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BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, the fight over VAWA heats up. Then a feminist manifesto celebrates a big birthday. Behind the headlines, getting more black women and girls into technology.

(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, another war over women?

House Republicans are expected to introduce a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act next week. It's unclear whether the house will address the politically sensitive issues that blocked reauthorization last year. At issue is extending domestic violence protections for LGBT victims and illegal immigrants and allowing Native American tribal courts to prosecute non-tribal offenders.

Last week, the Senate overwhelmingly passed its own bill that did extend protections.

MS. ERBE: So Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever, why is it so tough this time getting this legislation through?

AVIS JONES-DEWEEVER: Well, the short answer is there's a lot of crazy people in the U.S. House of Representatives and from my estimation, unless the Republican Party wants to be a permanent minority, they will stop stalling and pushing back on common sense legislation like the Violence Against Women Act.

TARA SETMAYER: Because this is a – not a very good bill and it's filled with other things that take the focus away from the direct services to actually help prevent domestic violence against women, it's become politicized.

MONICA CEVALLOS: I agree. It's definitely a political partisan – you know, the partisan politics that is in both sides of the aisle, not trying to find the solutions for the women that they are trying to protect.

DARLENE KENNEDY: Republican lawmakers are not anti-women, but they do – all of our legislators have a responsibility to pass fiscally sound legislation, as well as constitutional legislation.

MS. ERBE: So what's unconstitutional and what's fiscally unsound about the VAWA Act?

MS. KENNEDY: Well, one of the concerns is this addition to the tribal – to allow the tribal courts to take the cases. Now, VAWA is a federal law. So then there're

issues that are of concern, going to litigate or going to try a case in the tribal that may not have to follow certain of our federal laws.

The other side is the fiscal issue. I mean, it is a very expensive piece of legislation.

MS. ERBE: How much?

MS. KENNEDY: Well, at least last year, I believe, the budget was almost \$500,000 – excuse me, \$500 million, excuse me. And I guess it's estimated to go as high as \$600 or over \$600 million. So it's an important piece of legislation, no doubt. But also remember, we do have laws on the books at the state level that also address issues of crimes against individuals, women as well as men, because we know violence is not only a man on woman crime. It is also a woman on man crime now.

MS. DEWEEVER: And the Violence Against Women Act is in fact gender neutral in that way. It can be used in terms of protecting male victims, as well as female victims. But as it relates to Native American women, what we're talking about here is the fact that if you are a Native American woman and you are battered by an abuser who is not a member – who is not Native American, who does not live in your tribal territory, then that person, frankly, can get away with that crime. VAWA, as it has now been passed to the Senate, would in fact correct that injustice. And I think that's perfectly reasonable.

MS. ERBE: And what about the LGBT cue and the illegal immigration issues?

MS. DEWEEVER: The same sort of coverage. It expands coverage to these particular populations that have been left out in the past.

MS. ERBE: All right. But my question is why are the Democrats putting it in if the Republicans would obviously have reauthorized the bill and funded it a long time ago, would have been helping a lot more women, if they try not to expand it, not right now?

MS. DEWEEVER: You know, if I was outside of the house – I have two children – if I was outside of a burning home with one of my children, I would go back and also try to get the other one, after leaving that one outside. You know, just because – this is a part of legislation. Legislation is not static. As it comes up for reauthorization, it's time to improve it. Every time legislation comes up for reauthorization, you think about what do we need to do to improve it, to make it work better. This is exactly what we've come with now and we need to move forward and make sure that everyone is covered under this piece of legislation.

MS. SETMAYER: Well, I can answer why those things were put in. It was because it's an extension of the war on women narrative that the Democrats wanted to put forth during the election cycle last year. It was a successful PR campaign that the

Republicans did an abysmal job of countering and this was one of them. You know, you call it the Violence Against Women Act. Well, who could possibly be against violence against women? Those Republicans, you know, they hate women. They want to see them abused. I mean, all of the rhetoric –

MS. ERBE: But then I ask you –

(Cross talk.)

MS. SETMAYER: – a bill that were problematic.

MS. ERBE: Then I ask you, if there are only these minor expansions, and they're not huge and they're not – in the scheme of the federal budget, they cost zero or 0.00001, why not just go along with it, if they don't want to be accused of being against women?

MS. SETMAYER: Well, because those are the only issues – I mean, the price tag is a problem as well. I mean, it went from \$450 million – that's a lot of money – you're federalizing crimes that some would argue don't need to be federalized. There's also fraud, waste, and abuse within what – because this was passed originally in 1994. There's a lot of problems and there haven't been any studies that show that all of this money has actually been effective. The GAO and the Department of Justice inspector general, they came out with reports that said we don't know if these things have worked. And we don't know there's duplicative programs. There's a lot of programs here along. It's not just we want to send money to help domestically abused women.

MS. CEVALLOS: I stand by expanding it because just as she mentioned, you know, Native American and undocumented women, they have a fear of going and saying that they're victims. So the same situation happens. An undocumented woman is with somebody. She's going to – and they're abusing her. She's not going to go out of fear. She's not going to go out of not knowing the resources. So this is a program that we'll be able to expand and help these people that are vulnerable. That's exactly what it's supposed to be doing.

MS. KENNEDY: But you know, if we're talking about making sure that women, particularly women who may be of foreign descent in the country, have knowledge and are aware that there are protections out there, it's a different issue than being able to go to a police officer, say, someone just beat me or someone raped me. I mean, they still – people – individuals in this country, we have a right to go to the police if someone assaults us or batters us.

So you know, I guess I'm a little frustrated because although I understand the importance of the legislation and that it has made this issue more knowledgeable across the world and across the country, you know, there're still laws on the book and there have always been laws on the book to protect people who are battered or injured.

MS. DEWEEVER: If you want – if you need to go to a shelter to get some protection from an abuser, most often that shelter is funded by the Violence Against Women Act. If you need to call up a hotline, it's because that money is there to provide those compensations for people to be able to be on the other end of that line. If you –

MS. ERBE: But they also raise a lot of money privately.

MS. DEWEEVER: They do. They do.

MS. ERBE: They get government and foundations funding.

MS. CEVALLOS: It's also about prevention and teaching these women, do the programs that teach these women that these resources are available. That's huge. That's something that's really important for the community.

MS. DEWEEVER: And it teaches police officers exactly how to go into a situation and assess it correctly. You know, it wasn't that long ago, when a police officer would come to a home and say, you know, this is a domestic issue. You guys work it out. Now, we have really put the teeth into the law to make sure that we criminalize these actions, as it should have. If VAWA wasn't there, we may not be where we are today with this issue.

MS. SETMAYER: But no one's talking about getting rid of it. They're talking about whether we need to expand it, whether this amount of money is necessary, and whether it's being used properly. You know, there are a lot of critics of this bill that say that it really stacks the chips against men. You know, for the – Centers for Disease Control came out with a statistic that 40 percent of domestic violence is now perpetrated against men, which is a part of this that a lot of people forget.

MS. ERBE: That seems really high versus –

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: I mean, I think it exists 5 or 10 percent maybe, not 40 percent.

MS. SETMAYER: Well, that's what the CDC says. They say only 15 percent actually report it because of social stigma, et cetera. And there's also an issue with the fact that it's very centric on protection orders that don't necessarily work. You know, it's – there's a lot of issues when you federalize something like this, it becomes problematic and very bureaucratic. And you know, I think these are legitimate concerns to try to improve the bill, as opposed to politically expanding it for an agenda.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe.

From VAWA to the women's movement.

Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" was first published 50 years ago this week. The book is widely credited with sparking the second wave feminism of the 1960s and '70s. Friedan encouraged women to change their circumstances to make themselves happier.

BETTY FRIEDAN: (From tape.) We had to break through the barriers that kept us from full personhood in society. We had to break through the feminine mystique and the definition, the mask of false femininity we were wearing.

MS. ERBE: She found 1960s housewives were much less fulfilled than women who took untraditional roles. Fifty years later, some commentators are saying the book is still very relevant.

Do you think it's relevant?

MS. SETMAYER: Maybe. I mean, I guess you can pull excerpts from anything that's considered a classic and apply it to everyday life today. I found the criticism of this interesting from some women who said that she sounded whinny, like she was whining. And –

MS. ERBE: Actually, I think Gail Collins in the "New York Times" said that.

MS. SETMAYER: Yeah, yeah, she was –

MS. ERBE: Who was supposed to be a big feminist.

MS. SETMAYER: Right, which I thought was a fascinating dynamic, considering how heralded this book was and how – what a breakthrough was, which it was at its time. I think the social dynamics have changed considerably, particularly in the home, with how many more working mothers and fathers, you know, two-parent working households, the role that men are now playing domestically. It's interesting, a different shift.

MS. ERBE: Nobody's going to say things haven't changed. But how much is Betty Friedan responsible for this? For example, I grew up in New York City in the late '60s, early '70s coming, you know, into my teen years. And Friedan and Gloria Steinem were like the only powerful figures I knew out there advocating for women's rights. Now, this is a young person, but I mean, from my perspective, I would – the book came out before I was involved, but Friedan really, she cofounded now, she really impacted my life.

MS. DEWEEVER: Yeah, I do think that for a huge segment of the female population in this nation, she spoke for them. Now, I would have to say, frankly, as an African-American woman, that book does not speak to me and does not speak to my experience or the experience of my mother or my grandmother even.

MS. ERBE: A lot of people – that’s obvious and the whole what about me thing happened in the ’80s and ’90s and now black women and Latinos and Asian-American women are –

MS. DEWEEVER: Being in the workforce was forever in terms of my history, right? And so – you know, but I can understand – I can appreciate the value of that book and I don’t want to discount it because it doesn’t necessarily reflect my particular history and my experience.

MS. ERBE: Have we moved as much as she might have predicted? We would have moved by now, 50 years later?

MS. KENNEDY: I believe we have and you’re going to have critics who disagree with that, but you know, we have more women in college, in graduate school, being doctors and lawyers. We do have women in professional positions now similar to men, although there is still that wage gap that we talk about all the time and talked about on this show. So there have been improvements and I have to say I have to agree with you, Avis, I mean, as I was now thinking about it and reading articles for this show, I said, well, gee, my mom – I don’t – this didn’t really affect my mom the way it might have affected someone who was not black. You know, but the other side of that is –

MS. ERBE: And she was talking about white suburban house –

MS. KENNEDY: Suburban women. And you know, and if you want to call it feminism, I call it – for me, I call it the opportunity to pursue whatever my goals and dreams are as a young woman who happens to be African-American. And the person who instilled that in me was my own mother. So I would call her a feminist.

MS. CEVALLOS: Yeah, in the Latino community it’s very similar. Our people were not focused on kind of this feminist movement. We have Dolores Huerta, who was working on the labor movement and working on the community issues that were directly affecting her. So it’s difficult to kind of put a relation to how we felt or how to relate directly with this book because our communities were a little bit different.

MS. ERBE: Well, and also there wasn’t a huge –

MS. CEVALLOS: Influx, right.

MS. ERBE: – in – but in ’59, there hadn’t the huge influx of immigration of the last 30 years, hadn’t started yet.

MS. CEVALLOS: Exactly, but I do think that this is a pillar and this is something that has moved forward for all women and we all look – you know, all the young Latinas that are now growing up, they wouldn’t have the opportunities that they have without these women that are running the feminist movement.

MS. ERBE: And how are Latinas in terms of fighting for their rights, like for example, you refer to the Latino community. I've referred to the Latina community.

MS. CEVALLOS: The Latina community – yeah, no, the Latina community, I feel like they're in power, just as all other women – I personally feel, you know, that I'm entitled to everything that a man is and that I'm equal and that I should be, you know, be considered equally as they are. So I don't feel that those barriers as much and it's because of the feminist movement here in the United States.

MS. ERBE: And what about macho culture among Latinos?

MS. CEVALLOS: Machismo, I think it's changed. I think that's definitely something of the past.

MS. ERBE: Really?

MS. CEVALLOS: And I think that the young women, we're going – young Latinas are going to college more than the young Latino men, so it's changing. The dynamics are slowly changing and Latina women are becoming at the forefront of – in leadership positions in top corporations, so it's changing.

MS. SETMAYER: What do you think is causing that change because it was so prevalent in like Latin culture?

MS. CEVALLOS: I think it's being here in the United States, because of the feminist movement. I mean, my mom, still similar to many of our moms, she worked and she came home and cooked and cleaned. And that's a kind of a machismo mentality. But I don't see it. I'm equal – I'm going to wash the dishes. You're going to cook. Or I'm going to cook and you're going to wash the dishes.

MS. ERBE: But I must say, when I watch, for example, Univision or Telemundo, the programs are still back in the '50s, I mean –

MS. CEVALLOS: There're also films in Latin America. There's also films in Latin America. That's still the way that Latin American culture is, but Latinos here in the United States, Latinas here in the United States have a different perspective.

MS. ERBE: But interesting – I keep – sorry to keep pushing you on this, but do you think because there's such – now, Latinos, they're almost 20 percent of the American population, high teens, anyway –

MS. CEVALLOS: And the average is 26 years old for Latina. So we're still young.

MS. ERBE: Exactly.

MS. CEVALLOS: And it's the younger generation that is really making the changes with that.

MS. ERBE: And will it be able to transfer back to Central and South America, now that you're liberated, do you have relatives back there you can help out?

MS. CEVALLOS: Yeah, I mean, I think so. I have relatives back there and I know when they see me, they're just like, wow, you know, you're doing your own thing and you're working and – you know – they see that difference and I think it is growing in Latin American countries as well.

MS. ERBE: And Avis, do you think – do African-American women – I mean, you had the preeminent African-American women's national organization. But do African-American women feel like they've been fully integrated into feminism?

MS. DEWEEVER: You know – that's a good question. (Laughter.) And I don't know if I can wrap it up really quick. But I will just say, you know, there is a separate sort of wave that African-American women have embraced called womanism, which is – it takes the ideals of feminism, but also infuses the issue of race within that. So I think, with black women, we are both in. You know, we appreciate feminism. We definitely feel a part of it, but as well, we also want to recognize our African-Americanism as well as that femininity.

MS. ERBE: All right, very interesting. Behind the headlines, Kat Calvin, the young entrepreneur is encouraging more black women and girls to get involved in technology. As we celebrate Black History Month, we look at Calvin's organization, Blerdology, formerly Black Girls Hack.

(Begin video segment.)

KAT CALVIN: We really love the word “blerd,” which means black nerd for anyone who doesn't know. Black nerd is blerd, and so we're Blerdology, because we're all about the science of black nerds.

MS. ERBE: Calvin held the first so-called Black Girls Hackathon last fall to encourage more women to become tech savvy.

MS. CALVIN: Black Girls Hack sort of came out as an accident.

MS. ERBE: She had no idea that it would take off.

MS. CALVIN: My co-founder and I, we're desperately looking for a chief technology officer, a CTO, and needed to have a database built and don't have, you know, any money whatsoever, so we're trying to think how can we do this. I was at a conference, a startup conference. I'm for black women and sort of thinking through, like,

you know, there're so many of us who have these problems, so I sort of kept thinking through like what it was we can do. And I thought, oh, maybe I'll just put up a hackathon. And I love putting up parties. This is a party with coding. And then I thought a little more. I thought, you know, actually I haven't been able to find anything that's specifically for the black tech community. And so why don't I put on a hackathon that's specifically for black sort of funders, black coders, black designers.

MS. ERBE: Don't know what a hackathon is? Don't worry, you aren't alone.

MS. CALVIN: It's basically a big geek party. It's when a bunch of computer coders and designers get together and build a web or mobile app of some kind. You know, a lot of people just get together and you had the funds before they were sort of – part of – you know, the culture as they're becoming now. We just a – (inaudible) – for people who love to go to get together and say, hey, let's, I don't know, build a website for Furbies to date or something. I'm – what they've become now is a real opportunity to use tech to be able to address social issues.

MS. ERBE: Black Girls Hack produced websites and databases for at least eight startups. The success led Calvin to think bigger.

MS. CALVIN: We spent winter really thinking over what have we thought the goal should be for this and talking to people in the black tech community and in media and corporations who were trying to recruit more and more minorities in tech and to people at universities, et cetera. And we really sort of figured out that there's a real need for a community that supports and educates and connects people in black tech and the people who want to be connected to them.

MS. ERBE: And Calvin says it's especially important for black women.

MS. CALVIN: There're a lot of black women and women in tech and part of the goal of Blerdology is to bring all of us together. And there's a lot of incredible women in tech. So I think that you don't see us as much, but there're a lot of women in it. Because we think in tech so much, at least – you know, I think my generation are moving forward that even most of the businesses we're thinking of that we want to do wouldn't be possible if it weren't for the internet, because that just with this thing, how do we do things on the internet, right? And so you just – I just – it's something that we can't really help and I think that most people aren't making a conscious choice to be in tech.

MS. ERBE: Calvin launched a nonprofit to help train high school girls in life and computer skills. Because the world is so technologically focused, she wants black women and girls to know their way around.

MS. CALVIN: I think some knowledge of coding is incredibly important for everyone and especially women and girls because often look at you and think you don't know how to do what you're doing. I can get by on coding enough to stay up until 4:00 fixing my website or to be able to look when someone's building something for me and

sort of check and see what they're doing and how they're figuring it out. Everyone needs to know enough to be able to not have to call somebody when you need your header, you know, reduced a few pixels. But also, just because you need to be able to speak the language that everybody else is speaking in the business.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So I wonder, coming out of our last discussion with Avis's reference to womanism, is this a branch of womanism, black women, you know, helping other black women to –

MS. KENNEDY: Almost certainly. I mean, I think this is an awesome story. She is a tremendous young lady and I applaud her highly for what she's doing. And I think it just shows that, you know, there're so many – so much potential and so many opportunities out there for particularly young African-American women. And as I was listening to the story, I was thinking about 20-25 years ago, when computers were not as sophisticated as they are today, and you almost had to code a computer in order to make it function. But you know, in a society where, you know, we glamorize beauty and you know, how pretty you are, you know, how long your hair is and all these other foolish things that people look at, the fact that, you know, there's substance out there and that young women really can pursue a goal that can make a difference in their lives.

MS. SETMAYER: Yeah, this is like the, you know, women now knowing how – you know, back, used to be know about cars. You know, oh, you know about it? Now is like, oh, you know about computers? I look at that as the modern day, you know, I know how to change a flat tire. I think this really, really fantastic because it actually makes being really smart cool, and that's something, particularly in the black community, unfortunately, has a negative connotation, you know, and trying to overcome that stereotype, oh, you're a nerd or you talk like a white girls, or, you know, oh, why are you – you know – why aren't you out, you know, trying to be an athlete or a rapper. You know, this kind – having examples like her is a fantastic visual, especially for young black women who need to see that it's OK to be smart. So I commend her for doing it.

MS. CEVALLOS: I definitely commend her as well. I mean, this is exactly what we need a STEM education, because the young minority communities –

MS. SETMAYER: It's the future.

MS. CEVALLOS: When 26 percent of, you know, the workforce is African-American, Native American, and Latino, and only 9 percent of them are in the STEM field, that's a huge gap. And programs for education in STEM are extremely important. I'm currently working on a project called Inspire STEM USA and it's coalition with corporate partners and with nonprofits, education organizations to work on that pipeline for STEM education and working with immigration plans to make sure that we are building these jobs and building the education for these students, the minority students

here in the United States. So it's definitely something that is needed and I think that all corporate companies are starting to look more for diversity in their STEM career fields.

MS. ERBE: It's so true because we're shipping all those tech jobs overseas.

MS. CEVALLOS: Exactly.

MS. ERBE: They're gone – they have gone as of about 15 or – they're all in India and China. And why not bring them back to the United States?

MS. DEWEEVER: And there're so many ways in which we can get young people involved. My nine-year-old, for example, loves Lego robotics. So he's coding already. You know, so it's wonderful to see it. And I would say I think there is a change in this notion of blackness and intelligence not going together. I think right now, I just told to my 16-year-old about that. He was like, yeah, that's cool. Because I had to ask him. I want you to do tech and make sure that wasn't the case anymore because I remember those days. And you know, people, now, I think that people are embracing intelligence in a way, young people are embracing intelligence. They're inspired by it and I love to see activities like this. I think it's wonderful.

MS. ERBE: And tell me about how does this link in with womanism.

MS. DEWEEVER: You know, because she is – once again, she's sort of embracing it specifically focusing on black women and girls and saying let's help each other, let's – it's a whole new culture here when she says blerd, blerdology, so she's talking about the nerd, but she's like putting this extra twist on this saying black nerd specifically. And I think that that's wonderful because once again it shows that within this community, within the African-American community, there is the subset that is code savvy and really making that sort of the wave of the future. I think it's something to be celebrated.

MS. SETMAYER: And also because you can see the tangible results of this. I mean, we are a technical, digital society now. That is the way everything is moving. We're not as much brick and mortar as we used to be. So when you see how that iPod works or how your iPad works or how your smart phone works and you go, oh, I want to learn how to build things like that, those are everyday technology fits that people can see, oh, well this – this is how I get there. So I think that how integrated these things are into our everyday lives helps promote students who want to pursue these careers, because again, it's the wave of the future.

You know, Congressman Rohrabacher, my boss, he's on the Science Committee. He's vice chair and for years he's been very supportive of STEM, promoting STEM opportunities for women and minorities and –

MS. ERBE: And that's fabulous and we got to get out on that note because that's it for this edition of *To the Contrary*. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe and

@TotheContrary and check our new website, [pbs.org/to-the-contrary](https://pbs.org/to-the-contrary), where the discussion continues. And whether you agree or think to the contrary, please join us next time.

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