



HOST:

BONNIE ERBE

GUESTS:

SIOBHAN BENNETT,

AVIS JONES-DEWEEVER,

MERCEDES VIANA SCHLAPP,

CRYSTAL WRIGHT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2013

**TRANSCRIPT PROVIDED BY
DC TRANSCRIPTION – WWW.DCTMR.COM**

BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, women and minorities are missing in Obama's inner circle. Then, binge drinking is way up among women. Behind the headlines, the country's newest female governor, New Hampshire's Maggie Hassan.

(Musical break.)

MS. ERBE: Hello, I'm Bonnie Erbe. Welcome to *To the Contrary*, a discussion of news and social trends from diverse perspectives. Up first, cabinet concerns.

President Obama is catching flap for his first few cabinet nominations for his second term. That for leaving out women and persons of color, especially after women voters secured his victory last fall.

Although President Obama wanted to nominate Susan Rice as secretary of state to replace Hillary Clinton, so far he's appointed men to head up the Departments of State, Treasury, and Defense. And the high-profile position of CIA director also went to a man.

Longtime friend of this show, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis surprised the public by announcing her resignation this week.

So Avis Jones-DeWeever, should we care whether or how many women or persons of color are in the second Obama cabinet?

AVIS JONES-DEWEEVER: It matters that we have a cabinet that's reflective of the diversity of this nation. This is a president that has said that that's important to him. He's lived up to it in terms of his first term and I believe he will do it in terms of his second.

MERCEDES VIANA SCHLAPP: I think Mitt Romney has an opportunity to bring over his binder of women and hand it over to President Obama, which we've heard has had a hostile environment in the White House.

SIOBHAN BENNETT: Well, I think the bottom line is he did a fairly good job the first time. He hasn't delivered yet and he needs to. Diversity at the highest levels of government is going to deliver better results and better electoral and legislative outcome. So what's he waiting for.

CRYSTAL WRIGHT: I don't even know where to begin, quite frankly, because President Obama ran one of the most divisive campaigns of identity politics in recent memory. He did it to divide and conquer the electorate. He got over 95 percent of the black votes, 71 percent of the Hispanic and Latino vote, 55 percent of the women vote. And what does he give his electorate for electing him a second term? He says, I'm going to appoint all white men to cabinets really important, that's Defense secretary, CIA, and I

think I'm missing one – and State. And did you know, Ruth Marcus, who I admire her but don't always agree with her, she writes for the "Washington Post," she said this the first time in 16 years we won't have a secretary of state of color or who's a woman. And I think for this president – you know, I think it's kind of funny because Ruth went on to say that it's almost Madman on steroids. Madman goes to Washington and dumps Peggy and President Barack Obama's only face of diversity. I think it's unacceptable, particularly –

MS. ERBE: Well, but I think –

MS. WRIGHT: Wait, let me just finish –

MS. ERBE: But that was supposed to be your opening remark.

MS. WRIGHT: I know. But everybody ought to – come on, let's be fair – I was on the show where you guys couldn't stop mocking Mitt Romney for –

MS. BENNETT: Hold on. Hold on.

MS. WRIGHT: – for asking for binders on women's –

MS. BENNETT: No. And that whole binder thing of women was blown out of proportion. We all agree with that.

MS. WRIGHT: By Democrats.

MS. BENNETT: Now what happened – no, everybody blew it up. It wasn't just Democrats. What happened is MassGAP, MassGAP in Massachusetts did – were the actually the ones behind the binder full of women. What they did in Kerry Healey –

MS. ERBE: OK, but let's not get too much into that. I do want to raise the point that what seemed so effortless really in pulling together his first cabinet –

MS. BENNETT: That's right.

MS. ERBE: – which included lots of women and persons of color in high positions has completely gone out the window this time and it's kind of like, you know, I'm in office now for – I can't run again, to heck with you guys. And everybody says he has time to make it up. No, he does not because the three top jobs are gone and the ability to make history is pretty much gone. They're talking about a woman at Commerce. How many female Commerce secretary have we had?

MS. WRIGHT: The Department of Education –

MS. ERBE: Going back to Barbara Franklin in the post-Nixon era. So I mean –

MS. SCHLAPP: Right and again, we have to go back to the fact that we've seen that these unnamed women officials that have come out and said, you know, the president has a woman problem. His circle, his inner circle, besides Valerie Jarrett, they're men. And they did the whole like set up the photo-op, that's just not enough. And so I think there is a fundamental problem here that he needs to address and should take the opportunity to put more of –

MS. BENNETT: And we totally, totally, totally agree with that on this side of the table. The thing that – this is representative – I think is that's an anomaly. His first term was an anomaly and we all assumed everything was going to be fine after that. You know what it's just like? It's the Year of the Woman, 1992, we had historic number of women. We thought we are on board, man, and we thought organically the problem would solve itself. Wrong. What we have to have is this deliberate concerted effort to always have women and always have diversity or it just doesn't happen.

MS. DEWEEVER: But let's look at the numbers. The numbers are that throughout his first administration, 43 percent of his appointees, 43 percent were women. Roughly analysis to what we saw under the Clinton administration –

MS. ERBE: You're talking in the cabinet or –

MS. DEWEEVER: I'm just like – broadly speaking, his appointments. That includes also – that's roughly the same that we had under the Clinton administration, 10 percent more than what we had under the Bush administration. Let me finish. And all these people who are arguing that his first initial high-level appointments are all white men, which I do agree and I do think that he can do better than that moving forward, the fact to the matter is for some of these people are kind of taken with the grain of salt. I feel like it's crocodile tears because a number of these people were the same people that were hurling very sort of insulting and horrible indictments of Susan Rice, when she was first floated as secretary of state. And now, at the same time that they were hurling all of these attacks towards Susan Rice, they were saying, we'd love Kerry. We love Kerry. Guess what, white male. Which one do you want?

MS. WRIGHT: OK, let me just answer that. The attacks are coming from Democrats, particularly Democrat women in your party. They're not coming from the right – excuse me – let me finish –let me finish. You said that the president's first term was an anomaly. Don't really know what you mean by that because he was the first black president elected in the United States of America, a keen awareness and sensitivity to the fact that diversity, his diversity, and the diversity of the American people got him elected the first term and the second term.

MS. BENNETT: No.

MS. WRIGHT: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I just want to put a little bow around this. So to say, to Bonnie's point, it looks to everybody and particularly women who are outraged in the Democrat Party that the president says, hey, women, you know, I

know I gave you Julie, the life of Julie, I made a lot of promises that we were going to take care of you from cradle to grave, but I don't really care. And I think, like Charlie Rangel said, it's embarrassing as hell.

MS. BENNETT: No, let me explain. When I said an anomaly, I said that high rate of diversity in his cabinet. Well, we have to remember, whether it's Obama or Bush, right, that everything is wired against women. And we saw beautifully or terribly in the Susan Rice situation. It is sexist – what she went through was sexist, beginning and end of story.

Now, I'm sorry –

MS. SCHLAPP: She was poor judgment and I spoke to a lot –

MS. BENNETT: No. I disagree.

MS. SCHLAPP: No, no, I –

MS. BENNETT: The ground water in this country, we rank 95th in the world in the number of women in elected office. We have to own up to the fact that our ground water is sexist and is wired against women's ascension and leadership –

MS. SCHLAPP: I would like to go back to that inner circle, because working in the White House, I can tell you that when President Bush was there, he had Condoleezza Rice, Karen Hughes, Harriet Miers. He was surrounded by these women that were there. Those are the people that the president meets with every day. So yes, you can have the lower political appointees. That's great and we should have more women and Hispanic and African-Americans and Asian-Americans in that group, but that inner circle, that's what – those are the folks that influence the president. And those people surrounding the president, while men, and that's where he needs to change it up. He needs to change it up.

(Cross talk.)

MS. DEWEEVER: – black woman, but his closest – his closest –

MS. SCHLAPP: She's the only one.

MS. DEWEEVER: – advisor is a black woman. I agree. And there will be more.

MS. ERBE: Wait a second. I do want to talk to you about that, though. There will be more. There's never – he had a chance female secretary of defense or Treasury, never been one before, and everybody inside and outside Washington knows Treasury, Defense, and State are really the only cabinet positions that matter. So since he's already made those appointments, or you know, at least sent the names out, can he really make it up? Because from where I sit, he can't.

MS. DEWEEVER: Well, those are – if you want to consider those the Holy Grail, you can say that those are the Holy Grail, but they're not the only having the positions. We still know now that we have Labor that we have to replace. We know that we have –

MS. ERBE: Which has had a female –

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: – excuse me, which has had a female labor secretary since President Roosevelt nominated the first female to that office.

MS. DEWEEVER: But we still need another one. That's what I would argue. Particularly as important as economic positioning is for women in this country, we need to make sure that we have representation. I agree with you. We need to make sure that this country has a diversity and leadership at the highest levels of this government. And in fact, it's up to us to push our leaders to make sure that that's the case.

MS. WRIGHT: And that's what we're doing here. But we also don't just women, blacks, or anybody given positions just because of the color of their skin or their gender –

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: No, wait, are we not past that?

MS. WRIGHT: We're not actually because the Democrats run a campaign of identity –

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: Wait, one at a time, one at a time.

MS. BENNETT: Well, let's stop. Let's just put apart –

MS. WRIGHT: You would agree to that.

MS. BENNETT: No, no, no, no –

MS. WRIGHT: You would agree to that we just don't put women in position –

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: Last word to Sam. Nobody else talk.

MS. BENNETT: Let's put the partisan gauntlet down and say we as women all agree Obama could have done a lot better and that's what our nation needs. It needs diversity in the highest offices making decisions.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe or @TotheContrary. From women in government to women's health.

Binge drinking, often perceived as an issue for men, is an under-recognized problem for American women. According to a new government study, 14 million women or some 13 percent binge drink. Among high school girls, the figure is closer to 20 percent.

Binge drinking is defined for women as four or more drinks on one occasion. Women binge an average of three times a month. Experts believe the increase is due in part to marketing strategies, including flavored alcoholic beverages. Binge drinking happens more often among non-Hispanic whites and becomes more common as household income rises.

So how concerned about this should we be?

MS. WRIGHT: Very concerned. And you know what I admire about the Center for Disease Control's authors of the study? They said the number one thing that we can do, parents can start talking to their kids. And guess what, kids take examples from parents. So if they watch their parents drink a lot to excess and get sloppy drunk, they're probably going to do it. And also the study said that, you know, most of these kids are getting alcohol from adults in their life. So I think, you know, Bonnie, this goes back – I know I probably sound like an old fashioned like wonky kind of a Norman Rockwell lady, but you know, parenting is always – it's one of the keys. I'm not saying it's the only one, but Sam and I were talking about this earlier. You talk to kids. There's consequences to bad behavior. Drinking is not your friend, especially for women.

MS. BENNETT: Absolutely. I've got a 28-year-old daughter, 26-year-old daughter, both married, got my first grandchild. I'm really excited. We dealt with that, right, when they were at those teenage years. It was real clear in our house. You don't drink. And we're not the strictest household in the world, but it – the downside of drinking is so profound, especially for girls.

Now, at the dinner table, when they got to be of age, there is wine at the table. We would drink it at the table. And the other thing that research shows is that girls and boys that grow up in households where you regularly sit down to the dinner table together as a family have much lower rates of these kinds of behaviors. So I agree with you 100 percent.

MS. SCHLAPP: Well, as a mother of five girls, of course, I am incredibly panicked by this. But it really is a serious issue that needs to be dealt with. I think – you know, I wish that they could get the video cameras and I think they did this in the

documentary, you know, capture these girls all passed out, drunk and stupid, and show it to these girls and say, look at you. You can die. You can get into a situation –

MS. ERBE: Or raped –

MS. SCHLAPP: – or get raped. Or you know, get into a situation you don't want to be in. You lose self-control. You lose the importance of who you are. And part of that is teaching them, not only parents, but also teachers being involved in this conversation with them about self-respect and the fact that you want to be in control. You don't want anyone to control you. And so in that case, I think that's an important discussion to have.

MS. DEWEEVER: There's a lot about peer pressure. There's a lot about wanting to be accepted, doing something because everyone else is doing it. And we need to teach our young girls to love themselves for themselves and not necessarily rely on these crutches in order to be accepted.

What I find very interesting about this particular study is that it really hits a particular segment that one would think would be advantaged. Here we are the most affluent girls, typically white girls, you're wondering what in the world is it that they feel this need to put themselves in such danger. And when you know who is really most impacted about this problem, that should create a situation when we start to think what can we do to target that specific segment to say we need to make sure these girls love themselves and take care of themselves.

MS. ERBE: But you know, part of it, too, is blamed by the report on marketing and coming up with flavored drinks. I'm sorry, but you know, I was a dumb teenager. But are there –

MS. SCHLAPP: No, you're not, Bonnie.

MS. ERBE: But I wasn't dumb enough to just go out and buy flavored liquor because I saw ads for it.

MS. DEWEEVER: Right.

MS. ERBE: I mean, how influential are these ads anymore? I don't – look what happened in the last election with the Republican billion spent on messaging that went nowhere.

MS. SCHLAPP: Exactly. You know, I went over to Costco in Kansas. And they had – I'm not kidding – it was a pink bottle that said Girl. And it was –

MS. WRIGHT: Wow.

MS. SCHLAPP: It was. It was like a liquor vodka drink. And you know, so catches your eye. So if they're able – if they're of age and they're able to buy that, why not?

(Cross talk.)

MS. WRIGHT: No, I was just going to say, your point, you have five girls, and you said it's about showing young women images of – do you think this makes you look? We have to focus on messages of empowerment, taking charge of your life. And I think it's very troubling, to your point, Avis, that one out of five high school girls is binge drinking, engaging in this behavior –

MS. SCHLAPP: Well and having access to that alcohol.

MS. WRIGHT: So how do we as a community – I think we're all raising a good point here – as parents, as mentors, as teachers – I think we should have – young women should be sat around a table, you know, at home, at school, in environments like the Girls Scouts and the Brownies and say, look, I want you to watch this video. This isn't pretty. Throwing up, passing out, and to Bonnie's point, you can get raped or engage in sexual activity that you're not even aware of.

MS. BENNETT: And let's add the community. What's the code word here? White affluent girls. It's college, you know. My first husband, university college coach, right? So I was right involved in that community. And when you look at the frat parties, the sorority parties that were going on, that's where all of that was going on. So when we're talking about those communities, bingo, a lot of that.

MS. ERBE: All right. Behind the headlines, New Hampshire made history this year by sending an all female delegation to the 113th Congress. This matriarchy of North includes both U.S. senators, its two Representatives, and the woman governor. This week, Governor Maggie Hassan shares her story of advocacy and public service with *To the Contrary*.

(Begin video segment.)

GOVERNOR MAGGIE HASSAN (D-NH): I'm from Exeter, New Hampshire, where I've lived for about 23 years and I have two wonderful children Ben and Meg and my husband Tom. I am a lawyer. I work in the area of business law, doing labor unemployment law for years. And then I gradually got involved in advocacy for our family and for my son because Ben, who's now 24, happens to experience severe physical disabilities.

MS. ERBE: Hassan's interest in politics is very personal. It dates back to her advocacy work and includes time in the state legislature.

GOV. HASSAN: It was a combination of my professional skills as a lawyer and my concern that families like mine and people like my son had advocates for them in our state capital that drew me to public service.

One of the great privileges I had was serving as majority leader for the first female majority legislative body in the country's history. And when you go around and talk to the women who serve in our legislature, it's often stories about getting involved in a community effort or to advocate for families or something like that that draws them into public service.

MS. ERBE: Hassan credits her husband with encouraging her to run for office, but she also had the support of female politicians.

GOV. HASSAN: Senator Shaheen, as governor appointed me to my first public service role, which was serving on an education finance committee, where I was representing the voices of public school parents. She's the first woman in our country's history to serve as senator, as well as governor. She's a great role model and I'm always happy to take her advice.

SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN (D-NH): Well, I wouldn't presume to give her advice. I think she's – she run a great campaign. She's gotten there. I have offered to be helpful in any way I can, but I think she's off to a great start.

MS. ERBE: Now, the two women are working together again, one in Washington and one in New Hampshire. Hassan says it shouldn't come as a surprise that New Hampshire is America's first matriarchy. The state legislature, which is an all-volunteer body, is filled with women.

GOV. HASSAN: You have women who have a history of volunteering at the community level gradually realizing that they want to take what they know and the issues that are of concern to them and their constituents to conquer in that role.

MS. ERBE: This year, five female governors will lead their states. Hassan is the lone Democrat in that group. As a woman and Democrat, the Governor hopes to bring all sides together.

GOV. HASSAN: What's most important for us right now is making sure that we have a balanced budget and that we have the tools to bring educators and businesses together so we can prepare a skilled workforce for the 21st century economy. New Hampshire should be and can be an economic leader. We already are a place with low taxes, low unemployment, and stronger than average economy. We want to make it even stronger.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So, Sam Bennett, with the female governor and the four female senators and congresswomen, what – what can New Hampshire do that other states can't do? What kind of power does this give to the women of the state?

MS. BENNETT: Well, this is a story we're particularly proud of at Women's Campaign Fund. We were her first national endorsement and we literally grabbed the rest of the nation, kicking and screaming to endorse her because she would have been terrific – she was a terrific candidate who's going to make an amazing governor. But one might ask why is New Hampshire the state that has this all women delegation. Well, there's some research out there that shows perfectly the story that women run for office because they want to change the world and men run for office because they see it as a pathway to power. New Hampshire has the lowest compensated state legislature in the country. Now, my state, Pennsylvania, ranked 47th in the country among all women in elected office, has the highest paid state legislature. And so there's this correlation between what they get paid and the dominance of men or women in that legislative body.

MS. ERBE: Very interesting.

MS. BENNETT: The other factor going on, additional research shows that there's a twin effect, that in fact if there's already a woman serving, the chance that another woman will serve in that position or a surrounding position goes up exponentially. In fact, there's an unusually high number of senatorial bodies across the country where you have twin sets of two women senators.

So the real story here is the one that Shaheen told, Governor Shaheen, that we as women only do encourage other women to run when we serve in office, we also provide very powerful role modeling. And Maggie is just going to be a terrific governor.

MS. WRIGHT: I'm excited and I completely agree with everything Sam has said. I know this is a first, but – (laughter) – hey, we're about first – but no, in all seriousness, you were absolutely right. I think what New Hampshire can do for the United States of America and women is I can look in the face of those elected women and say I can do it, you can do it. You can do it and you can do it. The power of that image – and what you left out, I think I'm right about this – is New Hampshire has a speaker of the House, I believe, who – their state legislature – who is also a woman and the woman who is the Supreme Court justice of the state of New Hampshire is a woman. So it's like woman power. And to your point and I know your organization has done a lot of research around this, most women, when they think about running for office, second guess themselves. Men, like you say, oh, right away. I don't have to be qualified. I'm going to do it. It's a rite of passage.

So I think that – and I like the fact that we have a bipartisan group of women leading New Hampshire. And I just think it's more power to everybody and should all take a lot of note in that. And they were elected by the people of their state. Doesn't mean we're inferior.

MS. ERBE: Now, how about – from your perspective, too, the four members of the House and Senate, three Democrats and then Kelly Ayotte, who’s pretty hard line conservative? Are they going to be able to get along and do anything as a group?

MS. WRIGHT: I think so. I think, again, this goes back to what Sam’s point is. Women get engaged because we’re moms, we’re activists, and there’s something personal that drives us, I believe, and I think your research shows that, to get involved in this. And just because Kelly might be a conservative – I don’t like labels, you know, of she’s a left winger and he’s a right winger or whatever, she’s a right winger – I think that what I’ve seen from Senator Ayotte is that there’s a commitment to work across the aisle and I think when you’re dealing with women, there’s just – I don’t know – I think there’s a tenacity and passion to say, hey, let’s get this done, folks.

MS. SCHLAPP: Bonnie, it was during the fiscal cliff negotiations that the women senators, both Republicans and Democrats, came together and said we can do this. These guys are not getting this done. And it is because we’re able to – I think we communicate better to one another and we want to get a solution at this point. But what I love about the governor of New Hampshire is, you know, she is incredibly supported by her husband. She’s very inspirational, not only raising her one daughter, her son with cerebral palsy, I mean this woman is truly amazing. And when she spoke at the legislature, she said I want to bring the parties together. I mean, what a great lesson for Washington. I mean, why can’t we get it done right over here. So –

MS. DEWEEVER: Need more women.

MS. SCHLAPP: And I think when you look at New Hampshire in particular, it’s just very rich in political tradition. These are people that – the first primary in the nation. They are very involved. The candidates go to the people’s houses. And if we can get people more engaged in the political system, get moms and you know, women to go and run, I think it would be just a benefit for us.

MS. ERBE: And don’t forget, pay your governors and state legislators less – lower salaries. (Laughter.)

MS. DEWEEVER: Well, that’s unfortunate. But it all goes to the fact that women are about getting things done. They’re about making a difference in their community. They’re about making a difference in the world. And the more that we can really support those efforts by donating to women candidates, by supporting them, by encouraging all of those bright spots that we see in our communities to, hey, throw their names in the hat, run for the next office, the more – the more we can replicate this idea.

MS. BENNETT: Yeah and I just want to say – thank you. That was beautiful. It was perfect. I couldn’t have said it better. But let’s point out. If we talk about Washington and the gridlock we’re all struggling with, to your point, and to your point, research shows women reach across the aisle, and they engage in politics in nonpartisan ways that men don’t do.

MS. ERBE: All right. And that's it for this edition of *To the Contrary*. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe and @TotheContrary and check our website, pbs.org/ttc, where the discussion continues. Whether you agree or think to the contrary, please join us next time.

(END)