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White House Emphasizes Flip Side of Gender Gap

GAP, From A1

ate to solve a problem that threatens Reagan's reelection chances if he decides to run next year.

"I have the unworthy impulse to say I'm horrified and turn around and laugh," said Ann Lewis, political director of the Democratic National Committee. "What they're doing is saying, since we've got ourselves a lemon let's make lemonade. But in '84 that lemonade ain't going to sell."

Lewis added that women represent the majority of voters for the first time. She said that black men, Hispanic men, blue-collar and ethnic males—members of voting blocs increasingly alienated from the Reagan administration, according to polls—are a substantial part of the male voters that Reagan's aides are claiming as his base of male support.

"You cannot build a winning election-year coalition on a subset of the minority of the voters: white-collar, white males," Lewis said. "Besides, women have become base-line Democrats [and] their support does not fluctuate. As the economy goes up and down, men go up and down, from supporting Reagan to opposing him."

Data from Washington Post-ABC News polls support Lewis' argument. Although Reagan's approval rating has stayed in the mid-40 percent range among women for the last two years, since January, 1982, his approval rating among men has gone from the mid-50 percent range to as high as

61 percent in April, 1982, only to drop to as low as 47 percent last January. In May, male approval of Reagan's job performance was 60 percent compared with 47 percent for women.

However, Betty Heitman, co-chairman of the Republican National Committee, said she believes that the higher level of male support for Reagan can be used to demonstrate the president's strong points to women and to counteract attacks by "liberal women's groups."

"The Democrats have a terrible gender gap," she said. "The majority of men in the country by far support the president and they support him for reasons that we need to communicate to women. Men have been out in the work force longer and they realize that Democrats will promise anything and then not produce. They don't believe the Democrats. . . . The men appreciate that [Reagan] is a strong leader and understand the need for military spending. They are skeptical of the Democrats' empty promises to keep the peace."

White House aides, who have concluded that the 1984 election will turn on the issue of the economy, feel that women have been slow to appreciate Reagan's success in lowering the inflation rate and to sense the strength of the recovery.

Among the legislative initiatives being considered by the Deaver group are efforts in economic areas. The most likely proposals are efforts to

change pension laws to have spouses sign pension plan agreements. In case of divorces or early deaths, that would prevent the spouse from being closed off from the worker's pension benefits.

Also high on the list are proposals to interest more businesses in starting voluntary day-care programs while changing the law to make employer contributions tax-free. The administration is funding a test program in four cities to determine whether women will use government-run referral services for day-care.

The White House also is considering recommendations for attracting more women into high-level government posts. Edwin L. Harper, a Reagan domestic policy adviser, said a recent White House analysis shows that although 14 percent of presidential appointees are women, only 5 percent of top career government employees are women.

While the White House proposals have been attacked as "largely cosmetic" by Democrats such as Rep. Patricia Schroeder (Colo.), Republicans such as Rep. Claudine Schneider (R.I.) and Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum (Kan.) said they now believe that the White House is genuinely interested in overcoming the gender gap.

"I think they are sincere because they've seen the polls and they saw what happened in San Antonio," said Kassebaum, referring to a meeting of the National Women's Political Caucus where the administration was criticized on women's issues.

Post 7/25/88

White House Sees Two Sides To Gender Gap

By Juan Williams
Washington Post Staff Writer

White House officials concerned about President Reagan and the "gender gap" say it cuts both ways: the president is grabbing male votes from the Democratic Party.

"It's the reverse image of the gender gap that's being talked about now," said a senior White House official who attended a recent meeting on the issue called by deputy chief of staff Michael K. Deaver.

"It's the fact that Ronald Reagan is very popular among men and he is taking the male vote away from the Democrats," the official said. "Men like Ronald Reagan and the Democrats know that's a problem for them. We'd like to shift the public debate from the Republican gender gap to the Democratic gender gap."

The Republican gender gap that worries White House officials is the showing in polls that women, the largest voting bloc in the electorate for the first time, support the president less than men do. One result is that the White House has tried to focus on women's issues.

The Democratic response to the suggestion of a gender gap of their own is that Republicans are desper-

See GAP, A5, Col. 1

Reagan's record on women

By Dwight Cunningham
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, challenging President Reagan's view that his administration is "quite a ways out ahead" when compared to the Carter administration's appointment of women to policy-making positions in the federal government, has asked the president for additional data supporting that statement.

In a letter to White House personnel officials last week, the commission asked for details about the appointment of some 1,000 women to executive positions within the administration, following Reagan's statement during a press conference that his record on hiring women was better than the previous administration's.

The commission letter and Reagan's speech yesterday before the American Bar Association's annual convention in Atlanta are the latest rounds of charges and countercharges on the issue of Reagan's insensitivity to women and minorities.

Reagan has taken special aim at the so-called "gender gap," his low standing among women compared to his popularity among men, in declaring that his two-year record of appointing women to executive jobs has erroneously been compared to Carter's four-year record.

Much of the controversy over who is correct about the president's hiring record of women centers on what categories of federal appointees are included in the total. While the commission apparently includes only top full-time presidential appointments, Reagan administration hiring figures also include appointments to advisory panels and other career positions having minimal policy-making authority.

A White House spokesman, expressing confidence that executive-

queried

level appointments of women and minorities "will continue to grow," said the administration is studying the commission's latest request.

"As part of the commission's continuing monitoring of equal opportunity in presidential appointments," the Civil Rights Commission letter said, "... we would appreciate your providing additional details about the 1,000 appointments of women, specifically, what categories... these appointments cover."

Two months ago, a commission report assailed Reagan's record of appointing minorities and women to high-level federal positions, concluding that his minority-hiring record "thus far is below the levels achieved by the Carter administration."

Civil rights commission sources yesterday expressed puzzlement over Reagan's reference that he has appointed more than 1,000 women to top-level

executive positions, when data furnished by the White House say that women comprised 388, or 14.3 percent, of 2,708 full-time and part-time presidential appointments.

C. Anson Franklin, an assistant press secretary at the White House, defended the president's record, saying the administration's figures included policy-making jobs in the Schedule C category (GS-13 to GS-15 level) in addition to Senior Executive Service positions.

But the inclusion of those categories in the administration's hiring figures is unfair when compared to other administrations', commission sources said.

"Those are middle- and lower-level policy-making jobs at best," said a Civil Rights Commission source who requested anonymity. "I don't think the White House will be able to claim a record" by including those jobs in the total, he said.

02 AUG 1983
Wash Times

02 AUG 1983
USA Today

Black woman aide hails chief

When Trudi Michelle Morrison was named White House associate director of public liaison last month, her hometown Denver newspapers were quick to label her the highest-ranking black woman in the Reagan administration.

But how high is the highest? Morrison is one of five associate directors in the public liaison office, which handles issues dealing with women, minorities, labor and public interests.

Above the five are seven special assistants. Above them is a deputy assistant, and finally, there's Faith Ryan Whittlesey, assistant to the president for public liaison.

While not exactly a heart-beat away from the presidency, Morrison, 32, agrees with Reagan's claims, restat-

ed Monday in a speech to the American Bar Association in Atlanta, that his administration has an "unshakable commitment to eliminate discrimination against blacks, women, the handicapped and other minorities."

"Knowing this president," says Morrison, who has met Reagan three times, "with him it's also a moral commitment to do that... as well as a legal commitment."

Morrison, however, finds it "very uncomfortable to be labeled as 'the black woman' in any administration."

"I spent years getting an education and becoming a professional and I demand to be judged on my qualifications and credentials, not on my race or my sex," she says.

A lawyer with a doctorate

in public administration pending from Denver's University of Colorado, she joined this administration in May 1981, working in Housing and Urban Development and in Health and Human Services. She is married to Dale Saunders, also a lawyer.

While praising the president, she criticizes civil rights leaders.

"I think these so-called leaders encourage narrow-minded, ignorant herding among our people. Also, I think that they espouse philosophies geared... toward fattening their own wallets," she said.

Morrison, who founded the Colorado Black Republican Council in 1980, comes from a long line of GOP activists.

Her mother, Marjorie



J.M. Applewhite, AP

MORRISON: Top black woman in the White House Morrison, says both of Trudi's grandmothers as well as herself were members of the now defunct True Way Republican Women's Club in Denver, and that Republican activism is "just sort of a family habit; my children just kind of grew up with it."

— Chris Collins