

Ensuring Success

What Happens After Women Win

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Once women take the leap to run for office and are successful in this endeavor, they unfortunately face a multitude of challenges when serving in elected positions. Despite the myriad of challenges they face, women prove to be effective in governing – passing more legislation, collaborating across party lines, securing resources for their districts, and maintaining high levels of engagement with their constituents. In sum, women fundamentally change their communities and that is where our success is found.

– Erin Loos Cutraro, *She Should Run* CEO

While we acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of women who run successful campaigns, we need to address the various barriers that impact their success once in office. We know that political leadership is often judged against one’s productivity in office. Consequently, if we want to see more women running and winning we must address the barriers impeding their leadership.

– Tiffany Gardner, *ReflectUS* CEO

Introduction

This past year was extraordinary for women’s political leadership. Women won and held a record number of elected positions. The 117th Congress, for instance, represents the most women ever elected with 142 seats, or 26.5 percent of Congress.¹ Women have also seen great success in statewide elections. In fact, women hold a record number of state legislative offices with nearly 31 percent, and the highest percentage ever of women in state executive offices at 30.6 percent.^{2, 3} While these successes are to be commended, our country must also address the barriers women face once in elected positions. Emerging research shows that while women are more collaborative and reach across party lines to achieve legislative goals more often than men, they still face a range of barriers male officeholders do not experience.



1 See Center for American Women and Politics, “Women in the U.S. Congress” (2021). <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-us-congress-2021>

2 See Center for American Women and Politics, “Women in State Legislatures” (2021). <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-state-legislature-2021>

3 See Center for American Women and Politics, “Historical Summary of Women in Statewide Elective Executive Office: 1969-Current” (2021). <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/historical-summary-women-statewide-elective-executive-office-1969-current>

Women political leaders, for example, are far more scrutinized and more easily dismissed by the media and other stakeholders than their male counterparts.⁴ In a poignant illustration of this experience, a recent radio show in Virginia spent 30 minutes discussing the 2021 gubernatorial primary race in which three men and two women are running. All three men were addressed by their name while neither woman was ever called by her name.⁵ Instead, the two women candidates were collectively referred to as “the two women” throughout the entire discussion.⁶ Similarly, in the 2020 presidential primary, male candidates were lauded for reading books, having minimal foreign language abilities, or simply being in the race while the women candidates’ accomplishments, including authoring dozens of books, speaking foreign languages fluently, raising more money, and winning larger past elections, were, for the most part, grossly underreported.⁷ Additionally, from being mistaken for the spouse of a male Congressman to being repeatedly interrupted during Congressional debates, women officeholders experience gender bias in a number of subtle and direct ways.⁸ Lastly, committee assignments, specifically committee leadership, often allows for greater influence in policy making. Yet, women political leaders are often disadvantaged in this regard as well. Committee leadership positions are frequently assigned to legislators who contribute the most to the party’s fundraising efforts – which generally favor incumbents, the majority of whom are men.⁹ These are just a sampling of the significant barriers women political leaders face when governing.

In this issue brief, ReflectUS will discuss the challenges that women in elected positions often face in achieving their policy agenda and objectives and discuss some ways to address these obstacles.

“In government, women continue to be a minority. I experienced imposter syndrome. I thought I didn’t know enough, wasn’t smart enough, and didn’t know enough people. The best way to overcome the challenge is to get out and listen to people. Find other legislators who you can learn from. My fears dissipated as I learned ways to advocate for constituents, draft legislation, analyze the state’s budget and revenue process, and file amendments to legislation.”

- Marti Anderson, Iowa State Representative

4 See Karen Finney, “Candidates in 2020” (Gender on the Ballot) October 15, 2020. <https://www.genderontheballot.org/the-challenges-facing-women-candidates-in-2020/>

5 See BlueVirginia, “State Senators Jennifer Boysko and Ghazala Hashmi, As Well As Former Lt. Gov. Candidate Susan Platt, Wonder: ‘When Will ‘The Two Women’ Get Enough Respect To Be Referred To By Their Names?’” (May 14, 2021). <https://bluevirginia.us/2021/05/state-senators-jennifer-boysko-and-ghazala-hashmi-as-well-as-former-lt-gov-candidate-susan-platt-wonder-when-will-the-two-women-get-enough-respect-to-be-referred-to-by-their-names>

6 See Ibid (BlueVirginia).

7 See Jennifer Wright, “Why female presidential candidates are still overlooked” (Harper’s Bazaar) April 18, 2019.

8 See “19 Women in Congress Reveal the Subtle (and Overt) Sexism They’ve Dealt With on Capitol Hill” December 21, 2018. <https://beatty.house.gov/media-center/news-articles/19-women-in-congress-reveal-the-subtle-and-overt-sexism-they-ve-dealt>

9 See Lindsay Mark Lewis and Jim Arkedis, “So you’ve won a seat in Congress—now what?” (The Atlantic) November 6, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/11/so-youve-won-election-to-congressnow-what/382421/>

Challenges Facing Women Political Leaders

The Media and Public Perception

Starting on the campaign trail and continuing into elected office, women often face public scrutiny regarding their ambition, likeability, qualifications, and even clothing.^{10,11} As recently as 1993, though not an official rule, women were dissuaded from wearing pants on the floor of the U.S. Senate.¹² In 2018, Senator Carol Moseley Braun spoke about her experience as the first woman to wear pants on the Senate floor and the harsh criticisms she received from the press for her clothing choice.¹³ This biased focus on women political leader's clothing remains unabated. When Senator Elizabeth Dole, for instance, was polling as the number two candidate in the Republican presidential primary in 2000, the media largely failed to discuss her many accomplishments and instead remained focused on her personality and appearance.¹⁴ During her presidential campaign, Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton was frequently criticized for her pantsuits.¹⁵ Even today the press continues to over-emphasize Vice President Kamala Harris's fashion choices.¹⁶



The public criticism of women political leaders extends far beyond their wardrobe. Women have been depicted as shrill and unlikeable,^{17,18} and others have been called gender-based obscenities by their male Congressional colleagues.¹⁹ While such attacks are more visible at the federal level due to media coverage, there are similar reports by women policymakers at the state and local level as

10 See Barbara Lee Family Foundation, "Ready, Willing, & Electable: Women Running for Executive Office" (2019). <https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/research/ready-willing-electable/>

11 See History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives, "Whereas: Stories from the People's House: Masquerading as Miss Rankin" (2017). <https://history.house.gov/Blog/2017/March/3-27-Masquerading-Rankin/>

12 See Jocelyn Sears, "Why women couldn't wear pants on the Senate floor until 1993" (Mental Floss). March 22, 2017. <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/93384/why-women-couldnt-wear-pants-senate-floor-until-1993>

13 See Anna North, "America's sexist obsession with what women politicians wear, explained" (Vox) December 3, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/12/3/18107151/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-eddie-scarry-women-politics>

14 See Heldman, C., Carroll, S.J., & Olson, S., "She Brought Only a Skirt": Print Media Coverage of Elizabeth Dole's Bid for the Republican Presidential Nomination, *Political Communication*, 22(3): 315-335. (2015).

15 See Becca Johnson, "Why are female politicians criticized for what they wear?" (CR Fashion Book) November 12, 2020. <https://www.crfashionbook.com/culture/a34634960/female-politicians-criticized/>

16 See Emily White, "Why are we still talking about Kamala Harris's outfits?" (34th Street). November 15, 2020. <https://www.34st.com/article/2020/11/kamala-harris-campaign-election-outfits-scrutiny-women-in-politics-media-joe-biden>

17 See William Cheng, "The long, sexist history of 'shrill' women" (Time) March 23, 2016. <https://time.com/4268325/history-calling-women-shrill/>

18 See David Smith, "Why the sexist 'likeability test' could haunt female candidates in 2020" (The Guardian) January 4, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jan/03/elizabeth-warren-sexism-likable-election-2020>

19 See Mona Lena Krook, "How sexist abuse in Congress amounts to political violence – and undermines American democracy" (The Conversation) October 21, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/how-sexist-abuse-of-women-in-congress-amounts-to-political-violence-and-undermines-american-democracy-147169>

well.²⁰ Many articles have been written on how women are treated on the campaign trail,^{21, 22} but running for office is only a microcosm of the barriers and obstacles women face in political leadership.

The discussion of women's personality, clothing, ambition, and tone is more than inconsequential slights by the media and male colleagues. The focus on these superficial matters often serves ad hominem attacks to distract from the issues and silence women in political leadership. This was demonstrated when U.S. Representative Maxine Waters of California was attacked as "unhinged" when she spoke out to "reclaim her time" during a Financial Services Committee hearing where former Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin refused to answer her questions and instead tried to elapse time on the clock by paying her superficial compliments.²³ Similarly, Senator Elizabeth Warren was silenced while reading a letter from Coretta Scott King, wife of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during a committee hearing. In silencing Senator Warren, the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell explained, "She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted."²⁴

Since the first woman, Jeanette Rankin, was elected to Congress, women political leaders' actions have been analyzed through a gendered lens. Whether through critiquing or highlighting their fashion choices or silencing their words through objectification and tropes that would not be tolerated toward male colleagues, or outright acts of harassment and abuse, it is clear that when it comes to women, whether intentional or implicit, these tools are used to undermine their political influence. These and other acts of political intimidation against women have consequences reverberating beyond the directly affected person, as women considering political office have long recognized these forms of abuse as part of politics and find these reports discouraging to their own participation in political leadership roles.²⁵



Committee Roles, Assignments, and Party Politics

In 2014, *The Atlantic* published an article detailing the steps newly elected members of the U.S. Congress should take to ensure success – namely, get appointed to a meaningful committee and ensure a solid six-figure fundraising report at the end of the first federal filing deadline post-

20 See Maggie Astor, "For female candidates, harassment and threats come every day" (New York Times) August 24, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/24/us/politics/women-harassment-elections.html>

21 See Alexander Frandsen and Aleszu Bajak, "Women on the 2020 campaign trail are being treated more negatively by the media" (Storybench). March 29, 2019. <https://www.storybench.org/women-on-the-2020-campaign-trail-are-being-treated-more-negatively-by-the-media/>

22 See Kira Sanbonmatsu, "Media Coverage of Women Candidates" (Political Parity) 2017. <http://www.politicalparity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Parity-Research-Women-Media.pdf>

23 See Vanessa Williams, "Maxine Waters inspires a new anthem: 'Reclaiming my Time'" (Washington Post) August 1, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/08/01/maxine-waters-inspires-a-new-anthem-reclaiming-my-time/>

24 See Katie Reilly, "Why 'Nevertheless, She Persisted' Is the Theme for This Year's Women's History Month" (Time) March 1, 2018. <https://time.com/5175901/elizabeth-warren-nevertheless-she-persisted-meaning/>

25 Acts of political intimidation and violence against women both on the campaign trail and while serving in office have been well documented. See National Democratic Institute, "#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics, A Renewed Call to Action" (2021). <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NTC%202021%20ENGLISH%20FINAL.pdf>

election.²⁶ Consequently, immediately following a successful election, officials are expected to begin fundraising for their re-election campaign while also financially supporting their political party. In particular, members of Congress and state legislators are expected to pay caucus dues to their respective parties, which are often calculated as a percentage of total funds raised. Perhaps most significantly, these dues are the ticket to important committee appointments – positions which lead to greater visibility, opportunities to create alliances towards specific policy agendas and opportunities to attract additional contributions from key interest groups.^{27, 28}

“When you are a new member, you must quickly learn as you go, start establishing relationships right away, and hit the ‘floor’ running, so to speak. I remember having people tell me at first not to run for office, because I would never have a chance. Despite the challenges I’ve faced, I am vice-chairing the Elections Committee because I believed in myself and the people I had and currently have around me.”

- Jessica González, Texas House of Representatives

It may not be inherently evident how this structure disadvantages women political leaders. First, political party systems are designed to protect the power of the party. Therefore, committee assignments are allotted to those who bring in the most money and accordingly provide the most financial benefit to the party. Second, since men have always held a significant majority of seats in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress, those who bring in the most money are overwhelmingly male political leaders. Hence, they are disproportionately assigned coveted committee assignments and chairships. Male political leaders wield their power in these coveted positions to raise their political profile, raise more money for their individual re-election campaigns, and further their policy agendas. Moreover, a portion of the funds raised goes towards the party, creating a cycle that keeps these male political leaders in power.

Additionally, the caucus dues structure likewise places women political leaders at a disadvantage. Women, who often win hard-fought, expensive election campaigns, frequently enter political leadership with very little in financial resources to cover their caucus dues. Moreover, there often are not fellow women political leaders who can mentor and guide them through this process. While many women manage to overcome some of these barriers in a system that rewards incumbency and longevity, it is quite difficult for non-incumbent women to benefit from the party support and committee assignments that make achieving one’s policy agenda easier.

26 See Lindsay Mark Lewis and Jim Arkedis, “So you’ve won a seat in Congress—now what?” (The Atlantic) November 6, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/11/so-youve-won-election-to-congressnow-what/382421/>

27 See Jeanine Santucci, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez defends her decision not to pay House Democratic campaign ‘dues’” (USA Today) January 10, 2020. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/01/10/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-defends-her-decision-not-pay-dccc-dues/4435201002/>

28 See Michael Beckel and Amisa Ratliff, “How the political parties leaned on the legislative leaders for cash during the 115th Congress” (LegBranch.org) <https://www.legbranch.org/how-the-political-parties-leaned-on-legislative-leaders-for-cash-during-the-115th-congress/>

“Relationships take time to develop and you build trust when you build a relationship. There is work that happens in committee and on the floor, but there is also a lot of work that happens having a cup of coffee or a sidebar meeting.”

- Carrie Coyner, Virginia Delegate

This is evident in the legislation first-year elected officials are able to pass into law. First-year elected officials are rarely given an opportunity to enact their own legislation.²⁹ Given that many women political leaders are often newly elected, they are less likely to be given opportunities to set their party’s legislative agenda or pursue their own. In 2019, for instance, only 23 first-term members of the U.S. Congress passed a single law. Many of these laws were incorporated into more senior members’ bills. Of the 23 Congresspeople who were able to pass any legislation, only eight were women.^{30, 31}

While some may argue that men are equally affected by first-year elected officials’ lack of opportunity to pass legislation, research indicates otherwise. A case study of the Michigan state legislature published by the University of Minnesota’s Gender Policy Report demonstrates that when women secured a white male cosponsor to their legislation, the bill was more likely to pass, regardless of whether the woman legislator belonged to the majority party or belonged to the committee from which the bill was moved.³² This also proved true for Congressional women in 2019. Of the 13 bills from the eight women who passed laws, 10 had a white male cosponsor and all 10 of those were bipartisan.³³ Hence, even prior to voting, male political leaders have tremendous influence over the success of a bill’s introduction and passage.

Underpinning this phenomenon is the importance of one’s network. In many cases, access to powerful networks is granted to those who are already part of those networks or to those who share common ground. Consequently, accessing these influential individuals can prove fruitless without people willing to serve as validators.³⁴ Since personal, professional, and political networks are vital in politics, starting with elections and extending into political office, access to powerful networks with deep pockets provide an advantage that is not available to many women political leaders. In fact, studies show that networks, including political parties, are the most influential factor in obtaining political support.³⁵

29 See Ayana Stewart, “Few House freshmen able to move bills through Congress” (KHSB) October 30, 2014. <https://www.kshb.com/news/national/few-house-freshman-able-to-move-bills-through-congress>

30 See GovTrack, “2019 Report Cards: House Freshman/Laws Enacted” (n.d.). <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/report-cards/2019/house-freshmen/bills-enacted-ti>

31 Women represented 23.5 percent of Congress during that same year, yet nearly 35 percent of new members who had bills enacted into law were women, demonstrating women’s ability to pass legislation.

32 See Hannah McVeigh, “Do women lawmakers need white men to cosponsor their bills?” (The Gender Policy Report) November 10, 2020. <https://genderpolicyreport.umn.edu/do-women-lawmakers-need-white-men-to-cosponsor/>

33 See GovTrack, “2019 Report Cards: House Freshman/Laws Enacted” (n.d.). <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/report-cards/2019/house-freshmen/bills-enacted-ti>

34 See Michael C. Wenderoth, “How to network with powerful people” (Harvard Business Review) December 16, 2019. <https://hbr.org/2019/12/how-to-network-with-powerful-people>

35 See Heaney, M. T. and McClurg, S. D., Social Networks and American Politics, American Politics Research, 37(5), 727-741, 2009.

Additionally, informal and formal networking structures, such as cause-based caucuses or standing committees, reinforce power norms rather than challenge the status quo, benefiting those holding existing power.³⁶ Research shows that men benefit from networking more than women and that the political networking process is guided largely through the lens of male social and political norms.³⁷ For women to access power, they must be able to build connections with those already in power – mostly men who are often not willing to share power nor have any real motivation to do so. Women’s forced reliance on male political power can greatly undermine their ability to accomplish their policy priorities and agendas.

Changes to Media Coverage

Media coverage is a significant challenge for women from the time they begin running for office to their time serving in office. To address this, standards for media coverage should be implemented. Reporters should refrain from commenting on women’s appearance, including, but not limited to, their clothing choices, personal appearance, and personal style. Additionally, the media should eliminate the use of gendered terms, positive or negative, from news coverage. For example, the media should avoid describing women as “hysterical,” “unhinged,” “crazy,” “poised,” or any other word they would not use to describe men in political leadership roles. When covering politics at any level, reporters should take great care to reduce biased language and women-specific questions, such as those about raising children, multi-tasking, career goals, and family, and instead focus on qualifications, policy ideas, and governing.



Additionally, the media should avoid referencing the age of women political leaders, even implicitly. For instance, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik was recently described as “fresh-faced” in a *New York Times* opinion piece³⁸ – a term that would not likely be used to describe her male colleagues. In another example, a party strategist, in commenting on Congresswoman’s Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s age, noted that she “seems quite charming...accessible and likeable” but questioned her ability to utilize those traits to her political advantage.³⁹ These same qualifications and questions are often not discussed of men serving in Congress.

While these demeaning depictions may increase social media likes, prompting notoriety for reporters and media outlets, it harms women and increases the social stigma and challenges they face in governing. ReflectUS Coalition members and other women’s organizations have been rapidly responding to sexist comments in the media and from male politicians. However, the onus should not be on these organizations to address this issue. Increasing the number of women in media leadership roles may start to shift some of the narratives of women in politics. More importantly, political party leadership must bear responsibility for addressing irresponsible, insensitive, or blatantly sexist comments about women political leaders.

36 See Ibid (Heaney & McClurg).

37 See Benschop, Y., *The Micro-politics of Gendering in Networking*, *Gender, Work, and Organization*, 16(2), 2009.

38 See Elizabeth Benjamin, “Elise Stefanik is playing a dangerous game with her career” (*New York Times*) May 14, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/14/opinion/elise-stefanik-trump.html>

39 See Eliza Relman, “The trust about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: The inside story of how, in just one year, Sandy the bartender became a lawmaker who triggers both parties” (*Insider*) January 6, 2019. <https://www.insider.com/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-biography-2019-1>

Revising Committee Assignment Structures

Women are increasing in number in many lawmaking bodies. In order to fully capture women's expertise, knowledge, and the invaluable perspective they bring, leaders should consider revising the method of committee assignments to ensure that women are proportionally represented on all committees. Women should have equal opportunity to serve on powerful committees, and committee assignments should be based on expertise, experience, congruence to the officeholder's district, and growth opportunities. Success in revising these structures will likely require rule changes to ensure that these measures are lasting and meaningful. ReflecUS recommends further study on the feasibility of local, state, and federal governments to explore and implement these practices.

Reconsidering Fundraising as Means Testing

For far too long, fundraising has been used for testing viability from candidacy to elected office. When women are first running for office, they are often told that they must have financial support from their personal network. This support will often determine whether they will receive further financial support from politically-focused groups. For women who are newly elected and have exhausted their fundraising networks, they are immediately expected to solicit those same networks for further financial contributions while building new networks of support.



Consequently, financial means testing has been employed by political parties to cement support for incumbents in competitive races. In fact, incumbents are often empowered through financial means testing when facing challengers from their own party. This system can disadvantage women who are largely newer to elected office and do not have the same level of political networks as their male incumbent counterparts. ReflectUS recommends a critical analysis of financial means testing and that party leaders consider new ideas that will allow all elected officials, including those newly elected, to focus on delivering results for their constituencies.

Building Women's Political Networks

Often, professional organizations use a "mentoring" strategy to address the lack of women in leadership positions. However, research demonstrates that mentoring is not enough and in order to truly advance women, a sponsorship model, where women actively advocate for other women, should be utilized.⁴⁰ Hence, women who have advanced in political leadership will need support as they advocate for other women as seen in the success of federal and state women's caucuses.

As women political leaders attempt to promote others to positions of power, provide access to political, social, and professional networks, and extend opportunities for growth and leadership, they will need support from party leadership and the existing caucus structure. There is no one size fits all solution, however, women building relationships and supportive networks with one another in political spaces can begin to open doors to previously closed systems, while establishing new networking opportunities.

⁴⁰ See Singh, S. and Vanka, S., Mentoring is Essential but Not Sufficient: Sponsor Women for Leadership Roles, Development and Learning in Organizations, 34(6), 2020.

“Getting more of the everyday, average people to the table is meeting with a level of success. In those people are the answers to your problems.”

- *Bernetta Lanier, Savannah, Georgia Councilmember*

While this is not an exhaustive discussion of possible solutions, these recommendations represent the start of a much needed conversation around our political leadership and representation.

Conclusion

In spite of the systemic barriers women face while serving in political leadership, women remain accomplished policy makers and leaders in their communities. It has long been established by political scientists that women bring more funding to their home districts, introduce more policy proposals (with more collaborators signing on), and introduce policy changes that specifically benefit women and the entire family.⁴¹ Moreover, bills introduced by women policy makers are more likely to be considered important policy changes as measured by media coverage.⁴²

Additionally, women perform better than their male counterparts across a range of measurements including “greater likelihood of response to constituents” and “responding more helpfully”.⁴³ When women serve a district, they fundamentally change their jurisdictions.⁴⁴ In fact, gender plays a greater role in legislative behavior than the ideological and political composition of the district being served as women sponsor more bills on education, healthcare, and families than their male colleagues.⁴⁵

In order to change endemic biases and challenges that women face while governing, ReflectUS recommends introducing standards for media coverage, re-examining committee assignments and other leadership positions, eliminating financial means testing, and creating and supporting women-led networking. Through facilitating these changes, our nation can begin to address some of the structural barriers that women face while serving in elected positions and establish a framework for success that will benefit all.

41 See Susan Kliff, “The research is clear: electing more women changes how government works” (Vox) March 8, 2017. <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/27/12266378/electing-women-congress-hillary-clinton>.

42 See Ibid (Kliff).

43 See Thomsen, D. M. and Sanders, B. K., Gender Differences in Legislator Responsiveness, Cambridge University Press, 8(4): 1017-1030. 2019. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/gender-differences-in-legislator-responsiveness/193D2C984B539E564DD776E626F6D294>

44 See Ibid. (Thomsen & Sanders). Studies have shown that if a woman political leader is replaced by a man, he will continue to advocate for issues specific to women more often than men representing districts that were never held by women.

45 See Ibid (Thomsen & Sanders).

ReflectUS

ReflectUS is a national, nonpartisan coalition working to increase the number of women in office and achieve equal representation across the racial, ideological, ethnic, and geographic spectrum. ReflectUS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. To learn more, visit: www.reflect.us

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