Announcing Launch of RISE TO RUN: New Organization That Will Mobilize and Train Young, Progressive Women to Run for Office

First-Ever Nationwide, Community-Based Organization Focused Solely on Preparing Progressive High School and College-Aged Women for Office

Contact: Shannon Watts, info@risetorun.org

(Denver, Colorado and Washington, DC) May 22, 2017 – Progressive women leaders representing a wide range of policy perspectives are coming together to launch a new national organization, Rise to Run, which will train and encourage progressive high school girls and college-aged women to run for office. Rise to Run is the first and only grassroots and community-based organization that is progressive, exists both on and offline, and is focused solely on this critical age group of women.

“For generations, American girls and young women have had too few women role models to look to in positions of political power – both in their communities and in the White House,” said Shannon Watts, Chair of the Rise to Run National Advisory Board and founder Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. “The dream of a political revolution for women didn’t die on November 8, 2016. In fact, the election outcome provided the inspiration for Rise to Run, which will activate the next generation of political leaders.”

Rise to Run will bring progressive girls and young women together in their communities to give them insight into the political process, connect them with mentors, and involve them in activism. Through in-person training and on-the-ground networks, Rise to Run will make electoral politics and political action more appealing and accessible for girls and young women of every identity.

According to the Center for Women and American Politics, the average age of American women to run for office is 47. And a recent study of high school and college students found that only 19 percent had any interest in running for office.

“We believe that if we can organize communities of young, progressive women and build power at a local level – and get those women into elected office as soon as they’re ready – we’ll build a better, stronger, more inclusive country. And in turn, we’ll significantly lower the average age women enter politics,” said Helen Brosnan, Rise to Run national organizer and member of The Women’s March on Washington political engagement team.
Rise to Run National Advisory Board members include Bob Bland, National Co-Chair of The Women’s March on Washington; Brynne Craig, former National Deputy Director of State Campaigns and Political Engagement, Hillary for America; Donna Edwards, former Maryland Congresswoman; Ilyse Hogue, President of NARAL; Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Washington Congresswoman and first Indian-American woman in the House of Representatives; Nanxi Liu, the Chief Executive Officer of Enplug, Inc. and youth advisory board member at the Lady Gaga Foundation; Sarah McBride, a transgender activist and National Press Secretary for the Human Rights Campaign; Natalie Montelongo, National Field Director at Voto Latino; Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor of California; Brittany Packnett, activist and co-founder of We The Protestors and Campaign Zero; Carmen Perez, National Co-Chair of The Women’s March and Executive Director of the Gathering for Justice; Symone Sanders, democratic strategist and former National Press Secretary for Senator Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign; Megan Smith, the United States’ third-ever Chief Technology Officer; Kara Swisher, co-founder and executive editor of Recode; Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America; Jamia Wilson, activist and Executive Director of Women, Action & the Media.

“Since the 2016 election, lawmakers, activists, and celebrities have implored American women to run for office,” said Sarah McBride. “Rise to Run answers those calls to action and helps create a new wave of women ready to enter electoral politics at a younger age. We need to fill our nation’s political pipeline with young, progressive women of all identities and backgrounds who reflect the vibrant communities that make up America.”

Rise to Run has also created a team of Trailblazers: women who have run for office, are currently running, or who are current or former elected officials. These women embody Rise to Run’s mission statement and values system and will serve as ongoing inspiration for Rise to Run participants, called “Risers.”

Initial Rise to Run Trailblazers include: Allyson Carpenter, former Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner and the youngest person ever elected to a position in the District of Columbia; Margo L. Davidson, the first woman and woman of color to serve as State Representative of the 164th district of Pennsylvania; Yvanna Cancela, Nevada State Senator and Executive Director of the Immigrant Workers Citizenship Project; Jillian Johnson, Durham City Councilwoman in North Carolina, Director of Operations for the Southern Vision Alliance; Tracy McCreery, Missouri State Representative and founding member of the St. Louis Rescue & Restore Coalition; Laura Moser, Congressional candidate in Texas and founder of http://dailyaction.org; Ayanna Pressley, Boston City Council member and the first woman of color to be elected to the Council; Cora Faith Walker, Missouri State Representative from Ferguson; Nantasha Williams, national organizer of the Women’s March on Washington and former New York State Assembly candidate; Attica Woodson Scott; Kentucky State Representative and former member of the Louisville Metro Council; JoCasta Zamarripa, Wisconsin State Representative and the first Latina elected to the state legislature.

"Women in America deserve and must demand control over their own destinies. Entering electoral politics can be daunting and difficult; those of us who already have a seat at the table have an obligation to pull up chairs for other women with shared progressive ideals. We must lift as we climb, develop and amplify others’ voices, and foster a new generation’s commitment to improve their communities and our country,” said Ayanna Pressley.
"We are at a crucial juncture in politics in the United States: the progressive movement must build a base of support for women at this specific level – middle school, high school, college – so that when women enter politics, they have a support system," said Attica Woodson Scott. "That's why Rise to Run is so urgently necessary and why I am so excited to be part of it."

Rise to Run is launching initial pilot programs in four locations: Bloomington, Indiana; Durham, North Carolina; Madison, Wisconsin; and San Francisco, California. The pilots are a mix of community- and campus-based hubs that will engage the Risers in local politics and civic activity. Rise to Run's in-person training will help prepare Risers to run for elected office at all levels and to have careers as key campaign staff. In addition, Risers will receive support from the Rise to Run alumnae network.

Rise to Run will expand its pilots to include hubs in all 50 states by 2020.

"One of the many things that sets Rise to Run apart is that even before Risers start any formal training, they're building relationships and engaging in political activism in their communities," said Eileen Soffer, Rise to Run national organizer. "They're not only future leaders, but they quickly become informed voters and advocates for progressive candidates and causes."

Rise to Run is working with existing local and education-based organizations, as well as national organizations focused on progressive and women's issues, to forge alliances that will benefit Risers. These connections also help Rise to Run participants identify opportunities to address unserved needs where they live.

"Rise to Run's boots-on-the-ground approach will embolden young progressive women to enter public office, electoral politics, and progressive activism at all levels of government – from campaign manager to city council to Congresswoman," said Brynne Craig. "Rise to Run is deeply committed to recruiting women of color and women with different economic experiences in order to bring about sweeping change to the landscape of American electoral politics."

Rise to Run's progressive platform priorities will include economic, racial, reproductive, education and climate justice; a commitment to human rights and dignity; protecting the rights of women and children, immigrants, refugees, people of different faith communities, LGBTQ+ people and other sensitive populations; supporting criminal justice reform; combating police violence; fighting voter suppression and ensuring equal protection under the law for all.

"Given the outcome of the recent election, now is the time to double down on advancing progressive values," said Ilyse Hogue. "Leadership development can't start young enough for girls and women – we must actively empower, mobilize, train and deploy a new generation of young women who are resolute in their progressive values. I'm proud to be a part of this effort to invest early and often in the next generation who will lead us into the next century."
“Studies show that when women make policies, all Americans benefit from their compassion and collegiality. Rise to Run candidates will ensure elected officials of the future are building bridges, not walls,” said Natalie Montolengo

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