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The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress

Michele L. Swers

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What if there were more women in Congress? Providing the first comprehensive study of the policy activity of male and female legislators at the federal level, Michele L. Swers persuasively demonstrates that, even though representatives often vote a party line, their gender is politically significant and does indeed influence policy making.

Swers combines quantitative analyses of bills with interviews with legislators and their staff to compare legislative activity on women's issues by male and female members of the House of Representatives during the 103rd (1993-94) and 104th (1995-96) Congresses. Tracking representatives' commitment to women's issues throughout the legislative process, from the introduction of bills through committee consideration to final floor votes, Swers examines how the prevailing political context and members' positions within Congress affect whether and how aggressively they pursue women's issues.

Anyone studying congressional behavior, the role of women, or the representation of social identities in Congress will benefit from Swers's balanced and nuanced analysis.

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