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Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
S	61	2	4	1

Emily's List

9/30

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
EMILY'S LIST WOMEN VOTE PROJECT
BRUNSWICK, MAINE
SEPTEMBER 30, 1996

[Acknowledgments: Libby Mitchell, State Representative; Mary Beth Cahill, Executive Director, EMILY's List]

Thank you, Mary Beth. I'm delighted to be with all of you in Brunswick and in the great state of Maine.

It gives me great pleasure to know that EMILY's List has endorsed Tom Allen and Joe Brennan.

Tom Allen has been a longtime voice for the working families of Maine. A community leader, a husband and a father, Tom Allen has fought -- and when elected, will continue to fight -- for issues that matter to women and their families.

And Joe Brennan has been an advocate for the people of Maine throughout his years of distinguished public service. He has long supported creating opportunities for everyone who is willing to work for them. And that means supporting an increase in the minimum wage. It means expanding access to education for our young people. It means standing with the President in supporting an expansion of the Family and Medical Leave law to help parents go to a child's doctor's appointment or a parent-teacher conference.

This is an exciting time to be a woman. It is an exciting time to be an American. Over the last four years, I have had the chance to travel all over our country, meeting with women and men to talk about their aspirations and concerns. And everywhere I go, I see people who are coming together to find solutions to challenges in their communities. I see people forming partnerships to fight crime in their neighborhoods, improve their local schools, clean up the environment, and provide opportunities for young people.

Whether I'm in San Antonio, or Sioux City, or South Central L.A. or right here in Brunswick, people are rolling up their sleeves and doing whatever it takes to make their communities safer, cleaner, more secure, and more productive.

These efforts make me very optimistic about our future.

I'm also encouraged because I have seen the important role that women are playing across our country. I often think about the parallels between now and the early part of the century. Women were leading the struggles for women's suffrage, for child labor laws, for improvements in public education, and for workplace reforms. From Jane Addams' settlement movement in Chicago to Eleanor Roosevelt's efforts on the lower East side of Manhattan, women were on the front lines of progress.

Many of the women of the Progressive Era were educated and of economic means. Yet they were able to look beyond themselves and their day-to-day concerns and see what we as a society needed.

They spoke out. They lobbied politicians. They organized. They picketed. They made things happen. Because of them, today our children no longer work in sweatshops, our loved ones can drink water that is safe, and we have the right to vote.

And yet, today, 75 years after winning the right to vote, so many of us do not feel enough of a stake in our political process to exercise this hard-won fight. Fifty-four million women chose not to vote in the last election.

And here in Maine, 87,000 women who voted in 1992 did not vote in 1994.

I think about that every time I travel and meet women around the world whose life choices are so limited because they are still living without this basic right.

That's why the EMILY's List Women Vote! Project is so crucial. Women bring a special perspective to civic life. Each of us has the power to shape our common future -- politically, economically and socially. We only need to use it.

Instead of pointing fingers or assigning blame, women across our country are asking: "What are we going to do to solve this problem?"

It is that spirit of involvement and caring that makes me optimistic about our nation's future.

During the next few weeks, I hope you will take the same energy and commitment that brought you here tonight and talk to your friends, neighbors, and co-workers about the importance of this election.

This is a watershed election. It is the last Presidential election of the 20th century. It will elect the first President of the 21st century. And it will speak volumes about what the future holds for women and their families.

That is why women must be involved.

Now, I realize that there are some women out there who are turned off by politics and don't want to get involved.

I've even had people ask me, "How can you stand being in politics?"

And my answer is always: "Are you married? Do you work in an office? Do you belong to a community organization or play on a team?"

Politics is the stuff of every day life. It's how we make decisions together as people. It's also the engine of our democracy. And to paraphrase Winston Churchill, "Democracy is the worst form of government except for any of the alternatives that have ever been tried."

I believe that it matters who sits in the Oval Office. It matters for women. It matters for children. It matters for families. It matters for all Americans.

And in this election we have a chance to re-elect a President who understands the day-to-day concerns that most of us live with.

We have the chance to re-elect a President whose economic policies have created 10 million more jobs in America since 1992, cut the deficit in half, and lowered the combined rate of inflation and unemployment to the lowest point in 27 years -- and that's good news for women, who make up nearly half of our workforce.

I don't know how many of you saw the census data that was released yesterday. What better evidence is there that our economy is on the right track?

- The largest decline in the income gap in 27 years
- Typical family incomes up since the President passed his economic package in 1993.
- The biggest drop in the poverty rate in over a decade, which has meant the lowest rate of poverty among African Americans and the elderly in history, and the biggest drop in child poverty and among single mothers in decades.

This is good news for all Americans.

We have the chance to reelect a President who signed the Family and Medical Leave Act after it had been vetoed twice before -- and who now is working to expand it -- and that's good news for 12 million men and women who need to take time off to take care of a child, spouse, ailing parent.

We have the chance to reelect a President who fought for a raise in the minimum wage and expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit -- and that's good news for those two-thirds of minimum wage workers who are women.

We have the chance to reelect a President whose Administration has granted more federal loans to small businesses than ever before -- and that's good news for women business owners who are creating more new jobs than the entire Fortune 500.

We have the chance to reelect a President who has proposed a GI Bill for America's Workers and other job training programs -- and that's good news for women who are still struggling to achieve full equality in wages and in the workplace.

We have the chance to reelect a President who yesterday signed a bill that will require insurance companies to cover hospital stays for women after childbirth for at least 48 hours.

The President also signed the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill into law -- and that is good news for millions of women and their families who no longer have to live in fear of losing their medical benefits, or being denied them, when they lose or switch jobs.

We have the chance to reelect a President who has worked as hard as he can to expand educational opportunities for Americans, not shrink them -- and that is good news for children in Head Start programs, students whose only hope of higher education is through more flexible college loans, and workers who need to go back to school to learn new skills to compete in a new global economy.

We have the chance to re-elect a President who is willing to stand up to the National Rifle Association and say: "No" to assault weapons and "Yes" to the Brady Bill -- and that's good news for all Americans, and especially women who worry about their children's safety in school and on the street.

We have the chance to elect a President who will balance the budget without undermining our investments in education, the environment, Medicare and Medicaid, and our pension system.

There is not a lot of guesswork in this election. The choices are clear.

One choice offers a bridge to the future. The other a bridge to the past.

I believe that as Americans we are poised for the greatest years in our history. The economy is on the right track. Educational opportunities are expanding. The crime rate is going down across the country.

We have a strong story to tell. And when people ask you why this election matters, or why they ought to be involved, you can tell them that it's about creating opportunity for all; demanding responsibility from all; and strengthening our American

community.

[Bosnia story]

Thank you for your commitment and support. And thank you for helping Bill Clinton and Al Gore return for another four years in the White House.

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