



Wider Opportunities for Women

ASK YOUR CANDIDATE:

HOW WILL YOU BUILD FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY?

During election season, we often take the opportunity to educate policy makers and the public-at-large about proposed solutions to build economic security for American families. One proven method for reaching candidates uses targeted questions related to policy areas critical to building family economic security.

National opinion research, conducted for Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) by Lake Research Partners, finds that the most powerful economic messages emphasize the **aspirational** themes of **building economic security** and **family economic security** and compelling **values**, like recapturing the American dream and strengthening and building the middle class. American voters need to know how candidates plan to achieve these goals through a comprehensive policy agenda.

Use the following questions at candidate forums and other public events to ascertain what a candidate thinks about policies that will help American families build economic security.

On promoting job creation, pathways to self-sufficient careers and workplace flexibility

1. According to the WOW's research, in today's economy, losing one's job is the top personal economic worry for Americans, regardless of age, gender, race or ethnicity. What's your plan to create new jobs with good wages and benefits?
2. Many Americans have caretaking responsibilities outside of work, for either older relatives or children. According to WOW's research, 89% of Americans say we need more flexible workplace policies to help families meet their obligations to care for family members. If elected, how would you encourage workplace flexibility in my community?
3. Many women earn low incomes because they are over-represented in very low-paying occupations, like administrative positions and retail sales, and underrepresented in better-paying fields, like information technology. Additionally, WOW's research shows that 82% of Americans believe that unmarried women have trouble making ends meet. What can you do to help remove barriers to good paying jobs with benefits for women and other vulnerable groups?

On developing tax policies that help American families meet basic needs and build assets

1. Services and publicly funded support programs are often out of reach to the many families trying to achieve economic security because they have accumulated a small amount of personal savings and may not meet the asset test on means-tested programs, which is often just \$2,000. Discouraging

long-term savings in order to receive short-term help, such as food or utility assistance is a real contradiction in the “American dream.” What can you do if elected to address this contradiction between policy and practicality?

2. According to WOW’s research, overall, a secure retirement dominates the wish list for savings. Almost two out of five Americans report that they would most like to save for retirement and a majority of the public believes that few if any Americans have retirement security. How would you address this issue and help to incentivize retirement savings for today’s workers and families?

On creating task forces at the state level to build economic security for American families

1. Would you support an executive or legislatively commissioned economic security task force in [state/community] that would identify barriers and create concrete goals with action steps for strengthening family economic security in our state/community?
2. According to WOW’s research, Americans support a broad-based agenda for building family economic security, including ensuring access to meals programs and long-term services and supports for seniors; fighting age discrimination in the workplace; offering tax credits to low-income renters; and providing child care assistance to families. If elected, what policy goals would you prioritize to build family economic security and strengthen the middle class?

On strengthening Social Security for today’s generation and future generations

1. Given the establishment of President Obama’s National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, there has been a lot of debate over Social Security. Over 3 in 10 elders rely on Social Security for 90% of their income or more in retirement. What’s your stance on strengthening Social Security benefits for today’s beneficiaries and for future generations?
2. With Social Security payments, about 1 in 10 elders are living in poverty. Without Social Security payments – relying only on retirement savings – almost 1 in 2 would be considered poor. It is clear that Social Security provides vital income for elders. Can you commit to protecting Social Security benefits from cuts – not only for elders but also for the persons with disabilities and families who rely on it?
3. The public strongly supports Social Security – 75% of Americans say it is critical to preserve Social Security, even if it means paying higher taxes. And WOW’s research shows that 58% of Americans think an elder needs more than \$30,000 to meet basic needs; yet average benefits amount to just over \$12,500 for older women and a little more than \$16,500 for older men. What options do you support for improving the program and its benefits?

Share your feedback or ask questions! Contact Kelly Stellrecht at kstellrecht@wowonline.org or (202) 464-1596