



Where women lead, change follows.

Kristen Welker, NBC News

Subject: Where do the candidates stand on women's and girls' rights

Dear Ms. Welker,

As the leaders of women's and girl's funds/foundations, gender equity funders, advocates and allies, we call on you, as the moderator of the final presidential debate (scheduled for October 22, 2020, assuming it proceeds), to put women and girls — especially women and girls of color — and the issues that most impact us front and center. We urge that you include the following among the questions and topics both candidates will be required to answer:

- As a result of the pandemic and resulting economic downturn, women — and women of color in particular — have been disproportionately affected by COVID-related job losses, including layoffs, reduced hours and furloughs. At the same time, with the brunt of unpaid domestic and child care labor at home already falling to women regardless of employment outside the home, many working women and mothers are being forced to leave the workforce in record numbers in order to care for their families as schools and daycare programs remain closed.

Question: How will you help women remain in or reenter the workforce to ensure an equitable economic recovery for people of all genders and to prevent women, especially women of color, from experiencing increased gender/race wage gap?

- Lack of access to quality, affordable child care; persistent gender and racial wage disparities; as well as weak public policies around securing living wage jobs and access to affordable, quality health care and health care coverage and worker benefits like paid sick and family leave are all problems that both predate and have been further exacerbated by the pandemic and whose burdens are most acutely felt by working women and people of color.

Question: How do you plan to address the child care crisis and how will you implement and expand family-friendly policies and protections for workers?

- Women and our families demand leadership in addressing and preventing violence against women and girls and gendered violence, including intimate partner violence and sexual assault and harassment.

Question: How will you work to reduce violence against women and gendered violence?

- Immigrants face great threats to their safety while in U.S. custody, including the caging of children and the separation of families in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody at the border. There are even [reports of deaths and miscarriages suffered by immigrants in ICE](#)

[custody during deportation](#) because they are denied medical treatment.

Question: How will you protect the health and lives of immigrants in U.S. custody?

- For women of color and immigrant women, institutional violence — like police brutality, mass incarceration and medical abuses, including forced sterilizations of incarcerated and immigrant women detained by ICE — threatens families and makes neighborhoods unsafe.

Question: How will you stop institutional violence against women?

- While climate change, rightfully, has gotten a lot of attention during the campaign, the water and air pollution that threaten women and families, especially women of color and women in low-income communities, have not been addressed. Even after the water crisis in Flint, Michigan and the air pollution in communities of color across the country have worsened asthma among people of color — contributing to poor outcomes during the pandemic, public officials still fail to address the grave environmental problems of water and air pollution.

Question: What will you do to ensure that every family in the U.S. — whether living in an inner-city neighborhood or in a rural community — has access to clean water and air?

- With multiple U.S. Supreme Court justices and the current nominee to fill Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg's seat vowing to repeal *Roe v. Wade*, on the heels of a SCOTUS decision to limit the Affordable Care Act by overturning the birth control coverage mandate, in the midst of a public health crisis and economic recession causing many to lose employer-provided health care coverage, months after drastically limiting Title X family planning funding for reproductive health care providers — women's and girls' health and wellbeing are under attack like never before.

Question: What will you do to ensure all women are able to get access to the full range of essential health care we need — including birth control, pregnancy and abortion care — safely, affordably and without political interference?

- Across the nation, individuals are standing in line for hours on end to place their vote. One woman of color in Georgia, interviewed by NPR, noted that her husband took the day off to care for their children so she could exercise her right to vote early. She stood in line for 10 hours - not one, ten, to be sure her voice was heard without a restroom break patiently waiting her turn. Many take their children to the polls to lead by example. Young children would not have the stamina nor the patience to wait this long.

Question: What should be done, and what can be done immediately to eliminate barriers to voting so all have an equal opportunity to vote in person?

Women's and girls basic human rights are at stake, yet the debates have largely ignored the impacts of sexism and racism. We demand that our issues be addressed.

Signed by the following women's and girls' equality and justice leaders:

Elizabeth Barajas-Román, President and CEO, Women's Funding Network
Jennifer Steadman, Ph. D., Executive Director, Aurora Women and Girls Foundation
Louise Davis, President, PRBB Foundation
Michelle Zych, Executive Director, Women's Fund of Omaha
Donna Haghighat, CEO, Women's Fund of Western MA
Jess Tomlin, Co-CEO, Equality Fund
Kelly Nevins, Executive Director, Women's Fund of Rhode Island
Tine Ward, CEO, Rockflower Partners Inc.
Kelley Griesmer, President and CEO, The Women's Fund of Central Ohio
Lauren Y. Casteel, President & CEO, The Women's Foundation of Colorado
Kimberly Crichton, Executive Director, Maine Women's Fund
Marya Meyer, Chair of the Board, The Women's Fund Miami-Dade
Beth Bengtson, CEO, Working for Women
Sheri Scavone, Executive Director, Western New York Women's Foundation
Keri Koehler, Executive Director, Women's Foundation of Greater St. Louis
Sharon LaRue, Executive Director, Kentucky Foundation for Women
Mesha Davis, CEO, Arizona Foundation for Women
Latanya Mapp-Frett, President and CEO
Stacey Keare, President, Girls Rights Project
Amalia Luxardo, CEO, Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona
Julie Castro Abrams, CEO, How Women Lead
Gloria Perez, President & CEO, Women's Foundation of Minnesota
Lisa Attonito, Executive Director
Susan Cornell Wilkes, President, Adventures in Giving LLC
Dawn Oliver Wiand, Executive Director, Iowa Women's Foundation
Karen Sterk, CEO, Jeannette Rankin Foundation
Tracy DeVries, Executive Director, Women's Foundation of Mississippi
Patricia Eng, President, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy
Jill Nowak, Chief Financial and Admin Officer, Missouri Foundation for Health
Emily Weltman, Founder and CEO, Collective Flow Consulting
Nicole Baran, Executive Director, Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation
Fatima Goss Graves, President and CEO, National Women's Law Center
Leela Bilmes Goldstein, Executive Director, Women's Fund of Hawai'i
Monica Ramirez, Founder and President, Justice for Migrant Women, Co-Founder and President, The Latinx House, Principal, She Se Puede
Natanja Craig Oquendo, Executive Director, Boston Women's Fund