

Inside Track: Politics has women fed up, survey finds

By Neal St. Anthony

Dori Molitor, the boss at WomanWise, says her annual survey of 800 American women confirms a three-year trend of females who are fed up with corner-office greed, corruption and partisan gridlock in Washington and St. Paul.

“We do this proprietary study for ourselves,” said Molitor, a former marketer at General Mills who now works with client companies to understand the evolving views of women and how to position their brand-name products.

“Women care more about things such as global warming and sufficient funding for education,” said Molitor. “We found that women were angry with all the greed and self-focus of the perpetrators. And they were angry with big business and government for letting it happen... It threatened them, their families and the country.”

She said women also are taking responsibility to improve things one child, one school, one neighborhood at a time. “That sense of responsibility is elevated with women,” she said. “It is reflected in how she spends money and who she supports [politically].”

That explains in part the 2010 backlash against Target and Best Buy when the male CEOs decided to spend shareholder dollars supporting Republican gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer, who is perceived as an enemy of gay rights and environmental issues at a time when a majority of women want a cleaner economy and support alternative families.

“Women understand the collective power of their voice, particularly on the Internet and through social networking,” Molitor said. “They are exerting their influence.” The 800 women surveyed were from all generations, races and economic classes.

Women will pay up if they think companies support the right things. Molitor points to General Mills and its theme of “nourishing lives” through nutritious foods, starting with cereals and its emphasis on healthy lifestyles and the venerable “Boxtops for Education” program. Many women would rather collect 250 box tops, worth \$25, and donate them to a school, than write a check for \$25, she said.

Molitor, 54, also cited Levis, traditionally a male brand, that last year decided it wanted to be the most-loved jeans for women. They built their program around a “Curve ID,” which basically results in three body shapes for Levi styles “and they got the product right and revolutionized the category. And they also have launched a program called ‘Shape what’s to come’ around women support and mentoring.”

Molitor says some women also are critical of their own pasts “... getting wrapped up in all that materialism and entitlement and credit cards and ‘guiltless debt’ and a better life that they thought was also always wrapped in a bigger house... She’s saying all that didn’t make me happier. She wants more meaning and purpose. She wants to make a difference.”