

Kassidy Marie

Marie

Ms Grable

English (1A)

04 December 2025

The Necessity of Child Care Expenses Serving as an Essential Campaign Cost and its Effect on Women and Democracy

The past 5 years have been important for women all over the world. Milestones met throughout these years will go down in history as one of the most progressive time periods for women's political and social achievements. Achievements such as the landmark election of Southern African and Black American Democrat-Kamala Harris in 2021, Nancy Pelosi being the first and only woman to serve as speaker of the house, and 142 women serving in Congress-with 51 of those women being women of color and 2 being LGBTQ+. While these achievements serve as an important monument for women all around the world, there is much more progress that needs to be reached to ensure equality is achieved for women, specifically in political fields. The current U.S. government has been in place since 1789, marking 286 years of democracy. Yet, the first woman to serve anything close to a presidential position is Kamala Harris about 282 years later as President Joe Biden's vice president during the 2021-2025 candidacy. To further put this into perspective there have been 48 men elected as vice presidents and 45 more men elected as the President of the United States. This response in juxtaposition with the mere 1 woman to ever serve as a vice president in 286 years is disappointing to say the least. The U.S. government is in need of a new face, one that is logical, nurturing, caring, and most importantly ambitious about the future of the United States. With that being said, there is no

Marie

better face for this duty than that of a woman. In order to encourage women to run for higher government positions, it is essential that reconsideration of the Personal Use Ban in coherence with a stronger enforcement of candidates utilizing campaign funds for childcare expenses in all states needs to take place to strengthen our democracy and protect the rights and autonomy of women. The rights and autonomy of women are threatened continuously through restrictive voting laws across states. These laws threaten the constitution of which the entirety of the U.S. stands upon. In order to strengthen our democracy, the focus of our nation has been on “removing barriers to participation, countering narratives and stereotypes about the different roles people can play and reimagining how power is distributed and wielded” (Frye, Goodman, Haider 1). These goals support not only the strengthening of our democracy but also the strengthening of women’s rights in their own autonomy. This mirror effect between women’s progress in society and progress of democracy is seen through the Roe vs Wade case of 1973. This true victory had its place in the legacy of women's achievements as it grounded the bodily autonomy women had as their own- but in 2022, 47 years after this remarkable achievement- society had taken a massive step back. The Dobbs Vs Jackson Women's Health Organization case overturned Roe vs Wade via the approval of the Supreme Court. With that, decades of precedent and protections had been overturned along with it, limiting women's autonomy to the hands of the government. Justice Samuel Alito replies to this tragedy with a nonchalant demeanor, claiming “the ruling merely returned the issue of abortion to states where women could use electoral and political power to influence the legislature. “Essentially, the Supreme Court is making a political mindgame of women’s rights and autonomy while being aware of the few strings women can pull to maintain power in both political and electoral situations. This issue is true based on the

fact that “ 47 out of 50 state legislatures are made up of less than 50% women”(NCSL 1) With this in mind , the Supreme Court is aware of the power imbalance between men and women in law policy making as it is apart of the Supreme Court’s responsibility to use the Judicial Review to make sure the legislature’s power does not go unchecked and remains equal and representative of the entire population . This inequality continues as “states with a higher percentage of women legislatures were more likely to adopt policies that provide abortion protection than states with a lower percentage of women legislatures” (Leslie 3) Hence certain state legislatures that lack equal representation of sex are faced with restricting policies that only limit women’s autonomy while more balanced legislatures allow for proper protections of a woman’s natural rights and autonomy. This issue further emphasizes the need for more women in political positions to ensure that proper equal sex representation is achieved in policy and law making facilities to ensure democracy , equal rights, and a constitutional government.

A policy that can influence more women to run for political positions is the use of campaign funds for child care expenses. The Federal Election Commission had released this opinion in 2018 via the approval of the Supreme Court. This policy permitted candidates for federal office positions to use campaign contributions for expenses such as day care, babysitting , food , or other expenses during political campaigning . Regardless of this opportunity that steered in the direction towards an equally represented government for the entire population, it was not utilized by all states. In support of this policy“13 states have enacted their own laws allowing candidates running at the state and local levels to use contributions for child care expenses.” but the majority of the states “sometmay not even explicitly allow these types of expenses in a complete statute “ (NCSL 1) So only 13 out of 50 states explicitly allow this policy

Marie

to be utilized without censorship. The censorship of this decision allows for fewer women to run for high governmental positions depending on the state they are from as 43 out of 50 states do not allow these kinds of expenses to be made. Correspondingly to the overturn of Roe V Wade , a protective policy that can benefit democracy and representation in the government is left to the decision of male dominated legislative branches who repress this basic need.

A common defense for this unconstitutional violation is that the use of campaign funds for childcare expenses constitutes a violation of the Personal Use Ban . This ban prohibits the use of campaign funds for personal expenses-defined as any expense that would exist “irrespective of the candidates campaign or duties as a federal office holder “ (Federal Election Commission 2) It is believed candidates and other working parents have a personal responsibility to pay for their own family living expenses and a failure to pursue this indicates absentee parenting This is entirely false and is refuted by the fact that these such “personal expenses “ are not personal or self inflicted at all and instead are a direct and necessary cost of campaign activity . If child care costs would not exist “irrespective of candidacy “ which is measured through the “irrespective test” that determines if the expense is a direct result of campaign activity then it is in fact a viable cost to pay with campaign funds . A 2020 survey in the Midwest found that “42% of women compared to 20% of men , reported cutting back on hours or quitting jobs , due to childcare costs “ (Runge , Conroy 20) in conversation with this statistic “ Among employed parents who missed work or reduced hours in 2023 due to childcare problems , mothers were consistently affected more than fathers “ (George 5) With a ratio of 3.1 % of mothers versus 1.1 % of fathers this highlights that child care widely affects working women . Therefore highlighting the necessity of campaign funds being utilized for child care to work as an accommodation during

Marie

campaigning to prevent gender biased restrictions . The reconsideration of the policies within the Personal Use Ban in consideration with the strengthening of the policy to allow candidates to utilize campaign funds is essential for women to be given an equal chance during the election process without the disruption of campaigning costs not being efficiently handled .

The government should be enacting policies and efforts to approach gender parity in public office through the encouragement of women to run for high governmental positions . This can be completed through the reconsideration of the guidelines within the Personal Use Ban in cohesion with reinforcing the ability of candidates to use campaign funds for childcare expenses across all states in order to strengthen our democracy and protect the rights and autonomy of women.

Work Cited

Erin George “Mothers’ Employment Has Surpassed Pre-Pandemic Levels, but the Child Care Crisis Persists.” *DOL Blog*, May 6, 2024.

blog.dol.gov/2024/05/06/mothers-employment-has-surpassed-pre-pandemic-levels-but-the-child-care-crisis-persists#:~:text=When%20a%20family%20has%20child,reason%20for%20working%20fewer%20hours.

Llenda Jackson-Leslie “Democracy & Abortion Access: Restrictive Voting Laws across States Threaten Freedoms.” *National Partnership for Women & Families*, 30 May 2024, nationalpartnership.org/report/democracy-abortion-access-restrictive-voting-laws-across-states-threaten-freedoms/.

“PersonalUse.” *Federal Election Commission*, 2024

www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/making-disbursements/personal-use/.

Resource Women in State Legislatures for 2025, 2025

www.ncsl.org/womens-legislative-network/women-in-state-legislatures-for-2025.

Tessa Conroy and Kristin Runge. “Windicators Volume 3, Number 5: Are the Kids Alright? Women, Work, & Childcare.” *Community Economic Development*, 2025

economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/articles/windicators-volume-3-number-5-are-the-kids-alright-women-work-childcare/#:~:text=When%20we%20asked%20about%20the,their%20partners%20see%20for%20themselves