

TRENDS, TRAVAILS, THE STATE OF THE WORLD... YOUR WATERCOOLER CHEAT SHEET

marie claire  
**2012**  
DECISION

## RUNNING IN HEELS

Attention, political junkies: 2012 is a record year for female candidates. Meet the women to watch (and vote for) this campaign season

By Roberta Bernstein, Ashley Ross, and Lauren N. Williams

Democrat Grace Meng of Queens, New York, speaking at a press conference on gun violence.



**S**HOCKING BUT TRUE: Women make up 16.8 percent of U.S. Congress. Even Sudan and Afghanistan have more female representation. But this year, a historic number of women want to change that. A record 298 filed to run for the House and 36 for the Senate. *MC* has the scoop on 11 lady pols to watch this fall—a double-amputee war hero, a Rhodes scholar, a gun-toting former police chief, and more. Raging liberal? Devout Tea Partyer? There's a new political hero here for everyone.

■ **ELIZABETH WARREN, 63**  
D-MASSACHUSETTS  
U.S. SENATE

**PERSONAL STORY:** After her dad's heart attack when she was 12, Warren's parents struggled to pay their bills, inspiring her professional focus on the trials of working-class families. Married, two adult kids.  
**RÉSUMÉ HIGHLIGHTS:** Harvard law prof for 20 years; chair of congressional committee investigating bank bailout; led creation of Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Dubbed "Sheriff of Wall Street."

**TOP ISSUES:** Jobs, the economy, nixing subsidies for big oil and tax breaks for the superrich. "The game is rigged . . . for billionaires, who pay lower tax rates than their secretaries."  
**IN HER BAG:** "I carry a backpack. It has my toothbrush, Chapstick, BlackBerry, and iPod."

■ **HEATHER WILSON, 51**  
R-NEW MEXICO  
U.S. SENATE

**PERSONAL STORY:** Her alcoholic



Heather Wilson, New Mexico Republican, keeps on trucking.

stepfather was frightening to live with, so early on she decided to be a problem solver who bettered people's lives. Married, two teen children, one adult son.  
**RÉSUMÉ HIGHLIGHTS:** Air Force officer; Rhodes scholar; author; first female military vet in Congress; member of former President George H.W. Bush's National Security Council.

**TOP ISSUE:** Jobs. Says biggest problem facing women is the need for "satisfying full-time work that pays well."

**IN HER BAG:** Carries a small Coach briefcase stuffed with her iPad, iPhone, credit card, PowerBars, and Rockstar Lemonade. >>



Democrat Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts on the stump.



Gabriela Saucedo Mercer



Tulsi Gabbard



Linda McMahon



## Life on the Stump

Ever wonder what it's like to run for Congress? MC hit the trail with **Grace Meng**, 36, in New York's 5th District to find out

**6 A.M.** Wakes, reads e-mail and news. Rouses sons Brandon, 2, and Tyler, 4; makes them frozen waffles.

**8 A.M.** Dentist hubby off to work. Meng hustles kids to day care.

**9:15 A.M.** Heads to diner for egg-white omelet, mingling with locals, and meeting with staff on gun violence press conference later that day.

**10:35 A.M.** While staffer drives, Meng crams gun stats for press conference.

**11 A.M.** At senior center for Medicare speech. Shakes 56 hands. While seniors take photos with their cell phones, one pleads: "Stop the robo calls."

**12:30 P.M.** After staff lunch at Chinese restaurant, back in car. Meng puts on blush, prepares for press conference.

**1:30 P.M.** Holds press conference on gun violence, then TV interview with Chinese-language station.

**3:15 P.M.** Hits housing project with visiting Congressman James Clyburn (D-S.C.). Resident corners Meng about her plumbing issues.

**3:50 P.M.** Sits down for interview with *New York Daily News*.

**4:20 P.M.** Heads home to hang with kids, makes stir-fry for dinner.

**7 P.M.** Husband returns; she heads out to voter meet-and-greet.

**9 P.M.** Arrives back home, checks e-mail and news, chats with husband.

**12 A.M.** Bedtime. —*Roberta Bernstein*

## Grace Notes

**RÉSUMÉ HIGHLIGHTS:** Public-interest lawyer, member of the New York State Assembly.

**HISTORY WATCH:** The Taiwanese-American would be the first Asian-American in Congress from New York state.

**TOP ISSUES:** Creating jobs, health care.



Above: Star-spangled Arizona Republican Saucedo Mercer. Above right: Hawaii Democrat Gabbard all *leid* out. Right: Connecticut Republican and professional wrestling mogul McMahon.

### ■ GABRIELA SAUCEDO MERCER, 48 R-ARIZONA

U.S. CONGRESS, 3RD DISTRICT\*

**PERSONAL STORY:** Born in Mexico, one of six kids, first visited America on a school trip to Disneyland. At 22, immigrated to the U.S., became a citizen five years later.

Has worked in defense electronics and as a consultant selling weight-loss products. Married, three adult children.

**TOP ISSUES:** A Tea Partyer who wants to return the country to its conservative roots and get people "off unemployment rolls."

**CAMPAIGN FLAP:** Got flak for a Facebook clip comparing food stamp recipients with animals fed in the wild. Promptly deleted it.

**SOUND BITE:** About her opponent, fellow Mexican-American incumbent Representative Raúl Grijalva: "[He] was born here, but he hates the American way."

### ■ TULSI GABBARD, 31 D-HAWAII

U.S. CONGRESS, 2ND DISTRICT

**PERSONAL STORY:** At 21, youngest person ever to win a seat in the Hawaii legislature. Served two tours in the Middle East with Hawaii National Guard. Elected to Honolulu City Council. Single, no kids.

**HISTORY WATCH:** If she wins, would be first Hindu member of Congress.

**TOP ISSUES:** Wall Street reform, reducing the tax burden on small businesses, ending war in Afghanistan, equal pay for women.

**IN HER BAG:** iPad, meditation beads, hair brush, campaign brochures.

### ■ LINDA MCMAHON, 63 R-CONNECTICUT

U.S. SENATE

**PERSONAL STORY:** Met husband Vince McMahon when she was 13—the two eventually married and built the powerhouse multimillion-dollar empire that is now World Wrestling Entertainment (starring The Rock, CM Punk, etc.). Has two adult children and six grandchildren.

**RÉSUMÉ HIGHLIGHT:** Spent \$50 million of her own money in a losing 2010 Senate run.

**TOP ISSUES:** Creating jobs, which she says she's uniquely qualified to do as a business mogul. "I want to make sure future generations have the opportunity to pursue their goals."

**IN HER BAG:** iPad, BlackBerry, lipstick, photos of her grandchildren.

### ■ TAMMY DUCKWORTH, 44 D-ILLINOIS

U.S. CONGRESS, 8TH DISTRICT

**PERSONAL STORY:** Iraq War vet; lost both legs after her Black Hawk was shot down. Appointed assistant secretary in the Department of Veterans Affairs by President Obama in 2009. "I still get asked if women should be allowed to hold combat jobs!" she says. "I didn't lose my legs in a bar fight." Married.

**CAMPAIGN FLAP:** Her opponent, Representative Joe Walsh, said, "All she does is talk about [her service]. Our true heroes . . . they don't throw it in your face." Her rebuttal: "He's just trying to distract people from his failures." >>



Tammy Duckworth

Clockwise from left: War hero (and weekend cycling warrior), Illinois Democrat Duckworth; Wisconsin Democrat Baldwin pursues the lab-coat vote; Utah Republican Love works the crowd.



Tammy Baldwin

## Gender Gap

Percentage of women and men who rank these issues as very important:

### EDUCATION

W 79% vs. M 65%

### BIRTH CONTROL

W 40% vs. M 27%

### HEALTH CARE

W 80% vs. M 69%



Mia Love

**TOP ISSUES:** The budget deficit and economic opportunity. Biggest issue facing women: lack of true equality in many fields.  
**IN HER BAG:** "I have a fabulous vintage hot-pink purse I got for \$10. It fits my speeches, netbook, Burt's Bees Lip Shimmer in Rhubarb, and Sephora Minimergency Kit."

### ■ TAMMY BALDWIN, 50 D-WISCONSIN U.S. SENATE

**PERSONAL STORY:** Raised by her grandparents when her young mother became addicted to prescription drugs after going through a divorce. Lawyer. Single, no kids.  
**HISTORY WATCH:** First out lesbian elected to Congress in 1998, and first woman from Wisconsin. If she wins, would be the first openly gay senator in U.S. history.  
**TOP ISSUES:** Health care, Medicare, Social Security.  
**IN HER BAG:** "Only the essentials. I keep my purse small so my male staff aren't embarrassed if they have to hold it for me."

### ■ MIA LOVE, 37 R-UTAH

U.S. CONGRESS, 4TH DISTRICT  
**PERSONAL STORY:** African-American Mormon, ultraconservative small-town mayor, and rising Republican star. Daughter of Haitian-American immigrants who told their daughter to give back to society. Married, mother of three.  
**RÉSUMÉ HIGHLIGHTS:** Worked as a flight attendant and businesswoman. Became mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah, in 2010.  
**TOP ISSUES:** Revamping entitlement programs such as Social Security, plus federal debt and tax reform. She says biggest problems facing women

are making their political voices heard as well as juggling kids and work.  
**SOUND BITE:** Via Twitter: "I'd vote for a shoe over our current president."

### ■ VAL DEMINGS, 55 D-FLORIDA U.S. CONGRESS, 10TH DISTRICT

**PERSONAL STORY:** Mom was a maid, dad was a janitor. After college, became a cop and eventually Orlando's first female police chief. Married, mother of three.  
**TOP ISSUE:** The economy. "Too many in Congress have focused on everything but jobs."

**CRAZY CAMPAIGN MOMENT:** Getting 700 Facebook friend requests in a day after announcing candidacy. "I thought, Wow, I'm really doing this with a little help from my friends!"  
**IN HER BAG:** "I carry a 9-millimeter gun in my Dooney & Bourke that was a gift when I retired from the police department."

issues facing poor families. "Many didn't care, so I decided to run myself," she says. Served in state legislature for seven years. Also a criminal defense lawyer. Single, openly bisexual.  
**TOP ISSUES:** Jobs, fixing "hyper-partisanship" in Washington.  
**CRAZY CAMPAIGN MOMENT:** Being chased down the street by an ostrich that escaped from an urban farm. "It was scary! I ducked into the bushes until it lost me."  
**IN HER BAG:** "Always some campaign materials, along with sunglasses and a water bottle—two must-haves in Arizona." **mc**



Left: Orlando's first female police chief, Democrat Val Demings. Below: Arizona Democrat Kyrsten Sinema appeals to a younger generation.