

Women on the Hill

by Lisa Stansky

Women lawyers on Capitol Hill have their hands full these days. Some are working to hold onto ground hard-won 30 years ago, while others are breaking new ground as they shed light on disparate impact of particular laws upon women.

It is not just women holding elected office making waves. Women lawyers play pivotal roles influencing federal policy as counsel to politicians, as advocates and as academics. These women are not always on the same page on the same subject. But one thing is clear: being a woman and a lawyer gives them an edge in defining and promoting a political agenda for women.

“I tend to have a big-picture perspective,” reports Andrea La Rue, counsel on Minority Staff of the Senate Rules Committee and former counsel to Sen. Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.). “It’s not just reproductive rights; it’s everything.”

“There really isn’t a major issue that doesn’t affect women these days,” agrees Marcia Greenberger, co-president of the National Women’s Law Center in Washington, D.C.

Some of the front-burner issues are unsurprising: reproductive rights, health insurance coverage (including Medicare and Medicaid), welfare reform, expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act, pay equity, sexual harassment, and affirmative action.

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