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Leaders in Lawmaking: Early Policy Preferences of Women in the U.S. House of Representatives elected in the 116th Congress

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Abstract

The 116th Congress was the most racially and ethnically diverse in American history. This research examines the agenda setting behavior/ policy preferences of the newly elected female legislators of the 116th U.S. Congress. More specifically, the research investigates the bills introduced by the members during the first six months of the 2019 legislative session and categorizes them according to its content. Historically, once elected to office, women have prioritized legislation pertaining to children, family, health, and welfare. Racial minority women have been found to prioritize minority interest legislation. Using descriptive statistics and the comparative analysis method, the research seeks to determine whether these findings still held true in 2019 or as women approached a critical mass, they focused on other issues.

Keywords: female agenda setting, descriptive representation, substantive representation, women and politics