

All of them, of course!

As the head of a statewide women's organization, I was surprised at a recent networking event when asked, "What proposed state bills impact women this year?" I was taken aback. The answer, of course, is "All of them."

There was a day, as late as the 1970s, when classified job listings in the newspaper fell under two headings: "Help Wanted Men," and "Help Wanted Women." Thankfully those days are long gone. And still, there appears to be a lingering mentality about some policy issues being "women's issues."

When asked what type of issues she thought of when she asked the question, this young woman (early 30s, professional career) listed family leave, affordable health care, and the high cost of rent. Then I asked the obvious question. "Do the men you work with also care about these issues?" And, as if a light bulb went off, she smiled and said, "Yeah, I guess they do."

So, the question mulling around in my head is whether we are having quality, well rounded, policy discussions if we continue to think in terms of "women's issues" and "other."

It's true that the majority of registered voters in Colorado are female, and that women vote at higher rates than men, but if we frame issue discussions only around how something will impact women, we are not considering broad impact.

The Colorado Women's Alliance is an organization that focuses on issues of highest importance to female voters. That's not to say that we frame the results as issues that *only* matter to women. Our latest poll of swing women voters in Colorado (all party registrations but who do not vote straight party lines,) indicated the following as top issues of concern:

- The Rising Cost of Healthcare
- Public Education
- Cost of Housing
- Immigration issues
- Roads and Transportation

I'm fairly certain that if we'd survey swing male voters, these issues would also have risen to the top.

The Colorado Women's Alliance takes the results of our research and develops opportunity for education and discussion around the issues. We've done this through forums, panel discussions, roundtables, social media, and more. Men are always invited, and always attend, our forums.

As of today, (Feb. 8,) the State Legislature is considering 333 pieces of proposed legislation. A quick perusal (<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills>) will tell you that every one of them will impact both men and women.

There are seven healthcare bills and over 50 that touch on education in some way. Bills have been introduced that impact Transportation, Energy, Business, and others that are so obscure you'll never read about them, or hear about them in the media, but they're all important.

I encourage women to pay attention to as many pieces of proposed legislation as possible. We won't all agree on desired outcomes, but it's important that lawmakers recognize us as interested and involved in a very broad base of issues, not just those that are traditionally thought of as "women's issues."

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