**Are Women Better at Compromising and Collaborating?**

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*Women make up less than 20 percent of Congress, yet they have emerged from the budget standoff as the real team players in Washington. According to a front-page article this week, a small group of female senators were the leaders in a bipartisan effort that paved the way to end the government shutdown and raise the debt ceiling.*

*Are women better at compromising and collaborating?*

In [“Senate Women Lead in Effort to Find Accord,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/15/us/senate-women-lead-in-effort-to-find-accord.html) Jonathan Weisman and Jennifer Steinhauer write about five female senators who became the driving forces to shape a negotiated settlement.

As the government shutdown dragged on, Senator Susan Collins of Maine was spending another weekend on Capitol Hill, staring at C-Span on her Senate office television as one colleague after another came to the floor to rail about the shuttered government.

Frustrated with the lack of progress, Ms. Collins, a Republican, two Saturdays ago quickly zipped out a three-point plan that she thought both parties could live with, marched to the Senate floor and dared her colleagues to come up with something better. A few days later, two other Republican female senators eagerly signed on — Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who overcame the Tea Party to win re-election in 2010, and Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, who benefited from the Tea Party wave.

Together the three women started a bipartisan group whose negotiating framework formed the centerpiece of a tentative Senate deal nearing completion Monday to reopen the federal government and avert a disastrous default.

“Before I went to the Senate floor, no one was presenting any way out,” Ms. Collins said. “I think what our group did was pave the way, and I’m really happy about that.”

In a Senate still dominated by men, women on both sides of the partisan divide proved to be the driving forces that shaped a negotiated settlement. The three Republican women put aside threats from the right to advance the interests of their shutdown-weary states and asserted their own political independence.

**Students:** Read the entire article, then tell us …

* Are women better at compromising and collaborating?
* Do women sometimes offer a different type of leadership than men? Explain.
* Do you think it is important for voters to elect more women to Congress?
* Some people might argue that compromise shows weakness. Would you agree? Do you think the ability to compromise and collaborate is important — particularly for members of Congress? Why?
* Have you noticed that women handle conflict differently than men in your own life? Explain.