

PETER WENSTRUP'S VISION: **Our Senator as a Fearless and Tireless Advocate for Women's Rights.**



Too frequently, men in public office overlook the barriers that require women to jump twice as high and run twice as fast as men. As a man running for public office, it is crucial to listen. As I've talked to the important women in my life and community in launching this campaign, I feel that it is imperative that our U.S. Senator is a fearless and tireless advocate for women's rights. Louisiana hasn't always been the best state for supporting women's issues. It certainly wasn't when Bill Cassidy was first elected to office nearly two decades ago and it is arguably less so today after more than a decade of him being in Washington, D.C. As our next U.S. Senator, I intend to change that.

As our next US Senator, I will fight for policies that empower women to end the gender pay gap. Every Louisiana women's group and every Louisiana woman will have a strong and dedicated ally in me. It is absolutely unacceptable that Louisiana women earn less than 79 cents for every dollar a man earns doing the same work. The gender pay gap is even worse for women of color. Today, African American women in Louisiana earn less than 64 cents for every dollar a white male earns for the same work, while the figure for Hispanic women is just 54 cents for the same work. This is a historical legacy of racist and sexist policies and practices that we must work to actively counter. Empowering women means passing the **Paycheck Fairness Act** to provide women with tools to fight unequal pay in court. Empowering women also means forcing companies to **publish average salaries for positions** so that women can fight to earn what they are worth. I will continue to strongly encourage our legislature to pick up the issue here in Louisiana so **together we can end wage discrimination based on gender**.

Fair wages must include and go beyond equal pay. As a teacher, I have spent my career in a majority-women field. I have seen the ways that undervaluing women's work impacts the quality of our schools and the outcomes of our children. My **education funding plan would guarantee teacher salaries of \$60,000-\$108,000 for teachers across the country**. And the fight for better wages must extend beyond schools.

A **\$15-dollar minimum wage** empowers more women with financial security and independence. **Nationwide paid sick leave** and **family leave** empower women to advance in their workplaces without discrimination. Paternity leave must also be included in family leave policies as our current patchwork of maternity leave plans open up a parenting-skills gap in the first six weeks that often persists for years.

A \$15-minimum wage and paid sick leave are also key components of a broader effort to **empower women to confront and escape domestic violence**. This issue is even more urgent as quarantine and job-loss force more women to remain home in harmful environments. I will push for our state to do a better job of protecting and serving women who are survivors of domestic abuse, including increased access to **24-hour safe spaces for women and children in need**. My plan to move from policing to holistic crisis response also allows cities to fund social workers and domestic violence specialists to respond to 911 calls so that **trained professionals meet women in times of crisis**.

But it's not just a safe bed for the night or a hotline. We need to make sure we are a rock-solid foundation for those who need the most help. That's why as our next US Senator I will fight to be the strongest ally **women experiencing homelessness in Louisiana** have ever had. Single mothers with children make up the largest portion of our unhoused neighbors and they have too long been faceless and nameless. We know this population is growing nearly unabated because of increasing medical and housing costs and stagnant wages. So, while we are ensuring the safety of women in peril, we must also be focused on moving them towards economic prosperity by **fully funding section 8 housing options and expanding HUD access to low-income women**.

And while it is essential that our state be there for women survivors, helping prevent the next generation of domestic survivors is an issue near and dear to my heart. We all have to do a better job of confronting violence against women. One in five women in Louisiana will be sexually assaulted while in college, and 22% of women in Louisiana will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner at home. While these statistics are not worse than many other places in America, they are absolutely unacceptable here. That's why as our next US Senator I will partner with any college in the state who wants to take on this issue with me - to do more to protect our sisters and our daughters and our granddaughters who decide to grace our fantastic institutions of higher learning. Men, this is our fight too. When I'm elected as our next US Senator, I will be reaching out to our brothers and our sons and our grandsons to stand alongside me in better protecting the women in our lives and on our campuses.

Though I will never forget the 8-week ultrasound of my first child, I know motherhood is an intensely personal issue. I cannot understand a woman's experience at that moment, but I do understand fairness. Regardless of what Bill Cassidy tells you, millionaires and billionaires will always have access to full reproductive choice. Therefore, I will oppose a big-government, Prohibition-style ban on abortions and any other measures that have a disparate impact on poor and working-class women. We must also decrease unwanted pregnancies by broadening access to reproductive health, including pre-pregnancy genetic testing so that parents understand their risk. As a teacher, I am aware that 1 in 20 teenage women become pregnant. We must empower these young women with access to school-based clinics and the right to consent to contraception at age 16. As our next US Senator, I will make sure Louisiana women can feel confident that **they will not be discriminated against in civic life or in the workplaces for choices related to their own autonomous health.**

Louisiana's rates of maternal mortality are unacceptable and preventable. I will advocate for ramping up our Nurse-Family partnerships to provide licensed, trained nurses to see or visit under-served populations, ensuring continuity of care. These programs can flag women for smoking cessation or substance-abuse programs. We must also address racial bias through implicit bias training and increasing the number of women of color in obstetrics.

Supporting a woman's choice to start a family when she's ready, and to making sure she's healthy in the process, is to also support her financial choices as well. Our office will be a strong supporter of **workforce development and job preparedness for Louisiana women**, especially as we try to rebuild our broken economy after the coronavirus pandemic. I will fight to increase **federal contracting with women-owned businesses** and increase support for women to follow their dreams through **business development grants through the Small Business Administration**. I'm honored to be meeting with various nonprofit and private groups to learn more about how our country can equitably implement programs like this.

I strongly believe the rights and protections outlined here for the women of Louisiana must equally and **strongly apply to all women, transwomen, and nonbinary folks as well.** All of our neighbors deserve to live lives of dignity and respect. As our next Senator, I will work to listen to and represent the needs of all the people of Louisiana. If we are all to succeed, we must all be included.

Finally, I'll encourage the Louisiana legislature to **pass the Equal Rights Act**, like Nevada and North Carolina did in the last few years. If the Louisiana legislature follows suit, we would be the essential final required state triggering the legislation to finally become the law of the land after a 40-year wait. Louisiana women deserve that honor, and we are in a position to help make that change.

While I don't expect everybody to agree with me on every issue on this list, I want all of you to know who I am, what I believe and what I stand for. And even with our differences, here's something I know we all agree on: When we work together to prevent discrimination and abuse in any form against women, our families are stronger, our economy is stronger, and our state is stronger.