**Women’s Issues**

President Obama is committed to a future where women have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed. The President has supported women in the workforce by fighting pay discrimination and insisting on adequate health care. The President signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which restored basic protections against pay discrimination, and continues to push Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. President Obama expanded women’s access to affordable health care through the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Today, new insurance plans must cover women’s preventative health care with no deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance. And, starting in 2014, many health plans must cover the cost of pregnancy. The President ensured women’s voices are heard throughout the federal government by appointing two women to the Supreme Court, including women leaders in his Cabinet and White House staff, and creating the White House Council on Women and Girls. President Obama has said “I ran for President to put the same rights, the same opportunities, and the same dreams within the reach for our daughters and sons alike.”

Rick Santorum continues decades-long rhetoric on women’s issues. “We are seeing the fabric of this country fall apart, and it’s falling apart because of single moms,” said Santorum in 1994 when running for Senate. “What we [should] say is that in order for Mom to be able to go on welfare if she has a child out of wedlock, you have to tell us who the father is,” Santorum said in Pennsylvania. Discussion flared up last month regarding the capabilities of women in the armed forces, with Santorum hesitantly asserting that problems would arise because “…with respect to physical capabilities, [women] don’t have the same requirements that men do in the military, and may be in a position if someone is injured, has to be brought back.” Santorum elaborates on the proper place of women in modern society in his 2006 book, *It Takes A Family*. “The radical feminists succeeded in undermining the traditional family and convincing women that professional accomplishments are the key to happiness,” Santorum argues. “Many women have told me, and surveys have shown that they find it easier, more “professionally” gratifying, and certainly more socially affirming to work outside the home than to give up careers to take care of children….” Santorum claims that his wife wrote that chapter, although she is not credited. According to Santorum, “in far too many families with young children, both parents are working,” but “they might confess that both of them don’t really need to.”

Mitt Romney goes on the attack, won’t condemn extreme statements. Planned Parenthood, “we’re going to get rid of that,” said Romney on Tuesday. Planned Parenthood — an organization which provides mammograms and other preventative services to roughly three million people per year — has been a popular target for the social conservatives, as a small portion of its budget is used for abortion services. In 2002 Romney filled out a questionnaire in an effort to gain the endorsement of Massachusetts’ Planned Parenthood. “His behavior is consistently autocratic, especially toward women,” said Judith Dushku of Romney in 1994. A professor at Suffolk University who worshiped with Romney in Belmont, Dushku was one of several women who said that “Romney turned a deaf ear to concerns about domestic violence and other issues” as church president. Romney has steadfastly refused to criticize even the most extreme statements from members of his party — particularly on women’s issues. *Politico* reports “ask Romney to whack his leading rival where he’s most vulnerable — on social issues like birth control, religion in politics or women’s role in the workplace and the military — and you won’t hear a peep.” Responding to Rush Limbaugh’s comments last week that Sandra Fluke, a Georgetown student advocating for contraceptive coverage was “slut” and “prostitute,” Romney limited his criticism to “It’s not the language I would have used.”

**NEA Believes**

Women should have equal access to employment, promotion, compensation, and leadership. 2011’s *Women in America* finds that “gains in education and labor force involvement have not yet translated into wage and income equity.” President Obama’s Affordable Care Act provides more women adequate health care, family planning options, as well as domestic violence screenings. In the workplace, policies for family leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, child-care leave, and professional leave are critical to the participation and growth of women at all levels.

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11. Ibid