

**THE WOMEN OF COLOR ALLIANCE  
ROADMAP TO VOTING:  
A VOTER'S GUIDE FOR WOMEN OF  
COLOR**



## **WOCA Roadmap to Voting: A Voter's Guide for Women of Color**

This Voter's Guide was designed especially for you by the Women of Color Alliance (WOCA), a grassroots organization in Idaho. We are Latinas, Native women, African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders working to shape the policies that affect our daily lives. Through education and training, we ensure our voices are heard by candidates and elected officials.

Women of color are movers and shakers. As parents, caregivers, educators, healthcare providers, entrepreneurs, public servants and more, we provide essential services to our communities every day. At WOCA our goal is to turn our collective strengths into political power for our communities.

Your voice is important even if you can't vote. Be a part of WOCA. Reach out to your friends and neighbors. Attend WOCA's trainings. You are an important member of the Idaho women of color community. Make your voices heard!



### **What does WOCA do?**

1. We educate women of color like you about issues that affect us through materials like this **WOCA Voter's Guide**. We help to make your voice count.
2. We introduce women of color to each other, so that we can break the isolation we feel and build a powerful community to increase our safety, our access to opportunity, and our participation in Idaho's decision-making process.
3. We help you to engage your friends, family and neighbors in building power and changing conditions in Idaho through workshops and trainings. Call us to find out more.



## What is the WOCA Voter Guide?

The **WOCA Roadmap to Voting: A Voter's Guide for Women of Color** is written specifically with you in mind as a woman of color, *mujer, babae, wa'ipi, femme, onna ...* Like any good road map, we hope the guide is easy to follow and the journey pleasant. And the choice of destination is entirely up to you!

Our guide is intended to help you think about what matters to you and your family, and give you information about how to take action by learning more, engaging your friends and neighbors, coming to a WOCA training, or speaking with candidates.

We want our state to support women of color and our families through laws and services that allow our families to thrive. We want what you want--an Idaho that supports dignity and justice for all.



## What is unique about Idaho?

***We have a significant Native population.*** Idaho has five federally recognized tribes: Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai, Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute. About 2.2%, or just over 14,300, Idaho women are Native American.<sup>1</sup> Reservations have governance systems that are worked out at the federal level. An important bill we may see again this year is SITCLEA (State and Indian Tribal Cooperative Law Enforcement Act). If passed, this act will make reservations safer for Native women.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Status of Women in Idaho, Institute for Women's Policy Research, [www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org), 2004.

<sup>2</sup> SITCLEA was withdrawn during the 2010 Legislative session. The bill would have allowed Tribal and local law enforcement to negotiate agreements allowing Tribal police to have the power to arrest non-tribal members for committing crimes on tribal lands. Similar Federal legislation has been passed, but state law is still needed.

***Our Latino population is growing.*** In 2000, our population was 8% Latino; now we are more than 10%. 41% of Idaho's Latinos live in Canyon and Ada Counties, with nine counties having Latino populations of over 20%.<sup>3</sup> What this means is that political power is beginning to shift. Latinos can have a significant impact in local, county and state elections by virtue of our numbers. This is a moment to stand up, be counted, and ensure that policies that we pass benefit our families.

***The State of Idaho Women.*** Compared to women in other states, women in Idaho trail significantly behind in the areas of employment, education, wages compared to men, and political power. Fewer of us earn college degrees, are gainfully employed, or earn more than 68% of what white men earn doing the same job. Idaho women fare slightly better on the healthcare front, ranking about 15<sup>th</sup> in the nation in general health and well-being.<sup>4</sup> On the political front, Idaho has had only **one** woman in an elected Executive Office (Superintendent of Public Instruction several years ago<sup>5</sup>); no woman has ever held the Idaho Governor's office nor has a woman been elected to a national office (Senate or House of Representatives) for Idaho.<sup>6</sup> Idaho has a higher percentage of women serving in the Legislature than the national average (26.7% vs. 22.4%)<sup>7</sup>, but only one is a woman of color. Idaho women register to vote and show up at the polls at lower rates than women nationally, so there is lots of room for improvement!



### **What are we facing?**

This November, Idaho will hold statewide and local elections to decide who gets to set policies for our communities. Several statewide and national positions are at stake: our Governor, one U.S. Senator, two members of the U.S. House of Representatives, our Secretary of State,

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<sup>3</sup> Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 2009, reporting data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Status of Women in Idaho, page 31.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Marilyn Howard, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1999-2006.

<sup>6</sup> Status of Women in Idaho, page 10.

<sup>7</sup> Status of Women in Idaho, page 10.

Attorney General, School Superintendent, and all members of the Idaho State Senate and House of Representatives.

From January through March 2011, our elected state officials will pass laws that impact nearly everything in our daily lives. These decisions will govern how long our children are in school and what subjects they learn, how much sales tax we pay for our gas and groceries, who is able to work, who is able to get healthcare, how immigrants are treated and the services we can access, and much, much more.

Our legislators are elected by us to make these policy decisions – their job is to represent us. While women make up half of the state’s population (about 700,000)<sup>8</sup>, only about one in four Legislators is a woman, and only one Legislator is a woman of color. The result is that right now, *policy decisions weakening our families and our communities are being made without our input.*

### **What happened last year?**

The following are two samples of legislation voted into law in 2010 by our state elected officials that impact women of color and their families.



De Facto Custodian Act. This law allows relatives of children to be granted full or joint legal/physical custody of those children without having to go through a full guardianship hearing. **By simplifying the process, this law strengthens families and communities of color by enabling them to stay together.**



Healthcare Refusal. This bill allows any healthcare professional to refuse health care services that are against his or her conscience, and protects them from any liability for such refusal. Women of color tend to have less access to resources,

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<sup>8</sup> Status of Women in Idaho, page 5.

including healthcare and contraception, so any restriction on such services disproportionately impacts us. **This law weakens the ability of women of color to access full healthcare services and disregards our ability to make our own decisions about our bodies, relationships, families and health needs.**



### **What's coming next year?**

State elected-officials will vote on bills that will have significant impact on women and our communities. We need to make sure they pass or stop the following bills:

- Pass a bill that ends the use of shackles on pregnant incarcerated women.
- Pass a bill that allows Native women to be safer on tribal lands.
- Stop a bill that criminalizes immigrants without documentation.



### **What should I know about my candidates?**

You already know what you care about, what affects you, your family, and the people and places important to you. Ask your candidates what they think about those issues. If they are currently in office, ask what they have done about the issues that concern you. If they are running for the first time, ask what they would do if elected.

Here are some questions WOCA members have been asking.

- Do you support an end to shackling pregnant women in prison?
- Do you support SITCLEA, the bill to clarify jurisdiction in enforcing Idaho state laws by tribal police, and protecting native women?
- Did you support the bill criminalizing people without papers (Employment Verification Bill)?
- Do you support funding for childcare and after school programs?
- How do you intend to help low income families in Idaho?

- What social services do you see as most important to preserve?
- What is your priority when it comes to improving education?
- How will you help increase living wage jobs in Idaho?
- As Idaho becomes more racially diverse, what do you see as a priority for supporting our increasing numbers of people of color? What do you see as an opportunity that this presents? And what are the challenges?

The list goes on and on...funding for libraries, training of police, support for military families, etc. If it matters to you, it matters to your neighbors; if it matters to your neighbors, it matters to many people in your community. And we want to make sure that our candidates and elected officials know that people like us are watching, speaking, organizing and voting.



### **How do I find out how my representatives voted?**

You can access the Idaho Legislative webpage through the State of Idaho website at [www.legislature.idaho.gov](http://www.legislature.idaho.gov). On this site, you can look up specific bills, their legislative history including who voted for/against the bill, and contact information for legislators.



### **Where do I find information on my candidates and where to vote?**

You can access information online at [www.idahovotes.gov](http://www.idahovotes.gov) or call your local county clerk's office.



### **What is my role?**

Our elected officials were put in office to represent their constituents—the people who live in their district. Us. And they tend to listen most closely to those who vote, those who get others to vote, and those who make their opinions known. This WOCA Voter Guide and the trainings

and workshops we offer are designed to help you, your family and your friends become those people.



### **What are the actions I can take now?**

1. Register to vote and vote on November 2! Check with your local county office or visit [www.idahovotes.gov](http://www.idahovotes.gov).
2. Share this Voter's Guide with other members of your community.
3. Show up at candidate events and ask your questions.
4. Become a WOCA member and sign up for leadership development activities! Call us today!
5. Attend our Public Policy Advocacy workshop in early December. WOCA can help you get your voice heard. Together we can create a powerful voice for our families and communities!

For more information or more copies of this brochure, please contact:

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**“True freedom comes from self-representation.”**



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\*Maps courtesy of the State of Idaho.