

Year Two of the Resistance: Let's Keep our Eyes on the Prize – A Seat at the Table

Last year was a year of profound disappointment but also of tremendous activism. Together, we rose, we resisted and we persisted! The Board and the various committees worked hard to protect and promote our feminist values.

Our engagement took several forms. We marched, we protested and made our voices heard loud and clear in the streets. The Women's March on January 20, 2017, energized us all. From there, SBWPC organized the ERA March for Equality. It was a great success and received a lot of press coverage including a mention in the Ms. Magazine Blog! We joined our sister organizations in rallies, marches and protests including the People's Climate March, March for Science, International Women's Day Celebration and the rally in support of our DACA recipients.

We created two new committees: the ERA Ad-Hoc Committee whose mission is to educate the public about the Equal Rights Amendment and advocate its passage and the Young Feminists Committee which is bringing fresh enthusiasm and new ideas to our cause. The Legislation and Advocacy Committee and Elections & Appointment Committee are exploring ways to engage politically beyond our borders.

We presented educational programs. We examined the importance of passing the Equal Rights Amendment by screening the documentary "Equal Means Equal" followed by a panel discussion. "Moving Feminism Forward in Challenging Times" was the topic of the Presidents' Circle Lunch.

We tracked legislation relevant to our values at the local, state and federal levels. We sent letters in support or in opposition. Nine of the state bills we supported reached the governor's desk; seven were signed into law.

Finally we continued our core mission to elect feminist candidates to office. In addition to endorsing feminist candidates and presenting candidate training workshops, we launched our newest project "A Seat at the Table: The Fund for a Feminist Future". The monies raised by the Fund will be used exclusively to support qualified feminist women SBWPC members in the potential candidate pipeline by awarding scholarships to attend training programs and by increasing our financial support to endorsed candidates.

This year, Year Two of the Resistance, it will be critical to keep our eyes on the prize: a Seat at the Table. The election of Donald Trump to the Presidency has galvanized women throughout the United States and has created a grass roots

movement of social resistance. We need to channel this energy and translate it into votes. This is the only way forward.

This administration, with the help of Congress, has demonstrated time and again that they are hostile to women and families through their regulatory pull back and legislative agenda. However, regulations and laws can be changed. This is not the case with federal lifetime judicial appointments. Federal judges have a tremendous amount of power over the issues we care about such as reproductive rights, LBGTQ rights, voting rights to name just a few. There are currently 123 vacancies at the trial court level and 17 at the appellate level. At the Supreme Court, we can only hope that there will be no vacancies until we regain the majority in the Senate.

If we want to protect the gains we have made and move our agenda forward, we must increase the number of qualified feminist women in elected office, appointed office and any other positions where issues important to women and families are raised and discussed, policies made and legislation enacted, at the local, state and national levels.

The climate is right to claim political power. We have seen it in the recent November election with progressive, non-traditional candidates defeating conservatives ones across the country. Our determination and our commitment to our values make us strong. But we must also be bold and strategic in pursuing our feminist agenda, including raising money to support the feminist women who will claim their seat at the table.

SBWPC is up to the challenge. Political action is what we do. This year we will be celebrating SBWPC's 30 years of feminism from marching in the streets to a seat at the table. We will start the year by participating in the anniversary Women's March – Santa Barbara on January 20. We will continue to focus on our core mission, helping feminists claim their seat at the table by raising money for the Fund for a Feminist Future, presenting candidate development training and exploring ways to make an impact in the 2018 mid-term elections. We will also continue our feminist advocacy through community outreach, programs and legislative advocacy. Make sure to check out our website and Facebook page for upcoming events.

The future is ours. Let's claim it.

Catherine Swysen
SBWPC President

