Women In America Essay, Research Paper

The role of women in American society has changed dramatically over the last one hundred years. Women were originally seen as daughters, wives and mothers but are now viewed in a totally different light. Women s views are now respected and sort after and this is why they will play an important role in the upcoming election. To understand how women will be involved in the election you first have to look at the history of women in American society and the roles that they play.

American women had been campaigning for equality even before the turn of the Twentieth Century but it wasn t until Nineteen Twenty that they were able to vote for the first time after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Many believed that this would create a huge change in politics and this made many politicians at the time (all male) nervous. The expected huge change never really materialised until much later though due to economic constraints (the depression and then the Second World War). During the depression the emphasis was taken away from equality as twenty five percent of America was unemployed.

The greatest change to women s roles though was not political at all. It was the transition from a primarily agricultural economy to a corporate, commercial, industrial economy. This meant that whereas before women were seen as business partners to their farming husbands, helping to saw the land whilst simultaneously rearing the children. But in the new urban environment the middle class ideal relied on a single wage earner meaning that the women were now expected to stay at home while the husband/father would work away from the home. Only women from poor families would go out and work because it was thought, at the time, that if it was economically feasible then once a women was married she should become a housewife and stay home and raise the family and look after her husband. This was actually a backward step (as far as equal rights campaigners were concerned) from the advances that had earlier been made in the fight for equality.

After the Americans joined the Second World War, women had to leave their housewife status and go back to work to cover for the men going off to war. Although there were now more women working than ever before it wasn t long before the men came back and, because of the employment and educational benefits that veterans received, the gap between men and women in high-paying positions widened. Women went back to being housewives but this stagnant lifestyle would not even last ten years. By the time the Sixties came along women were getting restless and with the business and public sectors rapidly expanding this opened up the way for more women to go back to into the workforce.

During the Seventies, Eighties and Nineties campaigners fought hard and many new equal rights laws were passed. It is ironic, however, that in the new Millennium, with women not needing to fight for equal rights, most of the key issues to women are the same now as they were one hundred years ago. This essay hopes to look at these issues and address them.

There are five key issues that women across America are concerned with for Election Two Thousand. These issues could be the key for either Gore or Bush in the race for the Whitehouse. The fiveissues are as follows Education, Childcare, Economy/taxes, Abortion and Gun Control.

The Department of Education released statistics stating that Math scores have been climbing an average of one percentage point a year for the last thirty years but reading scores have been stagnant. They stated that twenty percent of high school graduates could not even read at a fourth grade level. Dick Cheney, Vice Presidential candidate for the Republicans, was quoted as saying,

The current administration has made little or no progress improving reading and math scores in national achievement tests during the last eight years. This is something we plan to rectify. Susan Bowen, a student at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, agrees with Dick Chaney and the Republicans policies but states that Although I m a republican, I m not sure if the general consensus of women across America would agree with me but I would think that they would be supportive of improvements in education. The Democrates do concede that they may have slightly neglected education in the past but are promising that this will be one of the first items that they will address. But just why is education important to women across America? Maria Locklear, A shop worker form Pembroke, was asked that very same question. She responded by saying One of the reasons education is so important to women is that they are the ones who have to deal with the kids as well as going out to work. Who are the ones who have to go to P.T.A. meetings and help the children with their homework? Women!

Childcare is important to every mother across the country. How many women are there in America who have to stay up all night with a sick baby? Deb Nyberg wrote an article to the Shesgotvote web page on the world wide web explaining her plight. She explains how she has to cope with looking after two hungry children with no support from her abusive husband who drinks away far too many paychecks. She explains how she has to deal with having to worry about how she s going to pay for the electricity and how she s going to buy food for her babies. She sought help but was told that her family income is too much therefore not qualifying her for assistance.

The government is attempting to force education on job preparation, work and two-parent families, but fails to recognize the mother s position is not as controllable as government guidlines set out.

Domestic abuse, sexual harasment, lack of childcare and transportation are some of the main factors that force mothers into poverty. If a mother does secure employment she is then faced with having to leave her babies with a babysitter or at daycare. But if one of the children gets sick then she must then miss work thus putting her job security in jeoperdy. These are just a few of the obstacles mothers have to contend with in today s welfare system. Deb Nyberg wrote Women need to organise their communities and educate everyone on what the welfare receipient really has to deal with each day. Our voices in our communities will make a difference in how funding should be used to protect our children, and the mothers who care for them. The Personal Responsibilty and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 goals are to assist needy families so that they can care for their children at home.

In a recent interview Al Gore (the self proclaimed inventor of the internet) stated, in reference to the economy, that he has for decades worked hard to lead America into the information age by offering an exciting vision of potential for economic growth through innovation. As a House member, he co-authored legislation to set aside Federal research funds for small businesses working to turn new technologies into new products. As a Senator, he introduced legislation which expanded investment in research networks, such as the NSFNET. As Vice-President he has been at the forefront of the administration s efforts to use technology to build the economy of the Twenty First Century and to help prepare the workers of today and tomorrow to succeed in economy. If elected President he vows to take five steps to help America s high tech industries grow.

He vows to adopt economic policies that will create strong overall economic growth, as the key precondition to high technology growth. He will cut taxes to spur investment in research development. He will open global markets in cyberspace for U.S. companies. It has been predicted that global electronic commerce could reach up to one point four trillion dollars in sales within four years. The benefits for American businesses and workers would be enormous as a direct result of this economic boom. He will boost investment in formation technology. Gore believes that American investment in information technology will pay off in the long run in terms of high tech jobs and sustained economic growth. Lastly he vows to educate and train the workforce of tomorrow, not only to create the fruits of innovation, but also to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to enjoy all the fruits of a new economy.

George W. Bush feels that Americans have always been leaders in technology, and technology has always played an integral part in America s history. He states that, in an unprecedented way, that technology is taking center stage in American economy.

High technology elements accounted for over a third of real economic growth in America between nineteen ninety five and nineteen ninety eight. In nineteen ninety nine, internet related companies generated more than five hundred billion dollars in revenue in America and were responsible for two point three million jobs. The internet economy is projected to be worth one trillion dollars by the year two thousand and one. For hundreds of years people considered value to be land, resources and machines but now more and more wealth is measured in ideas. The result of this has been to place human beings creativity, intelligence and character at the bright center of the economic hope. Never has the wealth of the country depended more directly on the quality of their schools and families. This is why Bush vows to be committed to ensuring an environment at home and abroad in which the spirit of freedom and innovation that sparked a revolution in Silicon Valley can continue. He will ensure that an educational system is installed allowing every child to learn to read and thus leaving no child behind.

Sarah Monroe, a student at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, is encouraged by the proposed economic boom but states that This is a very exciting time to be an American. The internet is allowing more opportunities than ever before. The increase in high tech jobs is excellent for young, upcoming American business workers but lets just hope we see as many women as men in these positions.

Abortion is a very touchy subject in America at the moment. A candidates position on the abortion subject could swing popular opinion. Al Gore is strongly pro-choice and is deeply commited to making abortion safe, legal and rare. He believes that one important way to strengthen families is by protecting a woman s right to choose. Bush on the other hand is pro life. He has obvious exceptions though such as rape, incest and if the mother s life is threatened. Bush supports efforts to increase adoption and hopes to set the goal that all children should be welcomed in life and protected by law.

Finaly the last issue to be addressed is gun control. Deb Nyberg writes One of the most active political issues being addressed in Election Two Thousand is gun control. To pass a law which prohibits ownership of guns, would be to try to make sense out of the prohibition laws. She continues Alcohol was made and distributed illegally during Prohibition. Alcoholics still drink and drive despite laws against it. Drunk drivers kill innocent people when they possess the keys to a car. It is not the car that should be removed….it is the operator of the car. Guns will be made and distributed illegally, no matter how many laws we pass. It is not the gun that should be removed. I say, find a cure that heels. The problem is that if a law is passed to take away people s guns it is taking away their constitutional rights to freedom.

In conclusion it is clear to see that the results of this election could be greatly influenced by women. Bush and Gore need to realise that this segment of society is probably the biggest segment and therefore need to focus a lot of attention to women when choosing their policies. Women have always had a hard time in society and this is probably not about to change but with the new laws that are passed all the time it could be argued that women are now actaully equal in most parts of society. It will be interesting to see how long it takes for a women to become president. Just look at the example of Margerate Thatcher from the United Kingdom. She was Prime Minister for twelve years during the Nineteen Eighties and was arguably one of the countries most powerful and infuential leaders thus proving the a woman would be quite capable of holding a position of such power and authority.