and that made it much easier for people to contribute to progressive candidates.

Still, right before the election, Lifetime Television did a poll, and Feminist Majority did a separate poll, and what they found was that women still did not feel like the candidates, in general, were addressing the issues they cared about enough. Now, certainly the war was up there. The war was THE overriding issue. But then, when you come down to the other things women care about, such as pay equity and child care, you don't hear very much about it from the candidates.

And there's an old joke that's been going around Washington since Bush came into office, and every year you hear it when he gives his State of the Union message. And it is: If you take a drink every time Bush says "nuclear" you'll go home drunk. (Laughter.) But if you take a drink every time he says "woman," you will be sober at the end of the evening. And we do not want that to happen when women, again, are the majority. So candidates of both parties need to talk about what the majority wants, and they need to talk to the majority.

So what are the lessons we have learned from the last election and going forward -- Anna Nicole notwithstanding? We have learned that the country is not permanently conservative. Progressive movements are what has always made social change. Progressive movements are why this room is filled with women and they're not still in the balcony. (Applause.) Progressive women care about winning issues, they care about affirmative action. They care about stem cell research. They care about choice. They care about the minimum wage. We know that. But there's something else.

Going back to Kansas, moderates made a big difference in Kansas, and moderates have somewhere to go -- they need somewhere to go.

Moderate women vote their priorities too, and their priorities are not sending their children to Iraq and their daughters to the back alleys. (Applause.)

Independents are leaning now toward the Democrats. The Pew data are very, very clear on that. But independents have to be given a reason to vote and to put progressive candidates in office. Going for the majority vote, listening to the majority, listening to women -- for candidates of both parties, and for both parties I might add, is a winning strategy.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. BJERGA: Well, thank you very much for your presentation. And please, keep those questions coming. It makes it a better experience for all of us. And I've already seen a lot of really great questions. I'm going to be challenging (sic) to ask all of them, but we'll try to get in as many as we can.

The first question -- and I've seen this question asked in several forms, and it kind of leads to the example that you gave at the beginning of your speech of the National Press Club not allowing women onto the floor until 1971. It's an example that's been brought forth several times, but it is an example indeed from 1971. It's been 36 years. And several people asked this question:

Many younger women seem to think that women's rights issues have been fought and won by an earlier generation. They weren't alive in 1971. How do you inspire Generation Y women? And how are their challenges different from the generation of the '70s?

MS. BURK: Thank you. Well, in the '70s we didn't have anything and we were fighting to get things. We were fighting to get basic rights, like equal credit, pregnancy leave, legal abortion. Now younger women have to fight to keep what they have.

And one example I will give you -- because most women are now working outside the home, and younger women more and more. There was a statistic, I understand, that was slightly discredited. I'm not sure where we are on how many women these days are married versus not married, but married women are -- will be in the minority, probably, at least by the end of the next decade. But that's the workplace. And I know that Cyrus Mehri is in the audience today, and he is a person who has worked very hard, and that \$46 million settlement that was mentioned in my introduction was thanks to Cyrus and his partner, Steve Skalet. (Applause.)

But what we are learning from the young women is it is employment issues that are going to bring them into the women's movement, because what happens is that we say women get more radical as they age, because by the time they hit about 30 years old, they see that even though they got out of Harvard, they got out of Yale, they're not climbing that ladder as fast as the men. And so I think the next decade, workplace issues are certain going to take front and center.

MR. BJERGA: The press in general is no longer a male-dominated profession, but media management still is. Given that we're at the

National Press Club, please tell us what you think about gender equity or lack thereof in the media.

MS. BURK: Well, I wish my good friend Jessica Lee was here. Jessica was a White House reporter during Bush I. She worked for USA Today and she covered the president. And she told me this story.

She said even though there are lots more women in the media -- and at that time, USA Today was one of the more egalitarian employers of women in the media -- she said, "There's still a difference." She said, "You can go into any meeting, and some guy has to leave the meeting early because his car blew the brakes and he's got to go pick it up. And what happens? Well, people commiserate. They say, 'Oh, God yeah, I had one of those lemon cars one time. It gave me grief all the time. I jut couldn't stand it. I finally got rid of it and bought a 208Z.'" (Laughter.) If a woman," she said, "says, 'I have to leave early because my day care is closing,' it was, 'Well, aren't you serious about your job? Don't you care about this newspaper?'"

So I think that it was what happens to women in the media as women in other professions. They know that they're going to be seen as somebody with an axe to grind or a cause if they speak up too much, and unfortunately, there's still way too much of that. (Applause.)

MR. BJERGA: One person in the audience asks, why does abortion have to be such a high priority on the women's agenda when many women have other priorities such as health care insurance, affirmative action and poor schools?

MS. BURK: Well, the short answer is if you can't control your body, you can't control any other part of your life. (Applause.) But the reason the women's movement, the organized women's movement is always concerned with abortion, as we are with health care, as we are with minimum wages, as we are with childcare, is because we are constantly pushed into a corner to keep what we have, and we are losing the rights that were so hard-fought in this room and outside this room in the 1970s bit by bit by bit.

So the women's movement -- it isn't that the women's movement cares about abortion and nothing else; it's that the women's movement is forced by the right wing and I'm sorry to say by some so-called progressive lawmakers to fight for the rights they have had since the 1970s and stop the erosion of what we fought so hard for.

MR. BJERGA: Most of the questions focus on domestic issues, and that's understandable, given the portfolio of issues that you examined. One person in the audience asks, however, what can be done to help women in countries like Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan, where women clearly are second-class citizens?

MS. BURK: Women are even further below than second-class citizens. And this is one of the things that we don't hear very much about, because, again, the domestic agenda does seem to take priority. But during the Augusta National argument, the -- Hootie Johnson and the boys sent out some talking points to the press, and one of the talking points was, why doesn't the women's movement do something useful, like take up the cause of women in Afghanistan?

And we proudly said, "We do and have." The Feminist Majority, National Organization for Women, other groups represented in this room were sticking up for the women in Afghanistan long before George Bush ever heard of the country. (Applause.)

And he still can't spell it. (Laughter.)

MR. BJERGA: Of course we had numerous questions about politics today, and the first one -- I'm actually going to combine two questions that flow together nicely.

You seem to equate women with Democrats, liberals, supporters of choice. Doesn't this ignore the one-third of female senators and the many conservative women in the voting public? If the congressional candidates on your ballot were a conservative GOP woman and a progressive Democratic man, whom would you vote for?

MS. BURK: I'd vote for the progressive Democratic man because I always say what I want is feminists and progressives in the White House, and men can be feminists and are feminists. And some of them are in this room today. (Applause.)

I think it is a shame that there are women who still don't get it, and part of our job is to make sure they do get it. But the data that I quoted, from Pew particularly -- one reason we identify women with the Democrats more heavily than the Republicans is because they identify themselves more heavily with the Democrats and the Republicans. I wish the Democrats listened a little bit better, because I think that many of us have had the feeling before that they take women for granted often and say, "Well, they have nowhere else to go." But it isn't my defining women as Democrats and progressive; it's women defining themselves that way.

MR. BJERGA: How would you rate Nancy Pelosi as speaker so far? What has she done that a male Democratic speaker would not have done?

MS. BURK: Well, I think it's very interesting; on this war vote, she just said, "My job is to get the bill through the House, but I don't believe in this bill, and I'm not going to vote for it."

And so I think she has shown some leadership there that many of the prior speakers would not have shown.

I do have a statistic, if I can find it, that is very interesting in terms of women's priorities and the elections. And the polls asked Feminist Majority and Lifetime -- I think both of those polls -- asked women how important it was to elect a woman speaker, and 54 percent said it is very important. And men did not see it as nearly important. I think the number was somewhere around 29 percent for men, although men did support a woman speaker not nearly in the same numbers. And the same is true for electing more women to Congress, because women voters saw that as a way to get rid of the Delays, the Abramoffs, the Foleys, all those scandals.

MR. BJERGA: What are the top issues Congress should be dealing with this session? This is asked especially in light of the Women's

Equality Amendment, a revival of the Equal Rights Amendment. Do you see passage of that as even in the top five of issues?

MS. BURK: Well, I know that the Equal Rights Amendment is among the top five issues with women, with the voters, with the majority. Is it a top five issue for the Congress in this session? I think the top five issues for Congress in this session are the war, the war, the war, the war, and the war. I think the voters said that; women voters said it stronger than men. So I think until Congress can deal with that -- I was gratified that the minimum wage did pass last night in sort of a deal with the devil in terms of the war vote, but it did pass. That's going to help a lot of women.

We think the Women's Equality Amendment is very important when it was introduced this session by Carolyn Maloney of New York and Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts. It was standing room only. It made front page news. Why did it make front page news? Because 90 percent of the people say we need to have it in the Constitution.

MR. BJERGA: Many promising female candidates in close House races in 2006 did not win in close races. Male candidates had a slightly better record. Why do you think that is?

MS. BURK: Oh, I think there are several reasons. I cited two races where the party did not help women at all. There were races where the party did help women and they still lost. The Duckworth race was one. That was pretty controversial in the first place in terms of her being chosen by the party stalwarts.

But I think that money is a big factor. We have always known that incumbency is a big factor.

There are more male incumbents than female incumbents, and that's pretty tough. Those two things make it harder, I think, for women to get in.

But the electorate is seeing -- both women and men -- that women can be good lawmakers, and in many cases better lawmakers than some of the men they've seen. So I think it's changing.

MR. BJERGA: We could not have a politically themed luncheon during the 2008 presidential cycle, especially before this audience, without several questions about Hillary. (Laughter.)

First question of several about Hillary Clinton. Can we expect women -- should Hillary Clinton be the nominee -- to vote more than they have in the past and coalesce around her candidacy?

MS. BURK: Absolutely. I just said that moderate women need a place to go. Moderate men need a place to go, for that matter, because there isn't a place in the Republican party, at least. And so you will see a lot of crossover, I think, if Senator Clinton gets the nomination.

A lot of women said before the last election, as I said during my remarks, that they thought electing a woman speaker was very important. And if they said that about a speaker, imagine how they

will feel about a female candidate for the highest office.

MR. BJERGA: Do you think Hillary would be the candidate now running who would do the most for women, if elected?

MS. BURK: Well, I need to qualify the answer by saying that I live in New Mexico and I am a consultant for Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, who is also running for the nomination.

I am just going to say this. All of the Democratic candidates that you see in the debates are better than any of the Republican candidates for women. (Applause.) Women, for the first time in quite a number of years, have the strongest field of candidates to pick from than we have seen in at least a generation or more.

MR. BJERGA: Is the state of Hillary Clinton's marriage germane to determining if she should be president? (Scattered laughter.)

MS. BURK: Why don't we ask Rudy Giuliani? (Laughter, cheers, applause.)

I just think it is shameful -- I was asked earlier this morning if the front page of The Washington Post was fair or not to Hillary; would it be fair to a male candidate? So on and on. My answer is I don't know if it's fair or not. I think it's a rehash. And I think whether it's fair, whether it's right, whether it would happen to a male candidate, I doubt; I know this: It is tawdry.

MR. BJERGA: How would you evaluate media coverage of the Clinton campaign?

MS. BURK: Well, I think the media coverage has been pretty good of all the campaigns. Some of us who are in the so-called second tier -- (chuckles) -- would like to see more coverage of all the candidates.

Hillary Clinton -- there is no question that the senator has a very strong campaign team. I think anybody would be foolish to say that she doesn't know what she's doing. She knows exactly what she's doing. She will run a very strong campaign. So will many of the other candidates.

I have not seen, until this morning, when there was way too much space given in The Washington Post to all this rehashing of her marriage and so forth -- I think so far the coverage has been pretty even-handed. I think we're all going to be disappointed if it devolves into these discussions of past personal issues, and I know that we're going to be very unhappy if they start covering her clothes more than her policies. (Applause.)

MR. BJERGA: How do women's groups get candidates to address issues such as equal pay, paid family leave and other issues?

MS. BURK: Well, sometimes -- (chuckles) -- we feel like we need a frying pan to hit them over the head. (Laughter.) But you do it just, you know, like you've always convinced somebody. The first thing you have to do is get in the room with them, show them the

polls. You know, the polls are very strong on something like pay equity. It always polls very high.

But in the case of the party establishments, you have to go beyond the candidates, because Schumer and Emanuel, I think, as heads of the campaign committees, are a perfect example of two folks that are in control, and they don't want to hear it. And when they don't want to hear it, they pick a different strategy, and it's oftentimes a losing strategy. How many times are they going to have to lose before they listen to the majority? That is the question.

MR. BJERGA: More younger women are taking "traditionally male" -- in scare quotes -- college courses, getting college degrees in quote-unquote "traditionally male" fields, and succeeding in "traditionally male" jobs. With this trend, do you think the gender gap in voting will continue to exist, or will younger women still vote differently than younger men?

MS. BURK: Well, I think younger women always have their own bodily integrity to deal with, and younger men do not. I think it is a myth that younger women are making any serious inroads into male-dominated jobs. Even though women are the majority in universities and colleges now, they are still very much a minority in science, math and technology. And I will have to tell you, Lisa Mattes (sp) is sitting here, and I'm sure she knows all of the statistics, but the last one I saw for engineering is that only 8 percent of the engineers in the United States are female.

So to say that women are making great inroads into male-dominated jobs is just not accurate, and I think the sooner we realize that and get behind women for these non-traditional jobs and encourage them more through government policies and personal politics the better off we'll be.

MR. BJERGA: A question about the Corporate Accountability Project. What will you gain from suing major corporations?
(Laughter.)

MS. BURK: Well, \$46 million to start with. (Continued laughter.)

But what you gain from suing major corporations -- and I will refer now to the largest sex discrimination suit in history, which the National Council of Women's Organizations did not facilitate, but it is against Wal-Mart. That suit is very important because it is about pay and promotion of women down, if you will, at the bottom of the heap. When we hear about big sex discrimination verdicts, we often think, oh, well, that's women on Wall Street, that's women like Paula Poskin (sp) that work in the financial sector, and oftentimes it is. But we must not forget that women down at the bottom in those minimum wage and slightly-above jobs are the majority of female workers in this country.

And so when you, you know, sue a corporation like Wal-Mart -- the largest employer in the nation and I think maybe the world now, at least I know in retail -- you get their attention. Will they have to

pay out enough to make a difference in the bottom line? We don't know. But until we try it and until we say, "We are going to hold you accountable, and you can't run roughshod over women," nothing will change.

And I do have to add one footnote here because a lot of people think the Supreme Court is only about abortion and abortion rights for women and it's really not about anything else, and if you're not worried about that, it doesn't much matter who gets appointed to the Supreme Court. Well, all I have to say to you is that Roberts and Alito are very, very pro-corporate justices, and if the Wal-Mart case gets to the Supreme Court, there is a very good chance that the women will not prevail and it could gut Title VII, which is our main employment law for the next generation. So the courts matter in more than abortion.

MR. BJERGA: In April when now-former radio host Don Imus made remarks about the Rutgers women's basketball team, you called for his firing and he was. But was he simply saying a lot of things that his audience was thinking? Are the Don Imus's of the world really beyond the pale, or is that what lurks behind civil discourse on gender?

MS. BURK: Well, that's a very good question.

And what I said during the Don Imus thing -- and Barbara Reynolds and I were just talking about it before coming into this room -- is had that been only about gender and not gender and race, I think Imus would still be on the radio. And that is because we do not take gender discrimination and gender disparagement in this country as seriously as we take race discrimination. I think it is because the culture has always tolerated it, it's just the girls.

If Imus had called those women a bunch of dykes playing basketball and not had the racial slur in there, I have no doubt he would still be on the air. And I think it is unfortunate. Al Sharpton stepped up, so did many other black male leaders. Al Sharpton got in and met with Leslie Moonves of CBS. When it was only a gender issue with the National Council of Women's Organizations, Leslie Moonves said, "I don't want to talk to you." So that is what goes on.

MR. BJERGA: Why has the term "feminist" become a loaded word among some, even among some people who support women's equality?

MS. BURK: I wish I knew. (Laughter.) I am often asked, do we need a new word? Feminism is tainted. The word "feminist" is tainted; don't we need a word? What about "womanist"? A quality advocate?

Yeah, let's get a new word; in about 15 minutes, they're going to disparage that word, too, because fundamentally, there are people that just don't believe women should have equal rights with their brothers, husbands, uncles and friends. So no matter what you call the word, some people are going to shy away from it.

But our organization, Feminist Majority, in the lead of that, has done a lot of polling on the word "feminist." And when you ask it, as

Ellie puts it, the hardest way, when you ask women and men, are you a feminist, no dancing around, do you believe in equality, da, da, da, da, da, are you a feminist, the majority say yes.

MR. BJERGA: We're almost out of time. But before we ask the last question, we have a couple of important matters to take care of.

First of all, let me remind our audience and members of future speakers. On May 30th, we have John E. Potter, the postmaster and CEO of the U.S. Postal Service, who will discuss, "The Future - It's in the Mail." On June 4th -- (laughter) -- we have Alphonso Jackson, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. And finally, on June 6th, Senator John Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, will be reporting for duty at the National Press Club. (Laughter.)

Second, I would like to present our guest with our time-honored and highly prestigious gifts -- the National Press Club Certificate -- (cheers, applause) -- and the even more renowned National Press Club coffee mug. (Laughter, applause.)

And now, on to our last question. And looking at our time, you'll have a couple minutes to answer this. And I'll take some time in asking it, because I'm making it up as I go along. But it was a question actually originally directed toward me standing here at the podium, but I'd be interested in your response to this.

The women's movement clearly has had a long-standing support in American society going back to the 19th century. And clearly, the more support that you have, the more effective you're going to be. About 51 percent of our population is made up of women, about 49 percent is men. This room is not of that percentage. In fact, of these people standing here, or here at this head table, the only male would be me. (Laughter.)

So my question for you is -- and this is the last question of the day -- how do you get the women's movement to 100 percent support in society? Or because of the nature of the issues and the nature of the society itself, is that an impossibility?

MS. BURK: Thank you. Well, you are our affirmative action nominee here at the head table. (Laughter.) Actually, there are a lot of good feminist men in this room. I won't say a lot, but a number. Christopher Turman, who drug a pink pig all the way to Augusta for us. (Laughter.) Jack Wells (sp) and other men in the room that have always been supportive of women and women's rights.

I think that one of the ways we get to 100 percent -- and it's helping us get there -- is making fathers of daughters aware of what the women's movement has done and can do for their daughters.

You know, in 1960 or '62, whenever the Equal Pay Act passed, people viewed the Equal Pay Act as a zero-sum game -- "Oh my God, if we pay women what we pay men, it's going to hurt men's salaries. They can't support their families." As if women were not always supporting their families. And it was seen as a battleground between women and men; and women were taking something from the rightful owners. Women

were taking the jobs -- I will never forget Barbara Reynolds, something she said to me in this context of African Americans. She said to me, "On the one hand, they say we don't want to work, and on the other hand they say we're taking all the jobs. Now which is it?" (Laughter, applause.)

So I think that we have to go through the men who are fathers of daughters and say, If your daughter makes the money she should make, her life will be better and so will the life of her family. If your mother had made the money your father made, throughout her work life, you might not have to be writing a check every month.

And so men are starting to get it, that it is a family issue, it is not women against men. And I would say we welcome every feminist we can find -- male, female, child, whatever, join us. (Applause.)

MR. BJERGA: Thank you once again. And thank you all for attending.

This meeting of the National Press Club is adjourned.
(Applause.)

####

END