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[Jewish World Review](#) May 5, 2000 / 1 Iyar, 5760

**Larry Elder**

## Dems and the "she" vote

<http://www.jewishworldreview.com> -- POLLSTERS CALL THEM the "SHE issues" -- Social Security, health care, and education.



In 1992 and 1996, Bill Clinton lost the male vote. Women put him over the top. More women vote than do men, with women accounting for 53 percent of the electorate. Smart politics, therefore, dictates paying attention to "women's issues."

Eric Smith, an official with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, says, "We are very confident that we have the right message and the right candidates for the American people." This translates into Democratic calls for things like a patients' Bill of Rights, more gun control legislation, "saving" Social Security by increasing taxes, and expanding the already counterproductive role of government in health care.

But there's a problem. Women know less than men about political issues, economics, and current events. Good news for Democrats, bad news for Republicans. For the less one knows, the easier the manipulation.

A study at the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania confirmed women's lack of knowledge of the issues. Researchers asked 25 questions about candidates and specific issues during the recent primary season.

Questions concerned campaign finance reform, gun control, taxes, foreign policy, defense, as well as questions about the candidates' positions. Men knew more than women in 15 categories. Women outperformed men on only one question!

University of Pennsylvania researcher Kathleen Hall Jamieson said, "The perplexing finding that women do not perform as well as men on political knowledge still persists in the year 2000." Jamieson found women more ignorant than men, irrespective of age, race, income, education, marital status, or party identification! Why? Women, more so than men, get their news from local television. "Local news-watching makes you dumber," said Jamieson.

For many women, the Democratic message of grow-the-government socialism works. Unhappy with your HMO? Take taxpayers' money to make health care more "secure," more "affordable." Concerned

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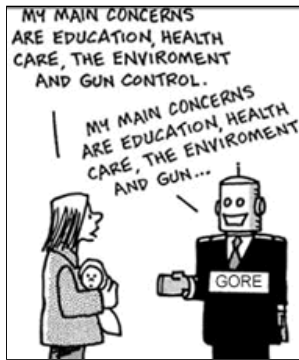
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about the "working poor"? Force employers to hike minimum wages. Gas prices too high? Appoint a commission to look into "price gouging." Drug prices too high? Attack "excessive" pharmaceutical profits by imposing price controls.

Al Gore's response to the recent rampage shooting at the National Zoo serves as a case in point. Within hours of the shooting, the vice president called for further gun control legislation, including mandatory safety locks. Never mind that Washington, D.C., makes it illegal to own, let alone carry, a handgun in the city. But Gore's appeal, pure emotion, sounds virtuous. And never mind studies showing that those living in high crime areas most desperately need guns for self-defense. "The basic problem is they don't get guns away from people likely to misuse them," said Gary Fleck, professor of criminology and criminal justice at Florida State University.



Even researcher David M. Kennedy of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government is skeptical about calls for greater gun control regulation. "They're not just publicity stunts. People really want these things to work, and a lot of people think they ought to work. Unfortunately, they probably don't." But emotion works. And a fact to an emotional liberal is like kryptonite to Superman.

Why does the Democratic message of Big Government welfare-state "soak the rich" socialism work? Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman once said, "The argument for collectivism is simple if false; it is an immediate emotional argument. The argument for individualism is subtle and sophisticated; it is an indirect rational argument."

So the Republicans face a dilemma in attracting female voters. Opposition to tax, spend, and regulate requires an understanding of the benefits of the free market, as well as the relationship between high taxes and low productivity. Republican opposition to regulation requires an understanding of the unintended negative consequences of government market interference.

"Democrats are betting that Republican opposition to the legislation on intellectual and philosophical grounds will serve only to anger voters in those groups," writes Investor's Business Daily's Peter Cleary. So, says Cleary, enlightening female voters turns them off!

This raises a disturbing question. Democrats claim a desire to improve education. But poor-performing schools produce people incapable of critical thinking, a condition helpful for the Democrats to run their emotionally driven, but often unsound policies. Teachers' unions -- major Democratic Party constituents -- battle efforts to improve education, such as vouchers, linking teacher pay to merit, or student and teacher testing.

In fact, in California, a group of parents and teachers -- The Coalition for Educational Justice -- complained about student testing. One teacher called the requirements that students test for promotion "racist, class-biased, and bad educational policy." Oh.

Given how easily politicians manipulate the less-informed, do the Democrats really want a smarter electorate?

Frankly, it serves Democrats' interests to keep voters as ill-informed as possible. As House Majority Leader Dick Armey puts it, "Republicans believe what they see, Democrats see what they

believe." Or to paraphrase a well-known politician, "It takes a village," -- of ill-informed voters. 🌐

JWR contributor Larry Elder reads all of his mail. Let him know what you think by clicking [here](#).

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