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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the Women's National Advisory Council

Edmund S. Muskie

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TRANSCRIPT

WOMEN'S NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL SPEECH
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
DECEMBER 2, 1971

Women

Thank you very much Irene and Merilee, and I thank the rest of you for being here. I don't know whether I ought to mention this or not, but the last hour or so I've been meeting with a group of men, and we've been talking about issues. And so I'm delighted to come over here and I want to say, first of all, thank you for your interest and involvement. The idea of a national Women's Advisory Council to be of assistance in connection with the campaign is something that we've wanted to do, and by your interest and involvement you're enabling us to do it. A great many people, including my wife, have been prodding me to be sure that we did not ignore this area of concern, and of course, I encounter it around the country. It's been our conscious and deliberate effort to get women involved at the top policy-making levels of our campaign operation as well as our Senate operation, and we've succeeded, I think, remarkably well up to this point, with Merilee and Irene and so many others who are at the top level of our organization, and we're going to have more. We've experimented, incidentally, and very successfully, from my point of view, using two very attractive young ladies in the advance operation. And this should not.... this should seem to be outside the scope of what you'd expect women to do willingly, and yet these two young ladies, I think, are performing as well as anyone we have in the advance operation. I rather think they're both very pretty, I might say. I don't know if they want you to say that... (LAUGHTER & INTERRUPTION)... Well, let's say attractive because even "masculine" would be attractive if he could manage it. But they're doing...they're doing very well and we're delighted to have them and we think we've made some break-throughs there. They're well-received in the communities in which they work. I ran into one young lady in one week in Billings, Montana, and Miami, Florida, and then in Charlotte, North Carolina. So she's seeing the country as completely as I am.

But I'd like to say just a word about this council. One of the functions we'd like to see you serve is...is to prod us and to monitor us and to make sure that we are managing to do an effective job...one, with respect to getting women involved, not only in our campaign organization but subsequently, if we're successful, in...with respect to other responsibilities that we have. Secondly, that you stay on top of us with respect to the issues that are of concern to women and make sure that we're on top of those and moving in the right direction. But thirdly, and maybe I should have mentioned this first, that I'd like to have you making your inputs and issues across the board, that this is the kind of involvement that we're talking about--forward. We'd better be concerned with the particular implications of women's

interests, but then beyond that, I think when we're talking about foreign policy, domestic policy, drugs, education, what we do in Pakistan or the Middle East, it is in these issues that we need the special inputs that women can give us.

I made a talk in Schenectady this...the past few days...what was the forum up there? ...It was the Freedom Forum, and I decided to use that forum to make a speech on women's rights. And I chose that after first being tempted to use a women's forum. Now this was a mixed one. So you see what the bias is...simplified...to make this speech to a mixed forum. And I must say that the reaction I got from the men was one that all of you could predict. You know they...they really don't believe that this is a serious matter...of concern to you, all too often, until you begin to specify and identify some of the biases that are built into our culture, or into our own instinctive reactions, as men, to the role of women or the functions they might play even in a campaign organization. It's going to take conscious effort on our part, I think, to break away from those biases. And that's where you can be of particular value to us. I think you can do that even more effectively when you're involved, not as women, or pushing women's rights, but when you're involved in actual issues and operations, ignoring the fact that you're women. (APPLAUSE)

Now, one of the most difficult areas in which to...in which to move politically (UNCLEAR) is delegate selection. But I'm committed fully to the McGovern Commission guidelines.....I...I think all of you know there's a conflict (UNCLEAR) here, unless we find a way to resolve it. Number one, the objective of a good delegate selection--and electoral base, so that delegates are elected. But at the same time the other guideline is that the delegations should be representative. Well, I don't know of any electoral process that has ever produced a representative result. No, it just isn't the way it works. And, of course, because it is based on the electoral process, or intended to be, the candidates and their managers have less control over what the process or the result will be. It is going to be a very big challenge to insure that we do better than the 13% representation that women had at the National Convention in '68. We've got to...we've got to set the target at 50% representation, and I think that if we work at it, using all of the ingenuity ...and the skills that we get at the local level, that we can find that we ought to move substantially toward that target. That's our commitment, that's our objective, and we'll need your help to do it, because you'll have to get women involved in every state where we get involved in seeking delegates, to try to find a way to come up with this objective, and we'll welcome your participation.

Now, may I say....the McGovern Commission is fully correct in giving...enhancing the rights of minorities--and I'm conscious of the fact that you are not a minority. So that is, I think, a terribly

important objective, and it will be easy to loose sight of if we don't recognize these conflicts in a few of the guidelines are going to be very difficult to...to resolve for women, for blacks, for other minority groups to be sure that we get as representative and independent a convention as we can. So, I look forward to working with you and I'll find the time, if I have to, you know... if I have to use the whip on my schedulers, to find more time to meet with you, so I get more of a direct input. (APPLAUSE)
I think...I think what I need to do is to get a woman in my scheduling operation. (LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE)
