

The Lioness Voter
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There is a reason why the lioness is one of the animal kingdom's most formidable creatures. She will defend her young with extraordinary ferocity. To the 2004 presidential candidates, I have three words of advice: Remember the lioness.

For thirty years, I have been studying and communicating with America's women, for most of that period working both as an executive and publisher of national women's magazines and as a partner with my husband to raise two children.

Perhaps the most extraordinary development in that period is the transformation that I and millions of other women in this country have undergone since the 9/11 attacks. Some have described it as the conversion of "soccer moms" to "security moms." I call it the Lioness Factor.

Before the terrorists struck this country three years ago, many women like me took the physical security of our families and communities pretty much for granted. While we always worried about our kids' safety on playgrounds, at and after school and while driving, most of the dangers they faced were ones we could – and did – do something about.

Suddenly when thousands of people – some who were my neighbors and many complete strangers -- were senselessly murdered, it affected us in a primal way. A woman's fear that everything we love could be snuffed out with equally unpredictable suddenness brings out the protective lioness in all of us.

Then came the various alerts, shifting again and again from a frightening status designated yellow to an even more scary one dubbed orange. It is hard to say which is more infuriating: Not knowing what form the next threat will take or feeling there is little we can do to defend our loved ones against it.

The lioness in me rebelled against these twin frustrations. I decided to do something about it by founding www.FamilySecurityMatters.com – an organization and on-line publication devoted to informing women about all issues related to national security. Family Security Matters' special focus is on offering our constituency practical steps that can make our families and communities safer and more secure.

One of the specific steps we are encouraging security moms to take is to enlist in a campaign called DivestTerror.org. It is empowering all Americans to contribute to the financial front of the war on terror by divesting stock they hold – or that others hold in

their name – in companies that do business with terrorist-sponsoring Iran, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

Few of us have any idea how much of our money is invested in such companies. A recent study available at DivestTerror.org reveals, however, that Americans hold roughly \$200 billion in portfolio via their public pension systems alone!

Is it illegal to make such investments? No. Could we use the leverage they represent to demand that companies stop partnering with governments that threaten our security? Absolutely.

The application of such 21st Century “woman power” should not be limited to state and local public pension systems. Collectively, we can also target college and university endowments, life insurance annuities, 401K’s and, in many cases, our personal portfolios. Twenty years ago, such a divestment campaign brought an end to the racist apartheid policies of South Africa – and, ultimately, to the government that imposed them. Today, it is the most powerful single thing Americans, female and male alike, can do to help defeat terror.

The presidential candidates and other politicians appreciate the importance of women voters. We are 52% of the electorate and by some estimates make up 65% of undecided voters. In focus groups of such women recently conducted by Family Security Matters in the swing-state of Ohio, the preeminent question participants wanted to ask the candidates was: “What are you doing to keep my kids safe from terrorists?”

Terrorists are feared because, like the lioness, they value the life of something else more than their own. But they have met their match. America’s millions of human lionesses will do whatever it takes to protect their families and communities – from divesting terror to electing a President who will join them in serving notice on the terrorist-sponsoring states and their business partners: We will not allow you to use our money to threaten our lives.

Watch us roar.