



MYRNA MELGAR

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

**SUPERVISOR MELGAR AND SAN FRANCISCO WOMEN’S POLITICAL
COMMITTEE ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
LIMITED SPEAKING TIME-STUDY**

*SFWPC analyzed the first week of March looking at men minutes vs. women minutes spoken
on the Board of Supervisors*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA— Supervisor Melgar in partnership with the San Francisco Women’s Political Committee (SFWPC) announced the results of their analysis for the limited speaking time-study in the first week of March.

In summary, the study found that there are a number of areas for improvement when it comes to gender equity on the Board of Supervisors, namely that men speak longer on average in comparison to their women colleagues. In addition, on average, men interrupt women during meetings - including Supervisors, City staff, and public commenters - more frequently than they interrupt men in the same roles.

In addition to the findings of the time study, SFWPC noted that during the time of the study committee assignments were not distributed equally when analyzed from a gender perspective. SFWPC found that if all committee assigned seats were distributed equally, each Supervisor would have 2 committee seats. On Average men have 2.4 seats while women have 1.5.

Methodology: SFWPC analyzed Supervisor meetings the first five business days of the month -- Monday, March 1st to Friday, March 5th. During this time period, SFWPC reviewed the following meetings: Rules Committee, Land Use and Transportation Committee, the regular Board of Supervisors meeting, Budget and Finance Committee, Budget and Appropriations Committee, and Government Audit and Oversight Committee. In total, over 11 hours of meetings were audited for the time period analyzed.

Facilitation: When counting time, the role of the President of the Board and or Chair of a Committee would not be counted if the individual Supervisor used the time spoken to guide the meeting forward without influencing the conversation. Because the President of the Board and the Chair of the Committee operate as facilitators, their time was only counted when they themselves used their time to influence the conversation or spoke in support or opposition of an item.

Men Speaking Time vs. Women Speaking Time: Since women are underrepresented on the Board of Supervisors currently (4 women and 7 men), speaking time for the four women Supervisors should average about 36.4% of total speaking time during Board and Committee meetings. Although men make up 63.6% of the Board, across the week they accounted for 77.9% of speaking time in committee and the Board of Supervisors combined. Women spoke on average 22.09% throughout the week, well below the 36.4% speaking time they should be allotted.

“This study was done by women, during Women’s Herstory Month, to really call attention to women’s lived experience on the Board of Supervisors. Although I got a small number of individuals who didn’t understand the importance of this study - on the whole - women and the space we take or don’t impact our daily lives. Even on the Board of Supervisors, we see that on average men over spoke and women under spoke in proportion to their representation on the Board,” said Supervisor Melgar.

The Role of Committee Assignments in Gender Equity on the Board: Representation of gender on Board committees also contributed and often exacerbated, the underrepresentation of women’s time to speak. Budget and Finance is composed of all men while Budget and Appropriations women make up only 20% of the committee. Committee assignments being distributed inequitably put women at a speaking disadvantage. Committees are where most of the Board’s work happens, under-representation here limits women’s ability to participate in the legislative process compared to the men supervisors.

“We were thrilled to participate in this landmark study. SFWPC believes that equal and proportional representation in our city and across our Board committees is essential to racial and gender equity and that achieving this equity is only possible by making very intentional decisions. There are currently only 4 women Supervisors out of the 11 total Supervisors, which is not reflective of the City’s demographics.” Said SFWPC Co-President Nadia Rahman, “given this reality, an intentional effort should be made by each and every Supervisor to ensure equitable representation for the women on the Board. In the future, we recommend factoring in gender representation when making Committee assignments -- including adding women to the Budget and Finance and Budget and Appropriations Committee as these two committees currently are under-representing women on the Board. Through this study, we have identified tangible issues of gender inequity on the Board that need to be addressed.”

Rate of Interruptions: SFWPC found that men interrupt more regardless of gender, but interrupt women at an ever-greater rate, once the gender of the party interrupted is factored in. Men disproportionately interrupted staff (Clerks of the Board, Departmental Staff, and whoever else has presented at Board meetings) and Supervisors during meetings, 84.5% compared to women at 15.5%.

An interruption was defined as when a member of the Board of Supervisors other than the President of the Board or Chair of a Committee speaks without permission or out of turn. Of total interruptions they drove, men interrupted women 56.9% of the time compared to interrupting men 43.1% of the time. Women interrupted men 60% of the time compared to interrupting other women 40% of the time.

Supervisor Melgar emphasized, “I implore my colleagues - men and women alike to self-reflect on the space and time used and take this opportunity to understand how each of us

individually - women included - internalize and externalize our interactions. Let's collectively work together to change behavior.”

SFWPC will share the full report and findings from the weeklong study in April 2021.

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