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It Takes a Latina Candidate

Melissa Guzman
Illinois Wesleyan University

Kathleen Montgomery, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral Presentation O1.3

IT TAKES A LATINA CANDIDATE

Melissa Guzman and Kathleen Montgomery*
Political Science Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

In the United States, women and racial minorities continue to face serious obstacles to entering elected office, particularly above the local level. This has negative consequences for democratic participation and legitimacy and may affect the substantive representation of issues that concern women, particularly women of color. Studies show that eligible women often list the following as deterrents from running for office: low political confidence, perceived risks associated with running, a lack of support, and a lack of interest in running for higher office. Do Latina candidates, as members of an underrepresented gender and a marginalized racial minority, face unique challenges when compared to non-minority women or Latino males? This study builds on the research on women and Latinos in politics and attempts to garner an in-depth understanding of the Latina candidate's experience through interviews with Latina elected officials at various levels of government in Illinois and uses survey responses from Latino men and non-Latina women elected officials in the state for comparison. This study finds that support and recognition from another elected official is crucial in encouraging Latina women to run for office, indicating that political gatekeepers are one of the largest obstacles Latinas face as candidates.