Dear Dr. Morgan & Friends:

Greetings to all the talented and capable women from the Women's Committee of the American Studies Association on the occasion of your Annual Women's Breakfast. Thank you for the invitation to share this special event. I applaud your hard work on the interdisciplinary study of American culture and history, most especially with regard to the contributions of women to our great nation.

Recently we celebrated Women's Equity Day. The 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote became part of our Constitution on August 26, 1920. Like you, I honor all the courageous women who have made a difference. Women's roles in history are often overlooked and undervalued. But we have shaped, and continue to shape, society – not only in terms of battles fought and won – but through great social movements.

Women also won an important victory when USHHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius adopted recommendations from the Institute of Medicine to expand the preventive healthcare available to women without copayments or deductibles. These guidelines assure that women of all ages will receive, at no cost, an annual women's health exam, and requires all health plans to cover comprehensive women's preventive care and screenings. I was successful in placing this initiative in the new Affordable Care Act. Prior to this, insurance companies decided what preventive services were covered for women. We are one step closer to ending the era when simply being a woman is treated as a pre-existing condition.

On a more personal note, it was great honor for me to join Senator Margaret Chase Smith in the history books this year as the longest serving woman Senator. Growing up in my ethnic neighborhood in Baltimore, I never dreamed of becoming a U.S. Senator. Only in America would my story have been possible. Only in America do we have this incredible right to speak your mind. I took on City Hall to stop a road from destroying Baltimore's ethnic and black home ownership neighborhoods. In other countries they put protesters in jail. In America, they put you in public office!

Thank you for all you do every day to keep the dream of America alive for all our daughters. Remember every one can make a difference, but together we can make change.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator