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Politics

The First Ever Madam President Will Be....

We're all thinking Hillary, but the field is much broader than that.

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Written by
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Just in case the country needed another reminder of the power of a potential Hillary Clinton presidential candidacy, another survey dropped Thursday to reinforce it.

A Quinnipiac University poll found Clinton holds a staggering [52-point national lead for the Democratic nomination in 2016](#). It's a complete and emphatic wipe-out, even of the sitting vice president.

But on the same day in Washington, the foremost Democratic women's political group - [EMILY's List](#) - was attempting to make a case that the drive to elect the first female president is far bigger than even Hillary.

Armed with a batch of fresh polling of their own, the group assembled at the National Press Club to argue that -- with or without the former Secretary of State -- the country is poised to elect a female president. And soon.

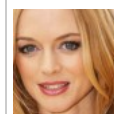
Almost 90 percent of voters in battleground states would consider voting for a "qualified woman candidate from their party" and [72 percent believe the United States will elect a female president in 2016](#), according to early April polling by the Democratic firm Anzalone Liszt Grove Research.

"There is one name that seems to be getting mentioned more than others," said EMILY's List president Stephanie Schriock to chuckles in the mostly female audience. "We do not know if Hillary is going to run, but we are hopeful that she may. And if she chooses not to, our options are far from exhausted."

The names on Schriock's "deep bench": Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, former Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Kirsten



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Pollster Lisa Grove emphasized that when they asked participants to describe the characteristics that would embody a female president, “they weren’t saying Hillary.”

“They were saying ‘strong, experienced, honest, leadership.’ If she was the person driving this conversation then her name would’ve been the first thing that came out of their mouths,” she maintained.

But for the near future, Hillary is the driving force. Take her out of the equation and the quest to find the first female commander-in-chief by 2016 becomes a significantly steeper challenge.

After all, polls show Vice President Joe Biden to be the strong Democratic favorite if Clinton passes on a bid. Meanwhile, the names floated by Schriock barely register in early polling.

The female with the biggest national profile is Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who netted 5 percent in [a recent New Hampshire primary survey](#). But she’s a freshman with no foreign policy experience who has essentially ruled out a run so soon.

A sizable 62 percent of Republicans believe a woman will be elected president next time, according to the EMILY’s List polling. Yet the GOP doesn’t even have a top-tier female in the mix of their field.

But they do know without Hillary, their chances at recapturing the White House are bolstered considerably.

“[Hillary’s] such a dominant candidate,” said GOP consultant Ed Rogers. “She’s going to be the frontrunner until the voting starts.”

That’s a double-edged sword for EMILY’s List’s campaign, which will include town halls in Iowa and New Hampshire and online chats with women’s groups to increase familiarity with contenders beyond Hillary.

Because even Schriock made clear that while the Quinnipiac poll is heartening for Hillary, the survey itself captures the problem she’s trying to solve.

“You will see who else is polled in this poll and it is a very nice list of Democratic male candidates. I’d like to today to challenge any national polling organization to start testing some of these other great women,” said Schriock.

“Because the truth is, this is a wide-open race if Secretary Clinton doesn’t decide to do this.”

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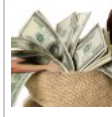
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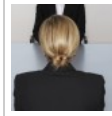


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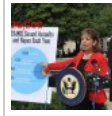
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