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Sheila Burke Talks About Women In Politics

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Inspired by Ms. Burke's recognition as a "[Woman Worth Watching](#)" and the recent election cycle, "Strive" Co-editor Amy Mahone sat down with Ms. Burke to get her thoughts on the current status of women in politics.

We all know by now that there were a lot of "firsts" in the mid-term elections – particularly for women. We saw the election of Joni Ernst, the first female veteran in the U.S. Senate (and the first female Iowa has ever sent to Washington); Mia Love, the first African-American female Republican member of Congress; Shelley Moore Capito, the first female senator from West Virginia; and Elise Stefanik, who at 30 is the youngest woman ever to serve in Congress.

And, for the first time ever, Congress will have at least 100 female members.

What is the significance of these "firsts" and what can we expect to see over the next few years?

Ms. Burke's response:

The presumption is that women tend to be much more willing to negotiate, and we have seen that occur in the Senate with women taking leadership and trying to drive consensus around difficult issues. As we move forward with many new members and changes in the committees, it will be interesting to see whether that ends up being the case going forward with the new women who have been elected to the House and Senate.

We do not yet know how the Senate committees will be made up, but we do know how the House is going to play out. There are women on both sides of the aisle who hold very important positions, both in the leadership as well as in the committee structure. For example, on the Republican side, Cathy McMorris Rodgers from Washington State is the highest-ranking Republican woman in Congress and serves as the Chair of the House Republican Conference, while Virginia Foxx of North Carolina continues her role as Secretary of the House Republican Conference.

On the Democratic side we have Patty Murray, also from Washington State, who currently chairs the Senate Budget Committee and serves as the Senate Majority Conference Secretary, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota serving as Senate Chair of the Joint Economic Committee, and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts being appointed as the first ever Strategic Advisor of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee.

Both the selection of women in the leadership and the fact that women are taking on major roles as spokespersons is a reflection of the important role that women are playing in government, as well as evidence of a growing sensitivity to women as an important part of the constituency.