

February 7

Andrea Dew Steele

Andrea Dew Steele is the President and Founder of Emerge America and the Co-Founder of our first affiliate, Emerge California. She is a passionate advocate for increasing the number of women in elected office at every level and is motivated by a life-long commitment to progressive politics and change.

Struck by the incredible lack of women holding elected office at the local level in San Francisco, Andrea co-founded Emerge California in 2002 to lead the fight to get more women elected to office in Northern California. Andrea worked tirelessly to develop a top notch training program and in 2005 she founded Emerge America to replicate the model in all 50 states. Emerge currently has training programs in 24 states across the country with plans to expand in the future.

While starting Emerge, Andrea served for 8+ years as Political and Philanthropic Advisor to Susie Tompkins Buell, co-founder of Esprit Clothing and Democratic activist and philanthropist. Prior to moving to the Bay Area, Andrea worked for many years in Washington D.C. as a policy analyst on Capitol Hill and fundraiser for Democratic candidates and committees. Andrea holds a B.A. in Political Science from Tufts University and a M.A. in International History from the London School of Economics.

Andrea is very active in the Democratic Party and regularly lends her expertise to women candidates for local, state and national offices. She also regularly blogs about politics at the *Huffington Post* and has appeared on national and local television and radio, including *MSNBC* and *Al Jazeera America* to discuss politics, campaigns and current events.

<https://emerge.ngpvanhost.com/>

<https://emergeca.ngpvanhost.com/>

In my opinion, to do philanthropy without doing anything political is nuts. For example, California Assembly Member Phil Ting was announcing part of the money he secured for homeless transition efforts. So if you get the right person in office, that person can pass legislation that affects millions of people – whereas philanthropy can be less broad.

Politics without philanthropy is also not a good idea. So that's why both are so critical.

So I founded Emerge while I was working for as a political and philanthropic advisor to Susie Tompkins Buell (co-founder of Esprit Clothing and Democratic activist). I saw a need to recruit and train Democratic women to run for office. There wasn't anybody doing this kind of work out there.

My friends and I decided to focus exclusively on Democratic women because when you run for office, you have to pick a lane and get to know the players in that lane – so it's hard to go outside and do it in a non-partisan way, from my perspective.

However, being in this world of women politics, I work closely with non-partisan organizations that are focused on women. Their role is very important.

At Emerge, we don't have that 501C3 arm, and a lot of that is because we partner with 501C3s. Clearly, this is a really important time. I think it's always an important time to focus on women. The empowerment of women is so critical and it's what lifts societies.

It's critical internationally as well. I took a break from my political work and spent a few years at Human Rights Watch, so I'm really passionate about human rights issues. I can work and toil away in my non-profit, or I can try to get the right person in there who will actually advocate for funds to really important international situations.

I feel very passionately about getting more women into positions of power – and particularly at the political level, because if we can do that first, then everything else can follow. Because women and politics are so visible, and the more normal it becomes when you see women in politics, then that will start translating into other arenas. And women are more effective in politics. There are a number of studies that show that women sponsor, co-sponsor and pass more legislation.

It's really important to build a more reflective democracy. Let's face it, we don't live in a reflective democracy at all and certainly not now with the Republicans in charge.

With that, I can go into some of the non-partisan organizations and the criteria that we should use when we are considering where our money should go.

When I was working with Susie, so much of what we looked at when we were evaluating organizations was focused a lot on leadership. That still holds true: who is leading that organization? Do you find that leadership compelling? And looking always at the track record: the best predictor of success is past performance. Not saying we shouldn't take a chance and fund new entities.

In terms of my work, research is really important. I can say women are more effective, but it's so fantastic when I can point to a piece of research to say, "and there's the supporting research for my assertion." That's really critical.

The Center on American Women and Politics (CAWP) – www.cawp.rutgers.edu
– They are really are the blue chip organization in terms of research.

Not enough research on women in office and the difference they make and every kind of factor. That's partly because to some extent women in politics has been somewhat ghettoized as an area of philanthropy because typically women support and really quite frankly, men control the vast majority of wealth. I do think that in particular research is something that we desperately need in this area.

I was just looking at a piece of research from CAWP today by this great academic Kelly Dittmer, and it was talking about how all the media is saying there are more women running than ever and that actually there are more men running than ever too. If you look at the number of people running for Congress, it's substantially higher but it's still 75% of the candidates are men and 25% are women. This was a

piece of research that I want to talk about because I don't want people to think, "Great. We're there now and we can sit back."

My first campaign in 1988 I worked on the Dukakis campaign. But also in 1992 during the Year of the Woman I helped to get Carol Moseley Braun elected, the first African American woman ever. Just as an aside, it did take us 24 years to get the second African American woman elected, and we have one in there right now.

It takes a lot of effort to have the supporting research to solidify your arguments with women running for office, and CAWP is one of the best organizations that I've found that really does support a lot of what we do.

I did work in the Year of the Woman 1992. We thought everything was going to change then. Actually, we had a boost and we got a few extra members of Congress and thanks to Emilys' List (www.emilyslist.org), but then we stagnated and it took 24 years to have the next African American woman. For a long period of time, we were stuck in the Senate.

We have been hovering at the state legislative level at 25%. What is it going to take to get to 30%. Academics say 30% is the critical mass you need for a tipping point.

CAWP is excellent and never has enough funding, so that's one thing you might want to consider.

A couple of other organizations focused on getting women to run for office are:

She Should Run – www.sheshouldrun.org

Vote Run Lead – <https://voterunlead.org>

These are good organizations trying to raise awareness and get more people in. And there is a place for that as well. There is room to raise awareness in this movement.

I don't usually focus on the non-partisan stuff, but I actually do want more Republican women in. It'd not what I do, but it's an important message there.

Ignite – www.ignitenational.org – is one of my favorites. I would encourage you guys to put that organization on your list. The founder is an Emerge graduate. What she is focused on is getting young people, progressive women, young women, women of color, to run for office. She's doing that all around the country and I'm very proud of the work she's done.

We do need to get our girls thinking so much earlier about running for office, and I think what she's doing is critical. It's not directly related to this election cycle, but a lot of times we get so focused on one election cycle and that's partly why we're in h

situation we are in now, because everyone wants to focus on this election, and when we don't think about 2019, 2020, we get into these situations where we have no power.

Right now Republicans are in power at every single level. We are in the minority at every level. Presidency, Senate, House, but also Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer. In all of those offices, there are more Republicans than Democrats. If you to the state legislatures, they control 67 out of 98. It really is very serious how out of power we are.

It's my theory of change that if we can get more women in office. I don't know how many of you watched what happened in Virginia: 9 out of the 15 flips that were switched were Emerge alumni. (Showing slide of women taking out white Republican men).

We had the first transgender women elected (Danica Roem). One of the first two Asian women, Kathy Tran (Vietnamese refugee; had her fourth child on inauguration day, named her Lis after Ellis Island and decided to run), first lesbian, and the first 2 Latinas ever elected to the House of Delegates. We weren't able to flip. We had one Emerge woman, Shirley Simonds, who lost the race by one vote. She wants to go on the speaking circuit to talk about how important it is to vote. Had she won, we could have had the majority there. I think they're at 28% in terms of women serving there in Virginia.

Everything that is happening is happening at the state level. Other than that terrible tax law, Congress is not getting much done. Any issue – environment, choice, you name it – it's all happening at the state level.

Q. Do you work with Sister District?

A. Yes, we work with **Sister District** – www.sisterdistrict.com – and love them.

[Showed a slide] This is the power we've lost since 2008. IN 2008, we were in the majority at every level, and then you fast forward to 2016, Republicans are in the majority at every level.

We do work with our partners and it's exciting. Our women would not have won without our partners. I've been doing this work since 2002. Within the progressive, Democratic sphere there has been a reluctance to focus on building the bench. It's shortsightedness, really. Within our progressive side, we are exclusively focused on these top ticket races and the immediate.

We are women. We can walk and chew gum. We need to get a little bit out of that, and this relates to giving money or investing. You want to have a diversified portfolio. Say, this is a critical election year. I want to focus 75% of my resources,

but maybe I'll focus 25% on the future. That's why Ignite is so great, too, because we have to think about the future.

Q – What about the disturbing 10 year trend, because of gerrymandering.

A – Gerrymandering, but we fell asleep at the switch. So Republicans went in and put some muscle behind state legislative races. One of Obama's big regrets - as he said in a podcast - is that he didn't invest in the party or infrastructure building. I love President Obama, but this is somewhere that he fell short; in helping to build for the future.

Q – What kind of things can you do philanthropically to support voters voting (as opposed to people running). It felt like in the last election, people just didn't get out and vote. Is there a role for philanthropic money in voter engagement?

A – Oh my gosh, yes. You can't win elections without good candidates. About 25% of our state legislative races go unchallenged. At Emerge, we focus on DA races; 85% of district attorney races go unchallenged. These white male incumbents; nobody even takes them on. But certainly you can't win elections if people don't vote. So you need that first.

Turnout is really critical. There are a lot of great organizations that focus on turnout. One of the most exciting pieces I've seen around voter turnout is trying to give felons back the right to vote. (Re-enfranchisement). It's a human rights issue and you're trying to get mostly Democratic voters turned out, and you can do that in a 501C3 way/

Women's Voices. Women's Vote. www.wvvaf.org That's probably the biggest women's organization that just really targets women.

Q – Where is the line in terms of what makes something a philanthropic money versus political money? Is it just that it's non-partisan?

A. If you say "Get out and vote" and you don't say who to vote for, it's 501C3. The minute you say vote for this candidate – vote for London Breed. Did I say London Breed? – that would be partisan and that would not be a 501C3.

Q – Question about age? What do you think about the proportion of progressive people in terms of age? What ages are most progressive? Younger candidates are not jaded by age and also this culture is so focused on looks. It would seem younger candidates are more likely to have a disruptive election and disruptive innovation.

A – Yes the younger people are more progressive and a lot of people want young people to run, but demographic that we've found, the sweet spot for women running is 40 to 47 years old. We're getting more mothers running than ever; particularly

right now. It use to be that women said I can't run because I have children and now they run *because* they have children.

Comment – Patty Murray.

A – It's true, we have an Emerge Washington now. I think that younger people are more progressive. A lot of people are trying to get young people to run. It's just difficult because first of all, in order to run and be successful, you have to be rooted in your community.

John Ossof was not rooted in his community. Yes he might have been born there, but he hadn't lived there in a long time and he wasn't even living there when he ran. I could go race after race that the people who win have community ties. It is not rocket science. Often young people have not formed those ties yet. We are getting more young people and it depends on what you say is young too.

One organization that popped up after the election was **Run for Something**. <https://runforsomething.net> – But they are partisan. But they're determined to get young people to run. When we get our women running, we send them to Run for Something to get some support.

Q – The Arena? <https://thearena.run/>

A – Their women are young. They're a new group, but I think they're partisan also. They're focused on helping a select group of candidates.

Q – Thinking about the things you've said and our giving. The importance of more down ballot races and getting outside of California, so thinking about our dollars impacting places where we really need to flip the state.

A – Another organization I really like is **Color of Change**. They're non-partisan. They have multiple entities and a 501C3 arm. They are doing really good work and are national. Hillary has now started Onward Together. Emerge is one of the 5 organizations that she supported. Color of Change is another.

Q – Should we be thinking about Pennsylvania and redistricting. Should we make a decision to put all our eggs in a basket? Or there's a great women candidate. Would we as an organization want to go for that or think more broadly...

Comment – It's hard when we're in California. There's a desire to think locally but we're in a blue bubble and there's a desire to do things in other states. But then if you're in other states, you don't really know if that candidate is rooted in the community and if you're flushing money down the drain.

A – We have to care about what’s going on in the rest of the country. We lost because of three states, in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan. We lost because those state legislatures are red. The first thing the Republicans do when they take over a state body is they pass restrictive voting legislation. For example, students in a state like Michigan can’t vote on campus and they don’t get absentee ballots and must go back to vote at home. It’s amazing what the legislature can do. Crazy stuff they pass. We have Trump in office because those three state have Republican legislatures.

Comment – My son is at U Michigan, registered there and voted on campus.

A – Maybe they passed something since. Or maybe the primaries. I spoke to someone who’s at Michigan State. Those states are important. That’s why we opened in Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina. We can’t give up on whole swaths of the country and they are so excited that we are there.

So I think in terms of giving there are a lot of opportunities in these places, because they are not saturated. Some places are saturated.

I’m also a member of the **Women’s Donor Network** – <https://womendonors.org/> – They were really successful in Alabama. They invested in organizations on the ground, in Alabama designed to get women of color to turn out the vote. Black women; that’s how we won Alabama.

Q – They can say we are focused on getting black women to vote. That’s non-partisan?

A – Exactly, they can say, that they are focused on getting black women to vote. That is non-partisan. And it’s a smart strategy. There are a lot of smart people recognizing that it’s the new American majority that we need to focus on, but the area of funding is not saturated yet.

Q – Should there be social network that all the progressive people can network with each other, like Facebook except with progressive young people.

A – I think Indivisible is doing a good job.

I think a diversified portfolio is important. Like am really focused on Alabama and I also care about my city. It’s not an either-or. In District 2, we have an Emerge women, Catherine Stephanie, who just was appointed by Mark Farrel.

Q – Speaking of social networks, the impact of disinformation on elections, like the Bots and so on. This is a new area, but is that an area where we can do something? Are there any organizations working in the area of disinformation?

A – I think that’s in the realm of private companies. I can’t even worry about the bots. It’s too much for me! It’s so upsetting.

There are some leaders in the area who may come over, like Ann Moses of Ignite, who lives a few blocks from here. That is not directed exclusively on that.

Color of Change is based in Oakland and there are other voting entities that are based out here too. New entity, Tech for Campaigns (to support progressive candidates).

Q – Next week we’re having Aker-Lyons at Noelle’s house. What questions might we want to ask her?

A – Her specialty is young people. If you are interested in getting young people to vote, that is a key demographic. She knows that sphere.

Tom Steyer is doing all about young people. We learned in the Virginia and Alabama elections that we can’t do business as usual in vote turnout. Low propensity voters do turnout if you have good candidates and organizations like Sister District.

Indivisible might have a 501C3.

Q – What marketing strategies work best?

A – I had Danica Roem at my house recently, the transgender woman who won in Virginia. She is one of the smartest politicians I’ve ever encountered; to be transgender and win against a 24-year white male incumbent, you have to be amazing.

Social media is being used with our candidates. But politics is still all local. Doing creative videos. In Virginia there were a lot of great videos. There was a lot of energy. People wanted to do something, we had filmmakers who pitched in and made videos for them

When I was talking to Shelly Simonds, the Emerge alum who lost by one vote, she was telling me **Tech for Campaigns** – www.techforcampaigns.org – was really great.

Q – On the subject of technology, I really worry when I give to a candidate that I don’t really know where the money is going. Are they spending it on direct mail, which will be tossed in the trash? Is anyone helping them market effectively?

A – We’re trying to share information that we’ve learned. People say in politics you have to do this amount of direct mail or XY and Z. Every election cycle you have to learn. Because we’re in 24 states, we can share best information and practices. We do webinars. We share new technology.

Whatever is cutting edge, we can do that and share the technology, which is the beauty of being a national organization. I do think our candidates are social media a lot more than they used to, but nothing beats going door to door. Danica Roem, she just outworked her opponet. She went to every door time and time again. Yes, social media is helpful, but working and meeting people is still the way politics works.

Q – I have a question about Emerge. You get these women who want to run for office and they go through your training.

A – First they have to fill out an application and go through an interview process.

Q – To what do you attribute your great stats about the women who have taken your training and then go run and win? Do you turn people down?

A – We don't do that. Our sweet spot is taking policy wonks and make them good candidates. A lot of the really good candidates are policy wonks. We definitely turn away people who just want to network and meet people. We are focused on getting Democratic women to run for office, so we do have a rigorous applications process.

Catherine Stephanie went through our program in 2009 (with Libby Schaaf, Mayor of Oakland) and now it's 2018 and she's running. She has two small kids. Sometimes they have to wait. It took Mark Farrell and him appointing her for her to run.

In 2017, we had a 73% success rate. IN 2016, we had a 70% success rate even when Hillary lost. It's really because of the rigorous training – 6 months for one weekend a month – they know how to do this.

The number one reason our women are successful is they are part of a network. Every Emerge affiliate has fulltime staff on the ground to help them and they have a network.

Comment – The “old girls’ network”!

It is. When you are asking women to run for office, you are asking them to do something hard. Putting your name on a ballot is arguably one of the hardest things you could do, second to fighting a war. One of the most important things you can do for your country. Having this network of support is so important.

Knowing that when I do run I'm going to have people there. When London was ousted, I was texting her. You're going to be fun. Other Emerge women were texting her. During the tough times too.

In Oregon, our women put lawn signs in the candidates' yards telling them good luck. The support is powerful.

Question: Have you ever had Emerge women compete against each other?

Answer: It happens all the time and it's a wonderful problem. In Virginia, it happened in 5 of those primaries – but what we're sure of is we're going to have an Emerge women. We try to help them and teach them that when you're running against somebody, you're not enemies – it's the same party – you're competitors. In District 2 here in SF, there are 3 Emerge women running. Catherine I've known for many years; I don't know the other two women. There's also a self-funded male billionaire.

Q – Do Emerge candidates every split the vote, and then the billionaire wins?

A – I don't know how it's going to work out. As an organization, we don't endorse or support candidates, primarily because we have so many women running in so many races. As an individual I do.

Q – Progressive women in Congress – Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris – how can we use their network and power base to create support for other candidates?

A – Good question. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand has an organization called Off the Sidelines. She is the number one person out there supporting other women.

Kamala was one of my inspirations for starting Emerge. It was 2002 and she was ready to run. I had nowhere to send her. I said come over to my apartment and we typed up her bio and then I said you need contacts and she pulled out her Filofax and my husband ordered her a Palm Pilot. That was one of my inspirations was I didn't want the Kamala Harris's of the world have to figure this out and be an entrepreneur. That's not fair to make all these women run for office and be entrepreneurs too.

Then Kamala actually recruited London Breed into the Emerge program. London was the head of the African-American Cultural Center.

These women are out there talking to younger women and helping guide them, and they're happy to have somewhere to send them. A lot of women want to run and there's nowhere to send them – especially in down-ballot races. District Attorneys are the most important position in our country, in my opinion.

Q – Are any of the other current SF supervisors Emerge grads?

A – Yes. Leah Cohen.

Maryam – I wanted to announce that in addition to our regular One Sky events related to the giving cycle, Fiona Smythe and Meme have decided to put together a

series of One Sky events with all of the candidates for mayor. This will be an addition to our year. Mayoral Candidate Forum for members and friends.

These events are not about giving money. They'll be an informal opportunity to hear from the candidates. We've already heard confirmation from London Breed and Mark Leno.

We'll be sending out a survey to ask gather for the candidates. The pre-approved questions should be related to the One Sky mission, but there will be an open Q&A session as well.