

## Electing Women Alliance Breakfast

10/23/25

- Thank you, Stacy, and good morning, everyone. There's no better place to be this morning than in the company of super bad women who support and uplift other women.
- One of the great role models of the 20th century, Constance Baker Motley, is well remembered as a trailblazer. She was the first to do so many things, and she was a mentor to a generation of dynamic women. And she once said something that's as enduring as her legacy. "When you have a chance to open the door for others, you don't have a right to say no."
- Those words carry a lot of weight. It sounds like an assignment you can't opt out of.
- But it's less of a demand and more of an acknowledgement that you've reached a place of importance. It's a recognition that you have the power to help others. And it suggests that after you've experienced how hard the road is to get there, how tough it is to kick the door open, and you see that more of us need to be inside that room, you then understand the obligation to turn around and open the door for someone else.

- That duty can look different for everyone and can take forms large and small. For all of you in this room and thousands more who are outside of these walls, one of the ways is in the support you give to me and to so many other candidates as they run for office.
- It's what The Electing Women Alliance has done for 10 years. And I want to thank you for all you did to help me throughout my campaign.
- Financial assistance is critical, and it was a challenge I saw firsthand. I was 20 points down early in the primary to an opponent that had \$63 million – the second largest self funder in American history. A primary where I was outspent 10-1.
- And the dynamics of my race mirrored what women candidates so often face, and particularly women of color. A gender fundraising gap, a comparable fundraising network, and other societal obstacles that hurt a candidate's ability to get their message out - something that undoubtedly contributed to a decline in the number of women candidates last election cycle across parties and at nearly every intersection of race and gender.

- Fundraising clearly matters. But there's also no substitute for community. Not even a week after I entered the race, Stacy Mason reached out to me and insisted on hosting a fundraiser. And it was more than an invitation to raise money. It was an invitation into what I have come to call the secret sisterhood, a network with bases set up all across the country.
- EWA gave me more than financial support. You gave me words of inspiration. You sent your love. You were the wind in my sails. It's something that we understand intimately, how words matter.
- I remember speaking to a male donor during the campaign, and he asked, "aren't you a mother?" When I said yes, he then demanded that I lay out my strategy for how I intended to juggle the job of senator with the responsibilities of being a mother, something that I know would never have been asked of a man.
- That's why sisterhood matters. We know that our lives often involve doing multiple jobs, being in two places at once, caring for a family, and having to do it all better than a man ever could. Many of you have heard those kinds of demands yourselves. That's why, instead of requiring a strategy, you instead gave words of encouragement. Because you know what the road is like.

- And there were other uncomfortable misunderstandings along the way. It had been 37 years since Barbara Mikulski first ran for Senate, and the media was out of practice in how to cover a woman candidate that wasn't an incumbent.
- During one of my initial candidate forums, my opponent was extremely disrespectful. I waited until the end to jump in and correct some of his rude behavior. Afterwards, the press wrote that I was visibly angry, without even addressing his demeanor or any of the context. We had to call them on it, and the comment was later retracted.
- But these are the sorts of challenges women candidates face, even now in 2025. And in a race of first impressions, these are factors that can swing momentum.
- But there's comfort in the sisterhood. You all were a village of understanding and a source of hope. And you were consistent. You spent almost an entire year supporting me even though I was 20 points down in the polls. You stuck by me even though we didn't put up commercials until 6 weeks before the primary election. But what we didn't have in funding, we did have in consistent and disciplined messaging.

- And we went from down 20 points to winning by 10.
- But there was no time to rest. At the filing deadline, the most popular Republican governor in the country lined up to run against me. It was time to go back to work.
- And you all didn't go anywhere either. The sisterhood got right back to work. And even those who had already maxed out their donation limits made phone calls and emailed their networks on my behalf.
- And here I stand now, because the sisterhood took down another giant opponent.
- It was a challenging road. But I wouldn't change it. It's what prepared me for life in the Senate. I traveled all across Maryland, and I learned the issues that were closest to the hearts of voters. All around the state and all around the country, consistent themes arose, like economic opportunity, affordable housing, and access to quality and affordable healthcare.
- It was a reminder that people want representation that solves problems. That requires looking for partnerships in the unlikeliest places, like collaborating with Senator Britt on a homelessness bill.

- One unlikely partnership was with Senator Gillibrand on the GENIUS Act. I was the first Banking Democrat to sign on, and it surprised a lot of people. But what has surprised me for some time is how Democrats often talk about caring for poor people, but don't seem to know any. Because if you really talk to poor Americans, you'll understand that they're looking for economic opportunity, not handouts. If I'm going to open doors of opportunity for them, then I have to be involved in these discussions, even if I can't get every concession that I want.
- That basic notion of understanding who you're representing has held back a lot of common-sense progress. The U-FIGHT Act is one such example.
- Studies show that fibroids impact up to 80% of women. But we don't have any significant fibroids research because fibroids don't impact any of the men in legislating rooms. Opening that door is not their priority because they haven't traveled that road. That's why we're sorely needed in these spaces.
- But to have a successful bill in this environment, I would need to find a cosponsor – a Republican cosponsor. And I began searching for one.

- There was one potential senator that I was told might be willing to sign on – Senator Lummis. But I couldn't find her anywhere.
- Then I went into the senators-only bathroom. And I looked down at the ground, and I saw Senator Lummis' tennis shoe in the stall next to me.
- I got myself together and washed my hands, and I met her at the sink. And I had my cosponsor.
- I don't know how many partnerships are formed in the bathroom, but the story of women teaming up for the greater good is one that happens quite often.
- And that's why there's a future for women in politics, and why there's room for us to be elected in greater numbers. I am absolutely certain that our leadership matters. And I'm convinced without a doubt that women from all backgrounds can be elected – if we support them.
- That's why EWA is so important. Your support helped get me here. And now that I'm in these rooms, I know as a matter of fact that our presence can change rooms. Our voices and our ideas can change minds.

- I think back to the negotiations around the GENIUS Act, a discussion I knew I had to be involved in. And I was told later that my ideas were not only welcomed but also changed minds at the table. And I also heard that I brought to the negotiations the temperament to mold consensus.
- And that turned out to be necessary, because quite frankly, the men got very testy in the room.
- Not so with the women, however. Because we were not there to necessarily be right, but to get it right. And I knew that I didn't need to win every battle, as long as I won the war.
- That's why we need to have more of a say in politics. We bring so much wisdom gained from life experience. And with so much at stake, it can make a world of difference.
- We understand. We may not travel identical roads, but we understand what it takes. That's why you support the way you do, not only with fundraising but with encouragement.
- And that's why we feel that obligation to open the door for others. Because we understand.



- And right now, it feels like we're not winning much. But I see the small wins every day. They add up. So don't lose heart. That perseverance and faith we've built up is what's going to get us through.
- I truly believe the great challenges of our future are going to be solved by the women who are being seasoned during this current time. It's similar to how my campaign prepared me for today. And how today is preparing me for tomorrow. The connective threads of history will always show up.
- In 1987, when Barbara Mikulski entered the Senate, there was one other woman there. In fact, there had never been more than two women senators at a time, and you all know Barbara was the first Democratic woman elected in her own right.
- She was a champion of the people of Baltimore, down to earth and very relatable to them. But in the Senate, she was known as being a tough, no-nonsense legislator. The type of mentality you needed to fight – to fight to change the Senate's antiquated dress code. To fight against media bias and opponents who didn't know how to handle a woman in politics.
- As much as she fought against stereotypes, she fought *for* other women colleagues in the Senate, on both sides of the aisle. She's

4'11" but they looked up to her. And by the time she retired her seat, she saw the number of women senators rise to 20.

- If anyone knows how hard the road is, and how tough it is to open the door, it's her. And it was never more apparent than the day of my swearing in. You know she's not the emotional type, but I don't know many people who were more excited for this day than her.
- Barbara not only promised to be there, but she insisted that I stand back and let her open the door to the Senate for me. And as we walked onto the Senate floor together, she turned and told me, "Welcome to the Senate," as she burst into tears.
- There was nobody there to hold the door for her in 1987. And she was so moved to fulfill her obligation for me.
- And because you helped get me here, I have the same duty – to open doors of opportunity for Americans, and to hold open this door that Barbara held open for me.
- There's more than enough standing room on the Senate floor for more of us. And if we continue to find, support, and invest in women candidates, the nation will feel the rewards of what sisterhood can do.