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## **Women Respond To Palin -- Part 2, MomsRising**

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A "grassroots" [letter](#) that will be presented to Sarah Palin by [MomsRising](#) is currently on their site, available for signature. To date, 20,000 women's names have been collected. The question is asked of Palin, "Where do you stand on issues that matter to me?" After extending heartfelt congratulations to the Governor on her path from "PTA to Vice Presidential candidate," the organization gets down to brass tacks by specifically asking what she and the Republican Party would do for mothers and families.

MomsRising was founded in 2006. It grew out of a book project undertaken by Joan Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner. Released on Mother's Day of that year, [The Motherhood Manifesto](#), "explored the struggles of the American family."

It later became a documentary [film](#). Having reached a critical mass with their extensive research data, Blades and Rowe-Finkbeiner decided to mobilize the strength behind mothers' voices and their concerns.

A non-partisan organization, which works at the state and national level, MomsRising tackles problems that don't get adequate recognition. Statistics that the public should be aware of are underscored. For example, you may not hear on the campaign trail that 25% of families with children under six live in poverty, single mothers make 60 cents to a man's dollar, or that 75% of American mothers are in the labor force.

The website has excerpts from Ann Crittenden's book [The Price of Motherhood](#). Included is the quote,

"...having a baby is the worse financial decision a woman can make."

On social security Crittenden writes,

"[Women] earn a zero for every year they spend caring for family members. This means that motherhood is the single biggest risk factor for poverty in old age."

With a present membership of 160,000, MomsRising has the muscle to request Palin to clarify her positions. They want to know

where she stands on "healthcare, fair pay, paid family and medical leave, early learning, paid sick days, and flex-work options.

I interviewed Joan Blades by telephone to get her reaction to Palin -- who actively references her role as a mother. "We haven't heard her agenda yet," Blades told me. "The focus needs not to be on [her] personal family issues, but what she would do as Vice President."

Blades spoke passionately about the "40,000 children in kindergarten who are home alone after school," and "the heart-wrenching" e-mail correspondence that she receives. Many write her to discuss the conflicting choices they are forced to face, often between "feeding their children or taking care of them." Blades emphasized, "We've got to get to the issues, so that all women have the supports that they need. We need to make it possible for people to choose work."

For Blades the question is, "Where are they [Republicans] leading?" She is concerned with "substance, not just form." In December of 2007, MomsRising was part of a consortium that reached out to all the candidates running in the primaries, with a survey soliciting their positions on "family friendly policy." Every Democratic contender responded. There was no follow-up from the Republicans.

With Palin not yet weighing in on specifics, if McCain's past record sets the tone for his potential administration, the future is dismal. In late spring, McCain (although not present for the [Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#) vote) suggested that the legislation wasn't necessary because women needed more "education and training." Blades qualified that point of view as "just outrageous."

Perhaps that is one of the reasons MomsRising has mobilized [MomsVote'08](#). Their set task is to ensure that the country's 80 million mothers are registered, vote, and get involved. Using the slogan "Use your outside voice!" (a tag line any mother would love), they have aligned with ninety other organizations on this endeavor.

Motherhood has always been used to invoke visceral reactions to a wide range of agendas. With Palin presenting herself as a "pit-bull" on the case, MomsRising is making it their job to find out what she supports, and if she is all bark and no bite.

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