Washington women are pissed

Crosscut <email@send.crosscut.com>
Tue 10/23/2018 11:14 AM

To: Roth, Cambria <cambria.roth@crosscut.com>

In this edition: A dive into how anger is inspiring women in Washington to run for office, how many ads candidates are airing and the 9th District race.

Story by Cambria Roth

Before anyone knew who Patty Murray was, she was a mom driving home from Olympia with two young kids in the back seat of her car — and she was fuming. A hands-squeezing-the-steering-wheel kind of angry.

Earlier that week the instructor at her kids’ preschool informed her that the program was closing because of budget cuts enacted by the state Legislature.

Up to that point, Murray, a teacher, hadn’t been politically active. Despite growing up in Washington state, she had never even been to the state capitol. But she put her kids in the car and drove to Olympia anyways.

When she got to the capitol campus, she tried talking to legislators, but no one would listen. When she finally found a state legislator who would, he let her talk and then looked right at her and said, “That’s nice, but you can’t make a difference. You’re just a mom in tennis shoes.”

As she drove home to Bothell, she made a promise to her son and daughter. “I’m not going to let him get away with this,” she remembers repeatedly telling them. “He is not going to get away with this.”

Then she started plotting.
“I started thinking, okay, what can I do?” Murray says now. “If I call five of my friends and we find five other people … how do we reach more people? How do I get in contact with other moms and dads throughout the state who have kids in preschool and get them motivated? And that’s what we did.”

Murray helped build a coalition of 12,000 other angry parents. They sent letters, made phone calls and rallied their children on the steps of the capitol. Just three months after the coalition began its campaign, the program was reinstated.

“That was my lesson in life,” she says. “You can sit at home and gripe about what happens to you, or you can get angry, get involved and make the world work for you.”

Democratic Sen. Patty Murray walks through a line of supporters as she enters her election night victory party Nov. 3, 1998, in Seattle. (AP Photo/John Froschauer)

Women’s anger is again playing a role in our politics. Fueled by President Donald Trump’s election, the #MeToo movement and the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, Democratic women are running for more positions in the state Legislature and other offices than ever before.

According to four women I spoke to, this anger is complicated. They’re fed up, frustrated, tired of the status quo — but they’re not resigning themselves. Instead they say they’re owning their anger and using it to answer one big question: *What*
“In some ways I hesitate to use the word anger because men turn that against women — angry, emotional creatures,” says Tina Podlodowski, chairwoman of the Washington state Democratic Party. “Instead we’re channeling that into taking those seats of power and running for office, taking the reins of the system by becoming things like state party chairs, campaign managers and community organizers.”

It’s a national trend that is finding expression in Washington state politics, where a historic 105 women ran for state House and Senate in the Aug. 7 primary election. Of those women, 90 moved onto the general election, 70 percent of whom identify as Democrats.

Connie Fitzpatrick, Democratic candidate for the 26th Legislative District, campaigns door-to-door in Port Orchard. (Photo by Matt M. McKnight/Crosscut)

For Connie Fitzpatrick, the sense that she didn’t do enough in the run-up to the 2016 election had her searching for a way to make a real impact in politics. But it wasn’t until she read about the bad behavior by one of her district’s state legislators that she decided to channel her energies into running against him to represent the 26th Legislative District.

In April 2017, The News Tribune reported on verbal abuse in Rep. Jesse Young’s legislative office, quoting former staffers who said he was prone to “screaming fits.”
"I saw the hostile behavior in his office and that was unacceptable to me and fueled my fire," Fitzpatrick says.

A small business owner and Navy veteran with no experience in electoral politics, Fitzpatrick easily advanced to the general election, beating the Republican incumbent by nearly 7 percentage points in the Aug. 7 primary.

Kathy Gillespie knows that anger isn’t enough. She first ran for state representative in the 18th Legislative District, near Vancouver, in 2016 after sitting on the school board, where she grew frustrated with the way education funding was handled. She ended up losing by about 14 percentage points in that election, but took with her lessons she’s using in her second run for the seat. This year, she started campaigning earlier, hired consultants and made the race her sole focus. She has also seen a shift in the political environment that, she says, has helped her connect with voters.

“Things are different [from the last race] because people are uneasy about where we are nationally and at the state level,” Gillespie says. “What has changed is that the national scene has changed enough to cause the people I speak to when I’m knocking on doors to question: Is this the direction we want to go in? And if not, what is my role in changing things?”

The district Gillespie is running in hasn’t elected a Democrat in 20 years, but it is a politically and economically diverse district containing six of the seven incorporated cities in Clark County. To the south are urban areas like Camas and Vancouver, while communities with roots in agriculture and timber like Yacolt and La Center sit to the north of the district. The district is also home to Ridgefield, which has been named Washington’s fastest growing city from 2013 to 2017, due to land availability and its proximity to Portland and I-5.

"[The District] has had a population gain of 30 percent, so a lot of people are coming in and bringing with them different expectations, dreams, aspirations — and our communities are responding to that," Gillespie says.

Gillespie hopes she can offer that type of leadership and she just might. Gillespie could flip the historically Republican district. She beat Republican Larry Hoff by four points in the primary and Democrats are pouring money into her race. According to Public Disclosure Commission filings, the House Democratic Campaign Committee has given Gillespie $75,000.

For Gillespie, this moment is less about being angry and more about seeing an opportunity to do better. She says she understands female rage, but internalizes it differently.

“I think [women] look to our leaders and don’t necessarily see ourselves in those
leaders and we don’t hear them reflecting back to us our values or our hopes and dreams for our children and communities — the women running recognize that it’s up to them,” Gillespie says. “There is no baton to pass to anyone, the baton is in your hands now and you need to step up and do the work. I’m not surprised at all — when women feel things aren’t going well, they decide they have to do something.”

Gillespie and Fitzpatrick are all part of a larger movement — one that, like the 1992 election that vaulted Patty Murray into national politics, is being labeled as another “Year of the Woman.”

And Sen. Murray says 2018 feels exactly like 1992: Women don’t want to sit at home and let things happen to them. There is one difference she recalls, though.

“When I ran in 1992, I had people say to me, ‘Just call yourself Pat, so no one knows you're a woman,’” Murray says. “That was the exact opposite of why I was running. No one would say that to a woman today, because they know women are effective and they can do the job. That has changed — and I’m delighted to see it.”

Did you enjoy this? Forward this email to your friends and encourage them to subscribe!

Politically Ad- vantageous

A study by Wesleyan Media Project found that in races for the House and Senate, in the period between Sept. 18 and Oct. 15, Democrats posted huge ad advantages over Republicans. And it was true locally too.

The study found that in Washington's race for the U.S. Senate, incumbent Maria Cantwell (D) has aired 1,461 ads while challenger Susan Hutchison (R) has only aired 98 ads. It was the same in the 8th District race, where Democrats had a 1,507 ad advantage. The study has tons of interesting data and analysis about national races. Check it out here.
A battle for who can be more progressive

In Washington’s 9th Congressional District race, Democratic incumbent U.S. Rep. Adam Smith is facing another Democrat, a young politician who identifies as a socialist: Sarah Smith. Smith is part of the relatively nascent group called Brand New Congress, which focuses on recruiting House and Senate candidates to run on progressive policy platforms without corporate financing. Smith has made abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, a main tenant of her campaign.

While she barely scraped by with a win against Republican Doug Basler in the primary, she told Crosscut in August, "I feel very good about where I am in the district. I am a very strong voice for this district."

Voters first elected Adam Smith in 1997. His endorsements include local Democratic organizations, several labor unions and Washington state Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, as well as Rep. Pramila Jayapal. Some, however, argue he’s lost touch with his constituents after being in office for so long.

He has been criticized for voting for the creation of ICE, but has defended himself, noting he voted for the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, where the agency is housed, and not ICE. Smith has also been criticized for voting in 2002 for the Iraq war, a decision he now admits was a mistake.—Lilly Fowler

Recaps of two of Smith vs. Smith candidate forums:
A weirdly volatile and kinda infuriating candidate forum at Rainier Arts Center in Columbia City (The Stranger)

Democrats clash in 9th District forum hosted by Federal Way Mirror (Seattle Weekly)

Tweet of the week

Mohammed Kloub
@LessIsMch

Just a friendly reminder the newsroom has nothing to do with the editorial board.

Tim Keck @timothykeck
Seattle Times endorsed Dino Rossi. Today. In 2018. Donald Trump is our president. The most important midterms of our country's history and the Seattle Times endorses the anti-choice, anti-immigrant, anti-gay, pro-Trump Dino Rossi? That is 100% @seattletimes. 100%

6:33 PM - 19 Oct 2018
23 Retweets 162 Likes

Election 2018 must reads

Seattle Times Editorial Board endorsements for 2018 general election (Seattle Times)

The Seattle Times endorses Dino Rossi and I AM BOILING (The Stranger)

Washington elections safest from hackers, officials say (Spokesman Review)

In Washington state, a test of progressive climate policy (Axios)

Outside money floods into Rossi-Schrier race: Can anyone stop it? (KUOW)
Were you forwarded this email? Subscribe here to get coverage leading up to the 2018 midterm election.

We’d love to hear from you! Send any comments and feedback here.

Donate | Update Subscriptions

Crosscut | 401 Mercer St | Seattle | WA | 98109

editor@crosscut.com | 800.937.5287
©2018 Cascade Public Media | Privacy Policy

*Donations made to Cascade Public Media are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Cascade Public Media, which includes KCTS 9, Crosscut.com, and Spark Public, is registered under RCW 19.09. You may contact the Washington Secretary of State at 800.332.4483 or visit sos.wa.gov/charities for more information.