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BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, women to the rescue, the government's rescue. Then, the first woman to chair the Federal Reserve as a female role model. Behind the headlines, former senator, Kay Bailey Hutchison on pioneering women.

(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, are women the only adults in the U.S. Senate?

If President Obama and Congress want to avoid another government shutdown come December, they would do well to get more women in the room. Women senators were the driving force behind the compromise ending the government shutdown.

Susan Collins of Maine, a moderate Republican, took the lead with a bipartisan proposal that became the centerpiece of the final legislation.

Maryland Democrat Barbara Mikulski and two other Republican female senators, Lisa Murkowski and Kelly Ayotte, joined in the bipartisan effort. Nearly half who negotiated the bill's details were women. And it all reportedly began with a gathering of most of the 20 women senators at the offices of New Hampshire Senator Jeanne Shaheen.

So Megan Beyer, have women finally arrived in Congress? Do they have the power to get us through the next set of deadlines that come up in 60 days?

MEGAN BEYER: Absolutely, like the cavalry, they arrived. And I'm with Senator John McCain, who said I wish we had 50 of them. (Laughter.)

RINA SHAH: Look at Senator Collins, well, she's the epitome of power right now. And I think she's just one of the few women senators, I think, who has courage, conviction, and a conscience.

PATRICIA SOSA: As the one bipartisan group that was able to forge a solution with credibility, I think the women caucus has shown to be the answer to sustaining democracy in this country. (Laughter.)

HADLEY HEATH: I'm glad that the government is back up and running. I think it would be a mistake, though, to try to weigh who's a better leader, a woman or a man. I think both the genders have differences, but important characteristics that can be used for positive things.

MS. ERBE: But it was so amazing to me to watch this unfold and the women really did devise the compromise. They pushed it through.

MS. HEATH: Absolutely.

MS. ERBE: I mean –

MS. HEATH: I think that's –

MS. ERBE: And you would think men would be embarrassed to even let them come forward that way.

MS. HEATH: I think that's a strength that women tend toward. I think it's wrong to apply –

MS. ERBE: Why?

MS. HEATH: – sort of gender stereotypes universally. But absolutely, I think women are more relational. I think we're more collaborative in business, HR consultants –

MS. ERBE: Why – but – wait a minute – why is that – is that because of testosterone?

MS. HEATH: I think it's an innate – I think it's a natural difference –

MS. ERBE: Man are – go for the jugular.

MS. SOSA: But in this case, I differ from you. In this case, they actually show that they actually – they made the difference, that men were fighting with each other. They were unable to come together, to come with a sensible compromise that people could take seriously. And where the women who were meeting for a year or more from both parties that establish an agenda every time they met to come together for common causes and purposes that were able to overcome the partisanship that the Congress is living in right now.

MS. BEYER: And you know, to your point about the qualities of leadership, there's a firm called Zenger Folkman that has done a study of the 16 criteria for a really fantastic leadership. And they looked at 350 leaders. This wasn't meant to be a gender study, but what they found was, amazingly, they did a very hard analysis of these 350 individuals. And the women trumped the men in 12 of the 16 criteria, and in some cases, those criteria were very much criteria that we would intuitively associate with men. Two of those were initiating a response to a situation and another one was making sure you follow through to the end game and success.

Women actually were better in those two criteria, and that's what we saw in Congress.

MS. ERBE: But why is – I don't mean to pin this on you, guys, but you are Republicans, so explain to us where did this –

MS. HEATH: Nonpartisan.

MS. ERBE: Nonpartisan, OK.

MS. HEATH: Conservatives.

MS. ERBE: Conservatives.

MS. HEATH: That's better.

MS. ERBE: But where did this all come from? I mean, everybody points to Ted Cruz and – some of the House Republicans, the Tea Party, of course. But why were 30 – essentially 30 guys in the House able to hold the rest of Congress hostage. Was it because they were being these right wing political action funds were telling them if you don't hold the line on this tell the line, we are going to fund a more conservative candidate in your primary and you'll get knocked out of the House?

MS. SHAH: Look, there's some element of that. And I think you're right. I think there is some of we're worried about our reelection, but there is a fair amount – there is the segment in the House that really believes in this. They really saw this is their last stand, their last opportunity to do something to "Obamacare," which they thought was very detrimental and I think will be in many ways. We see that the society is not really ready for "Obamacare" in many ways, with its launch came missed deadlines and failures and glitches with the opening of the exchanges right in the middle of this shutdown. And I think what's happening here is that, you know, these are people who just really stood for what they believed it. And how it transpires is just a totally different –

MS. HEATH: So conservatives in the House were united in their opposition to "Obamacare." And January 1st is when many of the subsidies and tax credits and other mechanisms and exchanges go live. So the urgency came from the implementation of "Obamacare." I wish the Republicans had been paying bigger attention to "Obamacare" before such a late 11th hour. They should have been talking about it in 2012 because it should have been a bigger issue in the 2012 elections. But instead, we came to this last hour where, despite being united policy wise, they were divided in their tactics.

MS. ERBE: But tell me about – and your – the Independent Women's Forum advised –

MS. HEATH: Well, we have the Independent Women's Voice, which is our 501(c)(4) affiliate. And we were trying to come up with tactics and strategies to suggest to conservative members of Congress to pursue to undo "Obamacare" without pursuing necessarily a defunding strategy. We understand that there are good intentions behind that tactic, but it was not doable.

MS. ERBE: But I mean, is that because – I got to ask you – because you're a conservative women's group that you were telling them –

MS. HEATH: We're a sensible conservative group. And I think it has less to do with gender.

MS. SOSA: No, the other thing is a fact is 2012 elections, "Obamacare" was on the table. And when President Obama got reelected overwhelmingly, there was a clear message that the majority of the country supported "Obamacare."

MS. HEATH: That's false.

MS. SOSA: And that was the deficit. That was the deficit in which the Republicans have been working on and the whole fantasy that we are saving the United States from this horrible policy is not proving true. The polls do not show that. None of the polls show the same data. Certainly the polls related to the shutdown, people felt much strongly about the government functioning, that shutting down the government to save the world from "Obamacare."

MS. BEYER: But to get back to the women having saved the day – that we can all agree on – you know, this did not come in a vacuum. These women got together – I had lunch with Kirsten Gillibrand last week, and she said to me if we only had 51 in the Senate. And I thought, as Democrat, she must have been talking about Democrats. She said, no, I mean 51 women. (Laughter.) I was like, OK.

MS. SHAH: But so much of what Congress has done in the many, many years that I've watched is, gosh, 11th hour, 11th hour covering. And that's what they were up against.

MS. HEATH: I think we should point out, too, that there were some men in Congress working towards a compromise as well. Ultimately, it came from the Senate and driven by some very important female numbers, but there we men like Senator Vitter and Representative DeSantis who were recommending why don't we attach to a budget or a debt ceiling increase a requirement that members of Congress buy their health insurance in the exchange just like the rest of Americans who have to buy their insurance in the exchange? I thought that was a very important issue. Our polling showed that 92 percent of Americans think it's unfair that Congress wants a special exemption. I mean, from a policy and optic standpoint, if Congress passes a law that they want no part of personally, what does that say about "Obamacare?" I think it's pretty condemning.

MS. BEYER: But also recognizes it's a law, not a bill, which –

MS. HEATH: It is a law, absolutely.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe or @tothecontrary. From women senators to the Yellen Effect.

Janet Yellen will become the first woman to serve as Federal Reserve chair after her presumed confirmation by the U.S. Senate probably next month. For aspiring female economists, she could be an important role model. Men outnumber women three to one as economics majors across the country. It's not due to lack of ability or that men are better at math.

According to Bloomberg News, women are more likely to become discouraged by bad grades in introductory courses. Men get bad grades, too, but they press on.

So the question is will the so-called Yellen Effect encourage young women to stay in the field and could such a gifted female economist make them consider a career in one of the few fields where women are still hard to find?

So do you think once she's confirmed that young women interested in economics will stay the course instead of falling out as data show they do?

MS. SOSA: Well, I hope so. I mean, definitely having such a powerful woman who has an incredible record and who was so deserving of the job – I mean, this woman has been, you know, working at this for so many years, it could be – hopefully will be a positive force. But there're so many other factors, the support system that women need as they're going through a really difficult career. I mean, studying economics, as someone that didn't do it, well, at least I tried to do it, is really hard. Many of the jobs when they, you know, go and apply, sometimes they're only female. So it's a lot of challenges that need to be overcome. But hopefully I know women are capable. Now, there's a role model, so hopefully, we will see a difference.

MS. ERBE: Isn't it interesting about how – I find it fascinating that women students will take bad grades and say, OK, this is not for me and drop out, whereas the men are like, who cares, and they plug on. And that's very similar, by the way, I did some reporting on the Chinese system of education. That's – it's based very much on memorization, memorization, memorization. And it's supposed to teach you a life lesson that nobody gets it right at first. You're supposed to fail and you're supposed to overcome adversity. Why don't we teach our – and that's how they teach them to go through life. Why don't we teach our young women that about economics?

MS. BEYER: And it's funny because that is the way a lot of European countries see America, that we're the land of redemption. You know, that you have a résumé of a senator and oh, his first company failed or he lived out of a car and, you know, that's like our magic glory that he really failed and he really came back. And I hope that women

will begin to buy into that resilience. I think one of the reasons that they don't is that in the case of Janet Yellen, for example, when you saw the social media respond when it was then Summers or Yellen, and you read all the comments, the comments, well, you know, I think she sounds fine, but she doesn't have the virility that's required to do the job. And she doesn't have enough testosterone. And people might not accept her because she's not in their comfort zone. You know, the great thing about social media is you hear what they're actually thinking. And you know, there're people who don't realize they're not supposed to be saying these things. And I think that seeing is believing. You know, once you start seeing women in these roles, then, you know, you don't slide off that pole. You have adversity, yes, but you know someone has made it before and you're going to try.

MS. HEATH: I remember as a child Sally Ride being the first woman astronaut to really be well known and an amazing woman, super, incredibly smart. And that was important to me. I played a childhood game made by Mattel called We Girls Can Do Anything. And I've really grown up believing that. I think my generation of women doesn't take a victimhood mentality. We believe we're in control of our own destiny. But it does have something to do with confidence, as you mentioned the bad grades.

I saw another study where women and men were presented with a test. And the test giver said you may have heard that women score more poorly on some mathematics test. This test, that is not the case. With this test, that is not true. Was it a different test? No. They simply told women ahead of time that women are scoring just as well as men on this test and that gave – apparently it gave the test takers some confidence.

MS. ERBE: Amazing, amazing.

MS. SHAH: Women have to help women. And I think that's got to be true of everything. There're so many STEM programs coming up across the nation. More women are encouraged to become programmers and coders, so why not become economists. Janet Yellen is going to be a great, I think, role model. I don't fully agree with her views of how to run that Fed, but I'll tell you, I think it's going to be a good thing. And Hillary Clinton, again, somebody who's not on my side of the aisle, but I can say fully she's someone who was an inspiration. I think Janet will also be the same.

MS. ERBE: What about Christine Lagarde, I mean, she's been at the IMF now for a while. And she's – she – you know, unlike Yellen, she's a French fashionista and she's – I mean, she is just tough. Yellen seems like a really nice person you might – I hate to say it – be able to push around a little bit. But Lagarde –

(Cross talk.)

MS. SOSA: Of Yellen, they say exactly the opposite that she looks really calm and when the moment comes, she's the strongest person in the room and willing to say things nobody else is willing to say. And she has an impeccable record.

MS. ERBE: But I'm just saying about Lagarde, have young women been influenced by her? Because she has talked publicly about being a women and she said she had to grit her teeth sometimes and put up with mistreatment, but she didn't let it set her back.

MS. BEYER: But let me tell you what's just as important as having the women see that women can do is having the men see that women can do it. And there's no better woman in the world of finance than Christine Lagarde on that score. I have been to Davos the last four years, the World Economic Forum, and Christine Lagarde is fabulous. And they listen to everything she says. The room goes hushed when she starts to speak. And it's just – it's a sea of men at the World Economic Forum. And she has great respect, great credibility, and just this year for the first time, she started talking about gender and saying, you know, you all have got to start putting more women on your boards because you need a diversity of opinion. And studies like those at Credit Suisse, at Pepperdine, at Bain, you know, not feminist organizations, have, you know, told you objectively that if you have this diversity, your leadership will be more profitable.

MS. ERBE: All right. Behind the headlines – and thank you for that, Megan – pioneering women of Texas. We interviewed former Republican Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison about her new book “Unflinching Courage.” But we also wanted to point out one major Texas newspaper this week bemoaned her absence from the Senate and her replacement, Republican Ted Cruz, who led the Tea Party driven shutdown. Back to her book, which examines the lives of important women in Texas history, she says their spirits live on in Texas today.

(Begin video segment.)

SEN. KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON (R-TX): These were 19th century Texas women who put their stamp on Texas because they were genteel southern girls who had grown up in luxury. And they came to Texas with their husbands generally to seek the land, the free land that was given to people who would be willing to settle it. That was what drew the early settlers. And they faced these harsh conditions for which they were not prepared, but they faced these conditions with unflinching courage.

MS. ERBE: Women such as Jane Long and Margaret Houston played a key albeit underappreciated role in shaping Texas. Before becoming a state, Texas was an independent nation.

SEN. HUTCHISON: Being a republic certainly has made Texas unique. We're the only state that came into the nation as a nation.

Part of the pioneering spirit is independence. And I think that that is a strain that runs through Texas. I think you see it in a lot of the political figures that have come out of Texas – Barbara Jordan, Ann Richards, myself, but also the present two senators.

MS. ERBE: Her praise is nonpartisan. The two current senators Hutchison refers to are Republicans. Barbara Jordan, a pioneer in civil rights and a member of the House of Representatives and Ann Richards, the second female governor of Texas were both Democrats.

Hutchison was acclaimed while in the Senate for her ability to work across party lines. As our conversation moved from her book on Texas history back to the present day, Hutchison bemoaned the current divisive climate in Washington.

SEN. HUTCHISON: It's very divided and you don't see as much bipartisanship as when I first was in the Senate. That's for sure. But I do think that people are looking for more bipartisanship because that's how you get things done. You got a Republican House, a Democratic Senate. You're not going to really make progress if you don't have some cooperation.

MS. ERBE: Former Maine Republican Senator Olympia Snowe recently told *To the Contrary* she believes open primaries could be one cure for extreme partisanship. Hutchison supports the idea.

SEN. HUTCHISON: I think looking at our primaries system would make a difference in the kind of candidates that would come forward. I won my first election in an open primary because it was a special election. A lot of the states have special elections that are more open like that. And I think it's worked fine. So I think looking at our election and electoral system, certainly, is one way that we could affect the kind of candidates that come forward that would have a significant impact on the partisanship.

MS. ERBE: One of the keys to fixing Washington, Hutchison says, is ensuring the continued inclusion of women. She cites Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political historian who visited the U.S. in the 18th century and wrote "Democracy in America."

SEN. HUTCHISON: He wrote about the superiority of American women. He saw it back then that they were people that spoke their minds and the men listened to them. It was a respect that he thought was phenomenal. And he said it was the most important reason that he thought the success of democracy in America, even though women couldn't vote at the time, could be attributed. Because they were an equal part of society and they were making a mark. And I wanted that to be a part of our history.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So Hadley, is – are women left out of the history books and what impact will her book have on, you know, bringing credit to the women of Texas who held – you know – started the state?

MS. HEATH: I'm very excited about her book and as she pointed out, de Tocqueville wrote about American women and democracy in America. Even before we could vote, we were very influential on the culture in the United States. We know that

culture and politics are very tied. We know the policy is very tied to who we elect and how. But absolutely, I'm excited to see highlighting – and another great American woman in history, the Mother of Thanksgiving, Sarah Josepha Hale, didn't even believe in giving women the right to vote, but she was influential nonetheless as sort of an early feminist.

MS. ERBE: Dolley Madison, don't forget the ladies, right?

MS. BEYER: Yeah.

MS. SOSA: Well, I mean, I have to say it's an interesting take on – Texas history is more complex than that, but let's give credit to that particular community in that particular time. I think the bigger picture here –

MS. ERBE: Why, what's your take?

MS. SOSA: Well, because, you know, there were Latinos, you know, Mexicans, you know, on Texas before it was invaded. I mean they didn't start Texas. They took over Texas and you know, it's a complicated story. And there's a lot of Latinas that probably should be in that book that I'm sure are not.

But that's OK. You know, there's a piece of that story that she's telling and she obviously is a woman that have dedicated her life to public service and made a very strong point, an important point about how there's a need to have more women in Congress, that they make a difference.

MS. ERBE: And – you know – she dropped out. She didn't run again because she knew Ted Cruz was going to win the primary. And look what happened as a result. You know, you could pin on him at least the Senate's role in letting the government shutdown.

MS. SHAH: It was a one-man show, OK, let's put it that way.

MS. ERBE: But would open primaries have – could she have won an open primary in Texas?

MS. SHAH: I believe Kay Bailey could have and I think that's because she's a force. She's someone who's missed right now, as you noted. She's someone who was able to bring people together. And that is really what's lacking right now. And people are looking for that right now. They're desperately seeking for it. And I think she's someone who appealed to a lot of Texans. And of course, Republicans are of different tribes. You know, you got your northeastern Republicans and you got your southern. But I think she was one that appealed to many different types.

MS. HEATH: If I could recommend another solution to this problem, too, besides open primaries, it's an idea. Another idea is federalism. You know, we see how

Texas takes a lot of pride in their independence and every state has a unique history of how it was made. And every state has a unique political flavor. And I think the solution there is to give states more control over how programs are executed. If Massachusetts wants Romney Care, let them have it. Texas clearly doesn't want "Obamacare" or they wouldn't have sent Ted Cruz to Washington.

MS. ERBE: And your thoughts about the open primaries.

MS. BEYER: Well, you know, we have those in Virginia and I think they're much better. I do. The thing I wanted to say about this –

MS. ERBE: But we also have divided government in Virginia in that, you know, there's a conservative Senate. There was – the guy running for governor right now from the Republican Party, Ken Cuccinelli, tried to shutdown the Virginia government over defunding Planned Parenthood, so why are you saying they work better?

MS. BEYER: Well, that'd be perfectly fake – I wouldn't take what's happening in Virginia right now necessarily as, you know, something that would endorse the idea of open primaries. But what I'm saying is in a case like Kay Bailey Hutchison, if you had an open primary, you could have people cross over and I know many a Democrat who would have crossed over for her. In fact, she's a very good friend of Hillary Clinton. And it is by virtue of their co-partnership with Vital Voices, which is this wonderful NGO that does many wonderful things around the world and development helping women, you know, every single year, they come together and have an enduring friendship beyond their roles as senators. So I think that an open primary would have worked very well in Texas.

MS. SHAH: Well, from the strategist's standpoint, I can tell you they're fun to game, but I think, again, you make a great point is that we needed somebody like that. We need somebody who can cross party lines and I'm just happy for Senator Collins, again, I have to plug that. She's just – she's really great for coming across and being the person the Democrats approached first. We really need that right now.

MS. ERBE: And what about will open primaries help diversity, do you think?

MS. SOSA: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Although, I mean, I would say, you know, the gerrymandering issue is very central to the issue of diversity and is being discussed very much as to why – how the Tea Party have had so much control over the House of Representatives because these members really come from districts that are so heavily Republican that they can say all these crazy things. They can follow strategies that are not supported by the majority of the country. And they still are very strongly supported by their constituents in the district. So open primaries, I would imagine it could be helpful. But more important, I think redistricting in a way that reflects the society at large and not the interests of the political parties, which would be even better.

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

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