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We disagree, but congratulations

By Janet L. Holmgren

I want to congratulate Gov. Sarah Palin on her nomination as a candidate for vice president of the United States. As a woman leader, I welcome her commitment to civic leadership. As a mother, I share her commitment to children and family. While I strongly disagree with many of her stated positions — ranging from her views on the environment to reproductive rights — I profoundly hope that we agree on the importance of education as a critical avenue in providing opportunity for our children and building the future of our society.

As an educator and president of one of the nation's oldest and most distinguished women's colleges, I applaud the perseverance she showed in pursuing higher education. As many Americans do, she attended several higher education institutions before earning her bachelor's degree. Her determination to complete her undergraduate degree reflects, I hope, the importance she attaches to educational achievement.

Her children deserve a chance to enjoy the same educational opportunities that she did. Should she become vice president, I hope her demonstrated perseverance will

ensure that women and men across this country have access to high-quality education that allows them to make informed choices about their lives and the world around them.

At Mills College, we believe that education provides a vital foundation for women as they participate in the business and political worlds, serve as community and workforce leaders, and raise their sons and daughters. Mills works hard to provide access to high-quality education. Our students range in age from 17 to 93, and 32 percent are self-identified as students of color.

I hope that, after his service in the military, Palin will encourage her son Track to take advantage of the GI Bill to pursue higher education. Her daughter Bristol, especially, should be encouraged to continue on to college so that she will be better able to foster her child's potential. I extend to Bristol, and later to Palin's daughters Willow and Piper, the opportunity to apply to Mills College or other institutions to pursue their dreams and strengthen their opportunities as women and future mothers.

Holmgren is president of Mills College in Oakland.