

Kathy Spillar: In Wisconsin and other battleground states abortion and equal rights are top Issues for young women voters

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Nationwide election surveys of voters continue to be reported as showing the economy is a top issue for all voters without much analysis on key audiences and the intensity of abortion and equal rights.

This year, Ms. magazine took a deep dive into voter attitudes in key battleground states, including Wisconsin and eight others combined.

A just released Ms. magazine and Feminist Majority Foundation poll by Lake Research Partners takes an in-depth look at battleground states most likely to determine which party holds power in Congress and as Governors. True blue Democratic states of California, New York and Massachusetts along with true red Republican states were excluded.

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Among women voters of all ages in these battleground states, abortion and women's rights are tied with inflation and rising prices as their top voting issues.

This means that despite constant reports in the media on inflation and rising prices as the top issues in this election, abortion and women's rights are actually the most important for young women as they head to the ballot box. The overturning of Roe v. Wade has lit a fire under women voters, and especially young women voters, who

have the power to determine close elections. Historically in the last few elections, a larger percentage of undecided voters were women, a trend likely continue this year. Additionally, the numbers and percentages of young people voting have been steadily rising.

As the races in Wisconsin tighten, every vote matters.

Abortion restrictions and outright bans have energized pro-abortion rights women to be motivated to turn out to vote in November in much larger numbers than their anti-abortion counterparts, refuting conventional wisdom that those opposed to abortion are more motivated by the issue. Our survey shows that 35% of pro-abortion rights voters prioritize women's rights and abortion in their vote decisions compared to 10% of anti-abortion voters.

This passion goes beyond abortion into broader issues of equal rights. The Ms. survey included questions related to the Equal Right Amendment showing that voters – especially women voters – now know that rights can be taken away and want an amendment to the US Constitution guaranteeing that rights cannot be “denied or abridged on account of sex.” The polling shows that 74% of young women support the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), with 72% saying it is “personally” important to them now that various states are banning abortion.

Significantly, the ERA and abortion are connected for all women voters, with nearly three-quarters (73%) saying it is important to support the ERA in light of abortion bans; among young women voters, a similar 72% say that it is personally important to them to support the ERA now that states are banning abortion.

Politicians who ignore what Wisconsin women care about do so at their own peril. The message is loud and clear: women care about their rights and will vote to protect them.

*- Spillar is executive editor of Ms. Magazine. Op-ed courtesy of American Forum.
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