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We know that [Sarah Palin](#) hunts animals on reality TV and cheers her daughter on “Dancing With the Stars” — but do we know that both conservative and liberal scholars rate Nancy Pelosi as one of the most successful speakers of the House in United States history?

We know that Congresswoman [Michele Bachmann](#) gave the Tea Party’s State of the Union response, believes that the founding fathers abolished slavery and urged her Minnesota constituents to be “armed and dangerous” — but do we know that Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California is calling for the United States’ withdrawal from Afghanistan?

We know that [Christine O’Donnell](#) assured voters she was no longer a witch or antimasturbation yet lost her bid to be a United States senator from Delaware — but do we know that Senator Barbara Boxer supported reproductive freedom and restricting of shore oil drilling yet defeated her Republican challenger, Carly Fiorina?

If you answered “no” to any of the above, you have the right to protest media that cover sideshows instead of the main event.

Political women like Pelosi, Lee and Boxer are the main event because they work hard for majority issues, stay civil in the face of opposition and benefit from the gender gap; that is, the difference between male and female voting patterns on issues that are even more critical to women than to men. So do senators like [Dianne Feinstein](#) of California, Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, Olympia Snowe and [Susan Collins](#) of Maine and [Kirsten Gillibrand](#) of New York, as well as Congresswomen like Jan Schakowsky of Illinois, Maxine Waters of California, [Carolyn Maloney](#) of New York and [Eleanor Holmes Norton](#) of the District of Columbia — to name a few.

Note that Snowe and Collins are Republicans. It's more about issues than party label. Also consider that Senator [Harry Reid](#) won with the support of more women than men against [Sharron Angle](#) in Nevada — as did [Richard Blumenthal](#) against Linda McMahon in Connecticut. It's more about issues than biology. The goal is making life more equal for the female half of the country, not just getting a job for one woman.

However, if it's difficult for the media to tell political women apart, here is a guideline: a positive gender gap indicates a woman who is part of the main event and a negative one means she is probably a sideshow. For example, more than half of male voters in Bachmann's district voted for her, but only about 45 percent of women did. Only a third of women view Palin favorably, and only about a third of women voted for O'Donnell. In other words, right-wing stalwarts can count on the unwavering support of like-minded voters who are more male than female and make up about a third of the country — and for that, they certainly deserve fair coverage. But they are not the main event.

If the media followed this guideline, we would have known the story of [Gabrielle Giffords](#) of Arizona long before her attempted assassination. For example, she sacrificed her own career goals after college to run her family business because her father was ill, and yet she still became the youngest woman ever elected to the State Senate in Arizona and the first Jewish congresswoman to represent her state.

She fought for national and local majority issues, even in the face of a vocal and obsessed minority. If 9-year-old [Christina-Taylor Green](#) found her inspiring, shouldn't we have known her too?

Until the media understand that the majority of a constituency picks its own leaders, we're all in danger of missing the main event.