

**Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici— Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing
"Ending Violence Against Women in Politics" —March 21, 2017**

Good afternoon. I am honored to be here today for this important briefing on the prevalence of violence that women experience in politics and public service, both at home and around the world.

Thank you to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for holding this briefing, particularly our co-chairs, Jim McGovern and Randy Hultgren. Also thanks to our panelists for sharing their experiences and expertise, as well as to our moderator for what I'm sure will be a thought-provoking discussion.

Women's participation in politics is essential to a truly representative government that achieves policies addressing the needs of all members of society.

I am proud and fortunate that my home state of Oregon is marked by a strong contingent of women in public life. Women in Oregon serve in public office at some of the highest rates in the country; we currently have a female Governor, House Speaker, and several other members of the legislature in leadership positions. Women hold more than half the seats on Oregon's nonprofit boards, and serve as 71 percent of the state's community college presidents.

But Congresswomen Schakowsky, Wagner, and I are currently three of only 83 women in the House. That's less than twenty percent representing a country where women make up over half of the population.

Tragically, both at home and abroad, women in public service experience a range of targeted and misogynistic violence, from cyber-harassment to physical violence, sometimes including death.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union report being discussed today contains a number of alarming statistics. Unfortunately, many of them are not surprising—including that the vast majority of

elected women surveyed (65.5 percent) said that they had been subject to “humiliating sexist remarks”—the majority of which were made by their male colleagues.

For many women, whether in the U.S. or around the world, this kind of harassment and violence has a chilling effect on political participation and only perpetuates under-representation of women in politics.

It takes courage to be a woman in the public sphere. I have my mother to thank for giving me that courage. I remember her participating in civil rights marches, despite us worrying about her safety. My mom’s fearlessness inspired me to be politically active.

I hope we can inspire all women to be fearless as we work to make it safer and less daunting for them to engage in the political process.

Thanks again to my colleagues, to the Lantos Commission, and to our panelists. I am grateful that we are having this discussion today centered on protecting the political participation of women and how we can continue working towards a bright and equitable future for all.