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SYMPOSIUM OPENING REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

STEPHANIE SCHRIOCK*

Thank you Professor Ahranjani, thank you to the Symposium and the American University Washington College of Law. And thank you all for being here today.

My name is Stephanie Schriock and I'm the president of EMILY's List. For twenty-eight years, EMILY's List has been focusing on creating a culture of women's leadership and has become the nation's largest resource for women running for office.

Women's leadership in our country, or the lack thereof, has become quite the popular topic of discussion these days.

In fact, Jennifer Lawless, right here at American, just released some new research that found young women were twenty percentage points more likely than men to have never considered running for office.

And now we hear people asking if women are "leaning in" enough?

So why is there this gender gap in leadership? At the end of the day, all of these conversations tend to come back to the same two questions—is the problem the choices that women are making? Or, are women facing systemic limits to the choices they can make?

And I'm here to tell you that no matter what the original source of the problem is, you can fix both of those issues by having more women run for

* Stephanie Schriock, EMILY's List President. Stephanie Schriock joined EMILY's List as president in 2010, and in 2012 oversaw the most successful cycle in the organization's history, raising a record \$52 million, electing a historic number of Democratic women to Congress, and growing the EMILY's List community to more than three million members. Stephanie has been at the forefront of some of the most challenging and innovative political campaigns of the past decade. Prior to EMILY's List, Stephanie served as chief of staff to Senator Jon Tester (D-Montana) and is widely respected for her role as manager of the closely watched campaign and recount effort of Senator Al Franken (D-Minnesota). As the national finance director for Howard Dean's 2004 campaign for president, Stephanie built and led the team that revolutionized political fundraising. By harnessing the power of the Internet and through other creative strategies, the Dean campaign raised more than \$52 million in a Democratic primary, far exceeding previous records.

political office.

Not only do women in political office serve as role models for other young women and girls to follow in their footsteps, but they create a country that is more conducive to developing women into leaders.

At EMILY's List we recruit, train, support, and help elect Democratic women to office, up and down the ballot.

Now, that may seem like a simple proposition. Women are running today. Women are winning today. But that was not always the case, and it's still not happening at the numbers we need.

EMILY's List began in 1985 because three years earlier Harriet Woods ran for the United States Senate in Missouri. She was very close in the polls and came to DC to ask for financial help.

She was looking for just \$50,000 to buy airtime for an entire week of television ads to run across the state. And you can ask Claire McCaskill—today, that much money would get you about two days of ads in St. Louis.

She went to the unions. She went to the Democratic caucuses. She went to the Party. They all had the same answer: No. Women can't win.

They let her run out of money. And they let her lose—by just 26,000 votes. Less than two percent.

So a group of women decided to never let that happen again. They came together and built a network to finance Democratic women candidates. That group of women became EMILY's List.

They began by supporting social worker turned Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski in Maryland. They helped her become the first Democratic woman to win a seat in the Senate in her own right.

We haven't stopped since.

Our impact is growing, but we still have far to go. The United States ranks 77th in the world for our percentage of women in elected office. 77th.

Even Iraq and Afghanistan have a greater percentage of women in office than the United States. Today, in 2013, our Congress is less than twenty percent women.

It's clear, we have work to do. And no one is going to do it for us. As a young woman, I am honored to take this challenge on for the next generations of women.

I work every day to make sure that women have a path to leadership in politics because I know that this is not a fight we can take on alone.

Let's think about this. Men have been building leadership networks in this country for, well, 250 years; women have only really had the opportunity to do that in the last forty.

And only in the last thirty years have we made changes in the law to open doors and break down barriers across American society—in law, in

business, in journalism.

And those networks? They start in rooms like these.

They start by getting involved and supporting each other when we take on challenges and opportunities. When we become the backbone of each other's new ventures. When we build our sisters up. When we recognize that we all do better when we all do better. That is when we make progress.

Our mothers and grandmothers broke down doors for us so that we could get a seat at the table. Our job is to grab our sisters by the arms and bring them through those doors—together.

Because it's not just about taking a seat, it's about taking half the table.

That's what EMILY's List does. So much progress has been made for women in politics, just in my lifetime, and in yours.

Think about this. EMILY's List was founded in 1985.

Barbara Mikulski became a Senator in 1986.

Nancy Pelosi became the first woman Speaker of the House in 2007.

Hillary Clinton became the first woman to win a state presidential primary in 2008.

These women ran and won in our lifetime.

In my lifetime, we have tripled the number of women who have served in Congress. In this last election cycle we elected an historic number of women candidates.

We saw the first women Senators elected in Wisconsin, Hawaii, North Dakota, and Massachusetts. The first Congresswomen with combat experience, the first Asian American woman Senator, the first openly gay Senator, and three new Congresswomen under forty.

The 113th Congress has the greatest number of women ever. And I can proudly say that fifty-nine percent of them are EMILY's List candidates.

But, we still are only twenty percent of Congress! And we still face challenges.

When Barbara Mikulski was first elected to the Senate there was no women's bathroom. Seriously, she had to go back to her office building to go to the bathroom. She had to ask them to build her a bathroom.

That was in 1986. We had MTV before we had a women's bathroom in the Senate.

This year Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota announced the women of the Senate had made history in an unexpected way. There was, for the first time ever, a traffic jam in line for the women's bathroom.

So, our numbers are growing. But, men still outnumber us in Congress, in the courts, in corner offices, and in corporate boardrooms.

Women still earn less than men doing the same job. That's an issue that Republicans have stonewalled, ignored, opposed, called a "nuisance" and

“had to get back to us on.”

And there are still politicians out there who are trying to make it harder for women to fight for fair pay.

And that’s to their detriment. EMILY’s List polled independent women voters after the 2012 election and seventy-eight percent of them ranked equal pay among the most important issues.

These were not Democrats or Republicans, but true independents.

It’s easy to sit in rooms like these and think that these are issues that affect other women, not people like us.

That’s just what the women at Newsweek thought.

About forty years ago the women at Newsweek had to sue the magazine for the chance to be writers.

Until that point, women at Newsweek had been relegated to lower-paying jobs—doing research, clipping stories, and checking facts. They could write, but they had to hand their work over to a male colleague to get it published.

Only the men could be reporters and editors. Only the men got the by-lines.

So the women gathered their colleagues together in secret. At first it was just a few women, then a few became a dozen, and a dozen became forty-six.

Those forty-six women hired future Congressional Delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, as their attorney. And they became the first women in the media to sue for employment discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

They sued, and they won.

But their story quickly faded into the pages of history.

That was, until 2010, when three young women, also working at Newsweek, rediscovered it while writing a piece on fairness in the workplace.

As they read the account of the women who came before them, who worked so hard for so little credit, they saw how much had changed since the days when women in the newsroom were called ‘news dollies.’

They also saw how much had not changed.

They talked to their colleagues, and heard similar frustrations echoing decades later. Men had written all but six of the previous year’s cover stories.

More women had joined the ranks of the magazine’s masthead, but still held only thirty-nine percent of the leadership positions.

And because we are supposed to be living in a society where these battles have already been fought and won, it can be harder to push for

equality today than it was in the past.

And it's not just equal pay.

There are still men trying to legislate our access to healthcare. Men who let the last Congress end without renewing the Violence Against Women Act, letting the typically bipartisan bill expire for the first time since 1994.

It's pretty clear, a lot of members of Congress just have the wrong priorities. The easiest way to solve that problem is to send new people, new women, to Washington.

Because women have had enough of playing defense. We aren't satisfied with just holding the line. We are about being on offense. We have been on offense for centuries.

At his inauguration President Obama said "the most evident of truths—that all of us are created equal—is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall."

There's a reason that list started with Seneca Falls. Women have been true leaders in the fight for equal rights and equal freedoms.

Our fight didn't stop at Seneca Falls. After the Seneca Falls Convention it took women seventy-two more years to get the right to vote.

It took another forty-six years to ensure that women would have access to birth control.

And eight more years after that to make sure women could always have access to a safe and legal abortion.

And as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we have seen so much more progress.

In those forty years, we have seen the gender wage gap decrease, we have seen women become the majority of college graduates, and we have seen the number of women CEOs of Fortune 500 companies grow from two to twenty one.

Forty years ago, a woman had never been on a major party's presidential ticket or on the Supreme Court. And almost every woman who had served in Congress was filling the seat of their deceased husband. Now we have a Congress with ninety-eight women, the greatest number in history. We have fought hard. We have earned our seat at the table many times over. And we know it's our turn to take our place at the head of the table.

History has shown us, the key to progress for women is getting more women involved in the fight. We need more women to run for office. To lead corporations. To be law partners. And we need to give them the training and the confidence to do so.

I was lucky. My coaching started at home in Butte, Montana with a mom and dad who made sure I had the confidence to compete, to win, and to lose.

I was surrounded by strong women who let me try new things, who

guided my values and gave me strength.

I found mentors in the networks I built. In the strong women at Girl Scouts, at church, in school, and in a town that knew it took women and men working together to survive cold Montana winters, bad union strikes, and devastating mine disasters.

But it took laws to really open up opportunities for all those women—laws that I took complete advantage of.

I don't think there's a better example of advancing women's leadership than Title IX. Title IX eliminated gender discrimination in school sports and opened so many doors for young girls.

And, not only does it help advance women's leadership, but its very existence has women's leadership to thank! The legislation only exists because of the tireless work of the late Congresswoman Patsy Mink of Hawaii.

I played basketball for the Butte High School Bulldogs. That was an opportunity my own mother did not have!

Playing sports taught me how much fun it is to win, and how much you can learn when you lose. And in the world of electoral politics, I'm reminded of that lesson every day.

Sports also taught me that a loss, political or athletic, is not the end of the world; it's the end of the race. It made me less scared to take risks and take on challenges.

We need women and girls in this country to feel like they can take risks and try bigger things.

I also saw firsthand the importance of good coaching—getting the right advice at the right moment can change everything. I see that when I'm talking to women who are getting ready to run for office for the first time or taking the next step in their political careers.

And EMILY's List is always getting the next class of women candidates ready to go, making future campaigns possible. We have trained over 1,300 women to run for state and local office in the last two years alone.

In fact, we have already started trainings for 2014! We have trained everyone from grandmothers to recent college graduates, from coast to coast.

And EMILY's List has the power to back these women up. Now some of you may not know much about EMILY's List. So, here's the deal:

We recruit and train Democratic women to run for office. We help them staff up their campaigns with winning teams. We provide the political know-how. We turn out women voters. And we use our nationwide grassroots network to raise the funds they need to get ads on the air and boots on the ground.

I have seen that network in action. One of the first races I worked on was

for a wonderful woman named Mary Rieder, who was running for Congress in Minnesota.

She was an EMILY's List candidate—and I remember going to the post office box every night, and sitting in that campaign office opening checks from EMILY's List members from all over the country.

Checks for \$5, for \$50, for more. From women I had never met, from places I had never been to. Those checks, those notes said: We are with you. We believe in you. We have your back.

Over twenty-eight years that network, our network, of grassroots donors has done big things.

Through direct mail and online support they helped fund the campaigns that sent nineteen women to the United States Senate, 100 to the U.S. House, elected ten governors and hundreds of women at the state level.

The EMILY's List community now has more than two million members. And our grassroots donors gave \$52 million to help women candidates last cycle. They made the winning difference for women running across the country.

One of my favorite stories about an EMILY's List donor starts about twenty-five years ago. She was a young mom who was living in Texas, and she got a letter about this group of women who were raising money to help other women run for office, and she thought it sounded like a great idea.

So she wrote a check and gave her first ever political donation to EMILY's List. I think it was for \$25.

About two decades later, that woman decided to run for office herself, and EMILY's List was the first place she turned to. Because she knew what EMILY's List stood for, and what our community could do for our candidates.

We stood with her every step of the way. And that woman who wrote the \$25 check so many years ago? Well, you may have heard of her. Her name is Senator Elizabeth Warren. That's EMILY's List.

I have not always been at EMILY's List. But, I have been in this business awhile. I have seen a lot of polls. I have been backstage at concession speeches. I have helped make a few opponents give 'em.

When I was managing campaigns, I managed some of the toughest around. I ran a brutal campaign for a dirt farmer from Big Sandy, Montana, whom I am proud to say, is now known as Senator Jon Tester.

And I also got the call when Al Franken wanted to run for the Senate in Minnesota. Well, Senator Franken's victory ended up coming down to 312 votes. 312. Talk about a tough race—and a lot of lawyers.

I have run a lot of campaigns. And I know I said that Mary's was one of my first races. But really, the first campaigns I managed were my own. Campaigns waged in the very competitive political environment of Butte

High School.

I ran for class president many times. And I lost, many times. I needed a new plan. So my junior year I decided that I should run for Student Body President because it was not just my class voting, but the entire school.

I set out a campaign plan that solely targeted the freshman and sophomore vote. And I even got the younger sister of one of my opponents to join my campaign.

I won—and I learned my first campaign lesson: never underestimate the power of a younger sister!

There's a sister and then there's sisterhood.

We leverage that sisterhood every day at EMILY's List and we work to elect more women to city councils, to state legislatures, to Congress, and to governors' offices across the country.

And we do that for good reason. Democratic women have been the most progressive voting bloc in Congress for the last twenty years.

And these women are not just voting on progressive issues, they are the driving force pushing policies that will truly make a difference for women and families.

From the environment to equal pay, from Title IX to access to women's health care—it's clear that Democratic women have had a lasting and profound influence on legislative outcomes.

Their impact is felt every day by American families. And their leadership changes the conversation at those negotiating tables.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand tells a story about when she was serving on the House Armed Services Committee.

When they were talking about military readiness, she and women like Senator Gabby Giffords asked about supplies and personnel, and also about mental health programs for troops returning from combat and support for military families.

They changed the conversation. And that is a trend that goes back to the first woman to ever serve in Congress.

In 1916, Jeannette Rankin, a fellow Montanan, was the first woman to win a seat in the House of Representatives. And that was three years before women gained the right to vote nationally.

Before she was ever elected to Congress, Jeannette was a suffragist. And she was a real champion for the rights of women.

Her campaign was seen as a novelty, and even her own fellow suffragettes worried that a loss would hurt their cause.

But Jeannette was not scared. She was well-known and willing to work.

When she was elected to Congress she fought for the creation of the Committee on Woman Suffrage.

When it was created, she was appointed to it. And when the Committee reported out a constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote nationally, it was Jeannette who opened the very first House floor debate on the topic.

And she looked across that House floor, that floor full of men, and said, “How shall we answer the challenge, gentlemen?”

Jeannette was not afraid of a challenge. Her goal in Congress was not just to further herself, but to bring even more women into the political process.

Because she knew what we all know—women’s voices add more dimensions to the conversation.

There’s a place for any of your interests in politics. There’s a role for each one of you in my story.

This is not an either/or situation. You can do this and anything else you are passionate about.

In fact, you must. Democracy depends on us to take responsibility for our communities. As women working on expanding this forty year-old network, it rests on our shoulders to bring each other to the tables of power.

Some of you may run for office. Some of you BETTER! But all of you need to join me in this cause. We have to capture opportunities for women as quickly as they arise.

When there is an open seat, you can bet EMILY’s List is the first one there looking for a woman to fill it.

We have to be first, because it’s not as easy to find these women as you might think. And because men do not need to be asked.

In fact, a Rutgers survey found that fifty-five percent of men who self-identified as unqualified for public office had still considered running. Fifty-five percent.

Women do not work that way.

Women need to be asked multiple times before they run for office. It could take seven tries to convince someone. Consider this your first ask.

And when you see your smart, well-qualified friend and think ‘she should run for office,’ ask her. Then ask her again.

You need to take on that attitude, no matter what field you work in.

Because I will tell you this, if we do not throw each other’s names in the mix, no one will. Don’t think it just happens.

So, how shall we answer the challenge? We will answer the challenge by working together.

Our male counterparts do this. That 250 year old network? That’s how they built it.

It does not mean a woman is always the best person for the job. But, it

does mean we have to think long and hard about which one of our sisters could be. That is what EMILY's List does—and it's my challenge to each of you.

Because there is nothing holding us back. But there's also no ladder up for us, except the one we build for ourselves, the one we build together.

The women at Seneca Falls learned that. The women at Newsweek learned that. Jeannette learned that. I learned that.

They knew that when faced with a systemic problem you can not look to someone else for help. You have to look in the mirror.

Nobody handed these women the chance to make a difference. Nobody guaranteed them a path forward. They banded together, went out, and found it.

It takes courage to file a lawsuit that will attract the nation's attention. It takes courage to run for office.

It takes courage to do things even when the path forward does not seem obvious, especially when the path does not seem obvious.

Stop waiting for it to seem obvious. Do not wait for the seventh ask.

We have to strike out on an untraveled path knowing that in hindsight our journey forward will seem obvious.

Find motivation in the fact that with each new road we pave, we make it easier for other women to follow behind us.

Because progress is not made by individuals. Progress is not about advancing yourself and letting the next woman face the same hurdles on her own.

It's about making your way up and then reaching back to help the next woman do the same.

Because if we want a woman president and a Congress that looks like our country, and feels like it belongs to us—we can not just hope that it happens, we have to be willing to make it happen.

We owe it to the women at Seneca Falls and the girls at Butte High. We owe it to every woman who came before us and to every woman who will come after.

There is hard work ahead, but we are up to the task. In every field, we must strive together to move forward, together.

That is how we build our network.

That is how we move our country forward.

That is how we answer the challenge. And I'm so glad to have all of you with me in this fight. Thank you!