
BRINGING MORE WOMEN INTO PUBLIC OFFICE

ELECTED WOMEN ORGANIZE

Statewide Associations

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THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
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CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WOMAN AND POLITICS

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INTRODUCTION

In the decade from 1975 to 1985, women moved into public officeholding positions in increasing numbers. While still a small proportion of all officeholders, women in elected office more than doubled their numbers within ten years, growing from 4% of elected officeholders in 1975 to about 10% in 1985¹.

As more women entered public office, they began to form their own organizations geared toward their needs as female officeholders. Organizations of women officials proliferated in the decade from 1975 to 1985. Building ties across party lines, women came together in these groups to deal with being the "only" or the "first" women in their positions, to teach each other, to encourage each other, and to explore the implications of being women in a domain long dominated by men.

Among the most successful organizations to develop are statewide associations of elected women. By design, these groups are cross-jurisdictional and bipartisan, bringing together women officeholders from different levels of government and from different political parties within a particular state.

¹The 10% figure is an estimate, based on precise counts of women serving in county through congressional offices and an estimate of the number of women serving in municipal offices. The data are from the National Information Bank on Women in Public Office (NIB), a service of the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP). Through NIB, CAWP keeps a count of the numbers of women serving in federal, statewide, state legislative, county, and municipal offices in all fifty states. The data do not include school board members, clerks, judges, or law enforcement officers.

The development of statewide associations parallels women's increased entry into public office. The first statewide association of elected women came into being in 1974 when elected women in California decided to form CEWAER, the California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research. Sacramento Mayor Anne Rudin, a founding member and past president of CEWAER, describes how the need for an organization arose: "The number of elected women was gradually growing, but we felt that our power and effectiveness were greatly diluted. A statewide organization was very appealing."²

Since the founding of CEWAER in 1974, statewide associations of elected women have developed in several states. In 1984, twelve states had statewide associations or the foundations for such groups. There were well-established groups in California, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington; newer groups in South Carolina and Tennessee; the beginnings of groups in Illinois and New York; and a group in Texas begun in 1978 and revived in 1984.

In 1978, the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) began studying and consulting with organizations of women officials, including but not limited to statewide associations of elected women. In 1979, CAWP published Women's Organizations in the Public Service: Toward Agenda Setting, a report examining a variety of

²California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research, Commemorative Journal/1984 (Los Angeles, 1984).

organizations of women in politics and government.³ Commenting on the progress made in the 1970s, the report noted, "In 1970 there was hardly a formal or informal grouping of women in government; by 1980 most women in government will have some organization they can join to meet with others like themselves."⁴ In 1980, CAWP sponsored a conference for leaders of organizations of women officials; at the conference, representatives of almost forty groups exchanged information about their organizations and discussed solutions to common problems.⁵ To facilitate continued communication, CAWP began publishing News & Notes, a newsletter that includes information about organizations of women officials.⁶

In the years since the original 1980 conference, elected women's statewide associations in particular have grown in number and influence. In September 1984, the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) convened a meeting of leaders from these associations of women officeholders. The meeting was held in New Jersey at the

³Diane Rothbard Margolis, Women's Organizations in the Public Service: Toward Agenda Setting (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, 1979).

⁴Ibid., p. 1.

⁵For more information about the 1980 conference, see Diane Rothbard Margolis, Leaders of Organizations of Women Public Officials: Report from a Conference (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, 1981).

⁶The newsletter is now issued three times a year as part of CAWP's Subscriber Information Services (S.I.S.) program, and its subject matter has been expanded to include a broad range of items about women in politics.

Eagleton Institute of Politics of Rutgers University. Nineteen women from eleven states attended, representing associations at all stages of development.⁷

One of the goals of the 1984 meeting was to give leaders of this particular blossoming form of organization the kind of opportunity welcomed by leaders at the earlier meeting--the opportunity to exchange information and ideas about their organizations.

Another purpose for convening the 1984 meeting was to share CAWP's recent research findings with a most appropriate audience. In 1983, CAWP completed an extensive study comparing factors affecting women's and men's entry into public office.⁸ A primary finding was that women's support of each other can be vitally important in helping women to win elective offices or receive high-level political appointments. Statewide elected women's associations are one vehicle for women seeking the encouragement and knowledge required to win elections or advance from one office to another. One of the reports

⁷An appendix to this report lists the meeting participants.

⁸The research project, funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation, resulted in a seven-report series entitled "Bringing More Women into Public Office." The seven reports in the series are as follows:

Carroll, Susan J., and Barbara Geiger-Parker. Women Appointed to State Government: A Comparison with All State Appointees.

Carroll, Susan J., and Barbara Geiger-Parker. Women Appointed to the Carter Administration: A Comparison with Men.

Carroll, Susan J., and Wendy S. Strimling. Women's Routes to Elective Office: A Comparison with Men's.

Kleeman, Katherine E. Women's PACs.

Stanwick, Kathy A., Getting Women Appointed: New Jersey's Bipartisan Coalition.

Stanwick, Kathy A., Political Women Tell What It Takes.

Stanwick, Kathy A., and Katherine E. Kleeman. Women Make A Difference

The reports are available from the Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 08901, (201) 828-2210.

resulting from CAWP's research concluded: "These associations all share the goals of encouraging other women to enter political life and of encouraging their own members to seek higher office....[E]ven without the ways and means to achieve some of their goals, the associations play a critical role for individual women members."⁹ CAWP's research also documented that many women officeholders -- from over 10% of local council members to over 40% of state legislators -- belong to some type of association of women officeholders.¹⁰

With funding from the Charles H. Revson Foundation to disseminate the research findings, CAWP convened the 1984 meeting for leaders of statewide associations of elected women. The meeting provided a wealth of information--why these organizations exist; how they are organized; what they do; the problems they face. This report summarizes information from the session. Section 1 examines the purposes of statewide associations of elected women. Section 2 discusses the essential building blocks for establishing such associations. Section 3 describes their programs. Running throughout the discussion of statewide associations is CAWP's research finding put into practice: in purpose, organization, and program, statewide associations of elected women are actively supporting women's entrance into politics and their advancement within the political system.

⁹Stanwick, Kathy A. Political Women Tell What It Takes, p. 22.

¹⁰Carroll, Susan J. and Wendy S. Strimling. Women's Routes to Elective Office: A Comparison with Men's, p. 89.

Section 1

PURPOSE: DEFINING THE NEED

"Is this just an extra organization for which none of us has the time, or is it a needed organization?" Mary Dunkel, 1984 president of the Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association (PEWA), posed this question at the outset of CAWP's two-day meeting of leaders of statewide associations of elected women. During the course of the meeting, the answer emerged: Statewide associations help women officeholders cope with the unique problems and concerns common to women in politics.

By virtue of being women in positions traditionally occupied by men, female officials face similar challenges and express similar needs. To meet these needs, women officeholders in several states have formed bipartisan, cross-jurisdictional organizations for women officials. These statewide groups help build women's political confidence and encourage their advancement in politics. Through elected women's associations, female officials help each other, not simply to make a smoother adjustment into the political world as defined by men, but also to retain whatever unique perspectives they bring to politics as women. Associations achieve these ends by creating an atmosphere of support, strengthening informal networks, and providing political education.

Women Supporting Women

One of the most important benefits of belonging to an elected women's association is the encouragement and moral support members receive from each other. No one activity fulfills this purpose.

Rather, the very structure of such associations--the decision not to take stands on issues, not to endorse candidates, and not to exclude any woman official no matter what her party or level of office--results in a safe, supportive, and noncompetitive atmosphere in which elected women explore their own strengths and weaknesses, learn from each other's experiences, and receive personal encouragement to set their sights higher.

The oldest statewide association of elected women, the California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research (CEWAER), was founded in 1974 when the relatively few women who held office at that time in California recognized their need to come together to give each other support. Sacramento Mayor Anne Rudin, one of the founding members of CEWAER and its president from 1976 to 1977, described the first few meetings of the group:

During our first sessions there was a lot of sharing of experiences and we found that our situations and problems were similar. All of us were "first" or "only" women to serve on our governing bodies. We all had experienced the exclusion many women felt when they invaded a male domain. We all had had the same obstacles to overcome and were facing the same social and political barriers, both in the process of getting elected and in our roles as elected officials. We felt that we could help ourselves and others by offering mutual support through networking and providing role models and education for women in both issues and practical politics.¹¹

Another CEWAER past president, Sue Hone, highlights CEWAER's role in fostering friendship and sharing among political pioneers: "The political challenges women face as pioneers in the political world are so funny and so painful--it is marvelous to come together with other women and share these similar experiences."¹² Maggie

¹¹California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research, Commemorative Journal 1984 (Los Angeles, 1984).

¹²Ibid.

Erickson, the president of CEWAER in 1984--ten years after its founding--testified that the group continues to be a source of advice and inspiration: "It's really not a matter of it being another organization of women, it's not another meeting that I have to go to, it's really a resource for me that I use, and if I can then see myself being a resource for somebody else, then we're perpetuating something which I find to be very, very, exciting."

What makes associations a rich resource is the interchange that takes place among members; the less experienced learn from the more experienced, and all give each other advice and encouragement. The support that women need changes as they advance in politics, and associations change along with those needs.

Some associations are actively encouraging more women to run for office. For example, Minnesota Women Elected Officials (MWEO) teams up with other women's organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, to sponsor workshops encouraging women to run and teaching them campaign techniques. Julie Bjorklund, the 1984 vice-president of MWEO, noted that women "are such hard workers in political campaigns. They can turn that energy towards themselves and run for political office." One of MWEO's goals is to convince women in the state that they themselves can seek political office.

Other associations in the 1980s are beginning to provide support for experienced women politicians. As women mature in politics, many inevitably lose re-election bids or lack the political opportunities to advance. According to Barbara Shipnuck, the 1982-83 president of CEWAER, "These women still have to be kept as part of the organization because they're still valuable resources, and they're

mentors. And so we've begun to pay attention to programs for re-election at the same office level." CEWAER held a workshop at its 1984 annual meeting on "Life After Elective Office," advertised in the meeting program as follows: "Burned out? Ready for a change? Defeated in that last election? What's in store for you? Learn how to use your experience as a stepping stone to a new career."

Associations also play a supportive role by alleviating the tensions that are arising among women as more run for and hold office. Groups provide women with a forum for discussing problems such as competing against other women for seats. Often the discussion can help women realize, as the 1985 Maryland association president Barbara Kreamer put it, "It's not me, it's the situation." Barbara Shipnuck of CEWAER elaborated:

In sharing a problem or difficult experience, you find out that it happened to someone else in another state, on another board, or in your own state on the same issue. You realize it's not really you, it's just the way things are evolving, and then maybe you don't feel quite as bad. There's support in different kinds of ways.

Networking

Statewide associations of elected women serve an even more basic purpose--fostering ties among women officials. Elected women's organizations create and reinforce informal networks among political women in a state.

The name of Nevada's association is the Nevada Elected Women's Network, a name that Nevada State Senator Helen Foley said is exactly to the point. For Foley, the group's goal is clear: "The main purpose of our organization is elected women in Nevada knowing each other and being able to network." While the Nevada group does not

take positions or lobby on issues, the association creates an opportunity for state legislators and local officials to get acquainted and serve as potential resources for each other. The women in Nevada try to bring women into the network as soon as they are elected. According to Foley, the implicit message they receive is, "Please call on us, and we'll call on you."

Similarly, the need for a statewide network was a motivating factor for the 1984 formation of an organization for women in government in South Carolina. Founder and South Carolina state legislator Harriet Keyserling envisions the group allowing women officials at different levels of office to rely on each other for support on legislation.

None of the associations endorses or gives financial support to individual candidates, but the networks developed in associations can benefit women in their campaigns. For example, the Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association (PEWA) uses its newsletter to publish the names of women running in Pennsylvania races. With the disclaimer that the organization does not endorse candidates, PEWA publishes the list for "members' information so that each may volunteer support if she chooses." Similarly, members of CEWAER have access to the group's membership list for their own campaign mailings. After a member complained about this usage of the list, the CEWAER board ruled explicitly that individual members could use the membership list for fundraising. CEWAER does not, however, make the list available to non-members. Past President Barbara Shipnuck explained the ruling: "For elected women, the list was one of the obvious tools of belonging to the organization."

Shipnuck emphasized the importance of the informal ties that statewide associations help generate: "There's a need for networking which men have had for years and years. Maybe we won't need elected women's associations when men don't need Rotary. But I think until that time comes...and there's that easy camaraderie of support, we need these kinds of associations."

Education

Another major function of statewide associations of elected women is to teach members how to operate more effectively in the political world. Eleanor Kieliszek, 1984-85 president of the New Jersey Association for Elected Women Officials (NJAFEWO), clearly stated, "One of our goals is to develop leadership and policy-making ability among elected officials. Training and improving our skills is to me the most important thing." Maggie Erickson, the 1984 president of CEWAER, described the California group as a place "to learn how to raise money, to learn how to get the right people in the right places, to learn how to get yourself in the right place, and to learn when you have to give something to get something down the road." What is valuable about CEWAER, Erickson stressed, is that the education is directed at political women specifically: "...these organizations are specifically oriented for women in politics, not for men in politics, not for women in business, not for women who are moving up in another profession. They are really directed toward me as a woman in politics."

Female politicians may indeed have unique educational needs. Some women enter political office without having been involved in

politics previously. Not having the political know-how and contacts of their male colleagues, they turn to statewide associations of elected women as supportive places to develop political skills.

Erickson used her own experience as an example. Coming to politics with a background in school teaching and school administration, she said CEWAER's role was critical: "CEWAER was very valuable for learning some of those skills which, not having been a politician, I had not had a chance to learn firsthand. CEWAER was valuable for learning how to recognize the power that lay in the job that I had." Betty Gardner, the 1984 president of the Maryland Association of Elected Women (MAEW) described that group as instrumental in her political development: "For me, personally, the organization was great because there were so many questions I had. I wasn't political. I didn't come up through the ranks. I was community-oriented....The organization's all-day workshop answered so many questions for me."

While many of the groups sponsor training programs and workshops, much of what members learn comes from talking with each other. For example, a common experience for female officeholders is being in the minority in a governing body. Betty Gardner--the only woman on her board--posed the question, "How do you get into the men's room to know what's going on?" Gardner described a classic "outsider's" problem, that of the men on her board coming into meetings with their deals worked out and their decisions already made. Shipnuck of CEWAER was quick to respond that statewide associations are the place where women can deal with these kind of issues:

There are skills that you need in this job whether you're a school board member in a small town or whether you're in the legislature and you're one of thirteen women out of 120 legislators....What happens when the guys cut the deal before they walk in? How do you handle that? Where are you going to learn how to handle that, other than from other women who have handled that at their own level?

Education also helps women with the demand of having to prove themselves, a demand that Eleanor Kieliszek of New Jersey said has been constant for her. Describing herself as "the first of everything in [my] town: mayor, councilmember, planning board member," she has always wanted to "do a better job" than her male colleagues. Kieliszek thinks her female colleagues must also be well-prepared if male officeholders are to take any woman in office seriously. In Kieliszek's view, a statewide organization for elected women is critical because it "gathers women in" and gives them the skills and knowledge they need to achieve effectiveness and credibility.

Summary

Statewide associations of elected women provide women with the education and training to increase their effectiveness as officeholders. The groups also provide networks, giving women in office the opportunity to meet and work with other women officials in the state. In addition, the associations provide forums where women can give each other advice, encouragement, and moral support. Often, statewide associations fulfill all three purposes simultaneously. Sharing experiences with one another gives women both education and support. Educational events provide opportunities for networking, and networking provides women with moral or more tangible support. All three functions provide a valuable service to women officeholders.

Section 2

ORGANIZATIONAL DECISIONS: DEVELOPING THE ASSOCIATION

Whether ten years old or just getting off the ground, a statewide association needs an organizational framework. All the groups have grappled with some basic organizational questions: Who can join the association, and who can vote on internal affairs? What is the composition of the board? Does the association need staff? What is the primary source of financial support?

Membership and Voting

Most of the associations are similar in structure. While they are oriented toward women in office, anyone who shares the goals of the organizations is welcome to join. The associations range in size from about 35 members to about 600. Although membership is fairly open, the rules governing who can vote vary from group to group. At one end of the spectrum, the California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research (CEWAER) restricts the right to vote and serve on the board to women who currently hold elective public office. At the other end of the spectrum, the Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association (PEWA) and Elected Washington Women (EWW) allow all members to vote. Most groups fall somewhere in between, limiting voting status to current and past female officeholders.

The New Jersey Association for Elected Women Officials (NJAFEWO) provides a typical example. Any woman who is holding or has held an elected office in New Jersey can join the group as a regular voting member. Others, men as well as women, can join as associate members

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with all membership privileges except the right to vote. Dues reflect the different membership categories, with voting members paying slightly more than non-voting members. Organizations that support NJAFEWO's goals can join as "affiliate" members. Sponsoring memberships are also available for organizations or individuals "who make significant contributions to the fulfillment of the goals" of the group, according to the association's literature.

Of all the associations, CEWAER is the most restrictive, limiting the right to vote and serve on the board to women currently in office. The 1984 CEWAER president Maggie Erickson referred to the purpose of the organization to explain the decision: "We are an organization of elected women and by definition that meant exactly what it said. Elected women would be the women who were key to this organization." As a result of the rule, even board members who are in the middle of their board terms must leave the board if they lose an election. Another past president, Barbara Shipnuck, defended the ruling: "If you're not elected, you're not on the board. That sounds cruel--and we went through growing pains [to make these decisions]--but it's considered an elected women's association, and we're the women on the firing line. We have the problems. The issues change, and our needs change, and we have to be able to recognize those." CEWAER offers associate memberships, with all privileges except for voting status, to anyone who is not a current officeholder. In practice, except for participating in board elections and serving on the board, non-voting members participate fully in the group's activities.

In contrast to CEWAER, the associations in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington have very open structures. Elected and "electable" women have full membership status in PEWA, the Pennsylvania organization. Mary Dunkel, 1984-85 president of PEWA, noted that men are also welcome: "Our organization is for all people, not just women." Elected Washington Women (EWW) includes women in elected office and also other women in government. EWW co-chair Jeanne Hansen explained the importance of including women in government: "Those are the women who you hope will someday run for office because of their background and their knowledge about what's going on." Both appointed and elected female officials can vote in the Tennessee Association of Women in Office, Inc. a group started in 1983. The group initially consisted only of elected women officials but expanded to include appointed officials in order to achieve partisan balance.

The key to structuring membership and voting rights was summed up by Barbara Shipnuck of CEWAER. Her advice: "You need to decide very early on what your focus is." The overall goals of the association should dictate membership rules.

Composition of the Executive Board

Internal governing structures of associations are similar. Almost all groups have a president or co-chairs, several other officers, and an executive board or executive committee. In keeping with their mission as cross-jurisdictional, bi-partisan, statewide associations, the groups strive to achieve a balance of different women on their boards.

Most associations aim to bring women from different levels of government onto their boards. For example, the Elected Washington Women board consists of a representative for each level of office or jurisdiction in the state. Each representative is elected by EWW members in that jurisdiction. The levels of office range from public hospital districts and sewer districts to the state legislature and the judiciary. Board members elect officers--including two co-chairs, a secretary, a treasurer, and a membership chair--from among the board. The EWW board has a total of twelve to fourteen members.

Geographic and partisan balance on the board is also important. For example, CEWAER makes sure not only that state legislators serve on the board but also that these include both a Democrat and a Republican. In addition, according to past president Barbara Shipnuck, CEWAER purposefully selects a board whose members span the liberal-conservative spectrum.

Associations must also set board members' terms. In general, associations elect officers and board members every year at their annual meetings. According to Shipnuck, CEWAER debated between one and two year terms and decided upon the shorter term "so that the organization did not lose people who had less time to give."

Staff

Should the organization have paid staff? Ideally, the answer is yes, for the reason noted by Eleanor Kieliszek, the 1984-85 president of the New Jersey Association for Elected Women Officials (NJAFEWO) who said, "You can't run a statewide association out of your

kitchen." All of the associations need people to write and mail newsletters, compile directories, set up meetings, do the bookkeeping, and perform other organizational tasks. However, not all have been able to afford paid staff, and some have found alternative administrative mechanisms.

Two associations have hired staff. NJAFEWO employs an executive secretary who is responsible to the executive committee; CEWAER employs a part-time executive director. New Jersey's executive secretary works out of an office in her home; CEWAER boasts a central office where the executive director works. For both groups, the staff's office serves as a central repository for records.

In addition to taking care of the day-to-day mechanics of running an organization, a staff person provides continuity when an association's elected officers change. Associations are also less constrained in whom they can choose as officers. Kieliszek explained that, were there not an executive secretary for New Jersey's association, only state-level officials would command enough resources through their positions to head the group. An executive secretary, in effect, opens the way for a local officeholder to become president of the group.

Both Kieliszek of NJAFEWO and Shipnuck of CEWAER urged raising funds if necessary to hire staff. Kieliszek advised new associations to set a goal of hiring a professional staff. She said it was worth "even going out to find money so that you can have a central repository for your records, so you can computerize your records, so you can be professional about how you run your organization." CEWAER

does in fact raise funds, with some of the money used for supporting the half-time executive director. To do the fundraising, the organization has appointed two finance directors, one in northern California and one in southern California; women in those positions have been past presidents of CEWAER and, in Shipnuck's words, are "very committed" to the organization. In addition to raising money, CEWAER keeps costs to a minimum by using office space largely donated for the staff.

In some cases, college programs have served as the catalyst for the development of statewide associations, and colleges have provided ongoing staff assistance. The history of the Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association (PEWA) is a case in point. Carlow College in Pittsburgh in the late 1970s sponsored a series of courses in political skills development for women in the Pittsburgh area and in 1980 held a conference of elected women. At the conference, elected women and others formed a steering committee, and with the help of the college, the committee wrote bylaws and developed an organizational structure for an elected women's organization in the state. The college then provided support services to the group to help it get off the ground; only in 1983 did PEWA become an organization fully autonomous from the college. The Maryland Association of Elected Women (MAEW) got its start at a 1978 conference entitled "For the Women Who Won--What Next?" sponsored by Goucher College. Goucher has continued to work cooperatively with MAEW. Another association, the Minnesota Women Elected Officials (MWEO), receives support services from the College of St. Catherine.

All three of these colleges belong to the Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN), a consortium of ten women's colleges and two national resource organizations that sponsors programs to educate women about politics and leadership.¹³

All of the associations, but especially those who do not hire staff or receive support from a college, rely on their officers to run the organization. Barbara Shipnuck concluded that "not everybody can be president because it does require some staff back-up." Whether that back-up consists only of aides who can answer the phone and take messages, or of a budget that will cover some printing costs, some resources are generally necessary for an officeholder to head a statewide association. Hence the conclusion Mary Dunkel of PEWA reached: "I say pick your officers very judiciously."

Budget

The major source of support for all the statewide associations is membership dues, which in 1984 ranged from \$5 to \$25 per year. In some of the groups, non-voting members pay less than voting members. The associations welcome larger contributions, and many offer a "sponsors" category for their large contributors. In 1984, CEWAER established a new category of "life membership," available for \$1,000.

Some of the associations also receive donations from corporations. In its Fall 1984 newsletter, Elected Washington Women

¹³For more information about the Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN), see Katherine E. Kleeman, Learning to Lead: Public Leadership Education Programs for Women (New Brunswick, NJ: Public Leadership Education Network, 1984), available from CAWP.

lists such corporate supporters as the Boeing Corporation, Ackerly Communications, and Pacific Northwest Bell, all of whom had given money to the organization for at least three years. CEWAER developed a category of "corporate membership," available for \$2,000 a year. To raise money as well as provide publicity, CEWAER also published a "Commemorative Journal" in 1984 celebrating the organization's tenth anniversary.

Groups' budgets typically cover basic expenses such as telephone bills, printing, postage, and meetings. As an example of an association's budget, Table 1 shows the annual budget for the Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association for 1984-85.

TABLE 1

PEWA Annual Budget	
1984-85	
Approved May 5, 1984	
<u>Income</u>	
Dues	\$1,350.00
Contributions	
In kind	1,450.00
Cash	<u>5,300.00</u>
	\$8,100.00
<u>Expenses</u>	
Newsletter	\$ 450.00
Postage	250.00
General Correspondence	100.00
Equipment	150.00
Telephone	250.00
Travel/Meals	400.00
Conference/PR	2,000.00
Annual Meeting	1,000.00
Education	<u>3,500.00</u>
	\$8,100.00

Source: PEWA News, June 1984, p. 3.

Summary

Elected women's associations in different states are structured similarly. All are membership organizations, primarily run and supported by members. With the mission of serving women in politics, the groups are primarily composed of and oriented toward elected women officeholders. Many of the organizations also include women who do not hold office as well as men, and these members generally participate fully in the organization except for voting on internal matters. The officers and board members direct the course of the associations. Some groups receive staff support from colleges or hire their own staff to help with the logistics of running an organization. Summary information about each of the associations is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

STATEWIDE ASSOCIATIONS OF ELECTED WOMEN, 1984

<u>ASSOCIATION/STATE</u>	<u>DATE ESTABLISHED</u>	<u>NUMBERS OF MEMBERS (APPROX.)</u>	<u>MEMBERSHIP, VOTING, AND DUES STRUCTURE</u>
California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research (CEWAER)	1974	600	Voting membership is limited to women currently holding elected office. Associate members have full privileges except for voting status. Organizations may join as affiliates. Dues are \$25 per year for associate and voting members. Large contributors are classified as "sponsors." Life memberships are available for a one-time payment of \$1,000. Corporate memberships are available for \$2,000 per year. Honorary memberships are granted by the Executive Committee to individuals who have "rendered conspicuous service" to CEWAER's goals.
Illinois Women in Government	currently forming	- -	
Maryland Association of Elected Women (MAEW)	1979	75	Elected women can join as voting members. Other interested people can join as affiliates. Associate memberships are available for organizations, and "sponsoring" memberships are available for those who make a substantial contribution. Dues for voting, affiliate, and associate members are \$15 per year. The Board of Directors grants honorary membership to individuals who advance MAEW's goals.
Minnesota Women Elected Officials (MWEO)	1981	35	Voting memberships are open to all Minnesota elected women officials, and associate memberships are available for other interested people. Dues are \$25 per year for regular (voting) members and \$15 per year for associate (non-voting) members.

<u>ASSOCIATION/STATE</u>	<u>DATE ESTABLISHED</u>	<u>NUMBERS OF MEMBERS (APPROX.)</u>	<u>MEMBERSHIP, VOTING, AND DUES STRUCTURE</u>
Nevada Elected Women's Network	1980	40	Membership is open to all women who are serving or have served as elected officials in Nevada. Dues are \$20 per year (dues figure is from 1982).
New Jersey Association for Elected Women Officials (NJAFEMO)	1979	300	Any woman who is currently holding or has held an elected office in New Jersey can join as a regular voting member. Other interested people can join as associate (non-voting) members. Other categories of membership are affiliate memberships for organizations and sponsoring memberships for large contributors. The Executive Committee grants no more than one honorary lifetime membership per year to a person who has made a significant contribution to furthering NJAFEMO's goals. Dues are \$25 per year for regular (voting) members, \$15 per year for associate (non-voting) members, and \$100 per year for affiliate members.
New York	considering forming		
Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association (PEWA)	1981	260	Membership is open to "elected and electable women" and others who support the organization's goals. Dues are \$10 per year.
South Carolina Women in Government	1984	--	
Texas Association of Elected Women	1978 (now being revived)	--	

<u>ASSOCIATION/STATE</u>	<u>DATE ESTABLISHED</u>	<u>NUMBERS OF MEMBERS (APPROX.)</u>	<u>MEMBERSHIP, VOTING, AND DUES STRUCTURE</u>
Tennessee Association of Women in Office, Inc.	1983	Not available	Any elected or appointed woman in Tennessee is eligible to be a voting member. Associate memberships are available for others who support the goals of the organization. Dues are \$5 per year.
Elected Washington Women	1979	80	All elected women can join. Dues are \$10 per year.

Section 3

PROGRAMS: BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION

Statewide associations of elected women depend on the broad and active participation of women officeholders. To generate this participation, associations must develop programs and activities that appeal to a wide range of women, sustain the interest of members, and draw in new members.

The Texas Association of Elected Women provides an example of the challenges of maintaining participation. Established in 1978, the Texas group thrived, dwindled, and at the time of CAWP's meeting, was beginning to revive. Jan Shannon, at one time its executive director, described one of the major problems: "You've got a really diverse bunch of people that you're trying to coalesce around a common purpose." Differences between large cities and small towns, urban/rural differences, geographic distance, and differences among levels of office are some of the factors that divide women. The Texas association also faced another problem common to statewide associations--few people were ready to take up leadership after the original founders moved on. As Shannon described the problem, "We had great plans and ambitions that lasted until everybody advanced to the next level of office or got 'un-reelected.'"

The problems confronted in Texas are not uncommon to elected women's organizations. Leaders of statewide associations must work with the partisan, jurisdictional, ideological, and geographic distances that separate women in a state. The question for these organizations is how to serve the diverse needs as well as the common interests of women officeholders throughout a given state.

Dealing with Diversity

Statewide associations have found a variety of ways of navigating among members' differences while addressing members' shared needs. Some associations manage this challenge by steering clear of controversial policy issues. Barbara Shipnuck described CEWAER's unambiguous policy: "We never get involved in an issue which will split people along party lines." On the other hand, CEWAER has used its cross-jurisdictional character to influence policy on a nonpartisan issue. For example, at a CEWAER breakfast in 1984 with male and female legislators, three women from three jurisdictions presented a unified view on a local government financing issue. While not taking a stand on the issue as a group, CEWAER had created the opportunity for the individual women to discuss the issue, agree on a plan of mutual benefit, and advocate the plan to legislators.

Most elected women's associations do not take stands on issues but do sponsor educational forums on issues. For example, an annual meeting of Minnesota Women Elected Officials (MWEO) included informational sessions on comparable worth, focusing on the impact of some recent state legislation on local government. As described by the organization's 1984 vice-president Julie Bjorklund, MWEO's policy is similar to that of other associations: "We are here to provide information to our members. If we dare take a stand, we would lose many of our members because we're becoming partisan."

Elected women's associations also circumvent partisan battles by refusing to endorse specific candidates. As more women run for office and find themselves running against other women, the

non-endorsement rule may be essential if all women are to feel welcome in an association. Barbara Kreamer of the Maryland Association of Elected Women (MAEW) stressed the group's goal of maintaining bipartisan appeal: "Our challenge is to be broad-based, to be sure that we do include both parties and stay away from partisan issues."

Each group has a different way of meeting the challenge of appealing to women at various levels of government. Elected Washington Women (EWW) decided to accept the fact that, at least in its state, local officeholders devote more time to the organization. EWW co-chair Jeanne Hansen explained:

We came to the conclusion that we really would be working with women at the lower levels, encouraging them to come through the ranks and move to higher offices. A lot of our workshops are geared toward the person who wants to learn how to be a better elected official.

The state legislators--who include some of EWW's founding members--are generally too busy for the ongoing activities of the organization, but they play a supportive role by providing staff assistance and serving on the board.

CEWAER, on the other hand, has actively worked to integrate state legislators into the organization because, as Barbara Shipnuck expressed it, "You've got to have the state-level women in the organization or it doesn't have the status to make it important for the school board member who may have to choose whether she's going to spend the \$50 to come to your meeting or do something else." In addition to having women state legislators serve on the board, CEWAER always includes in its annual meeting an afternoon session in which legislators meet with other CEWAER members.

The Nevada Elected Women's Network has the opposite problem--not enough participation by local officials. According to Nevada State Senator Helen Foley, "It's the women legislators that run the show for the organization." In a large state like Nevada, Foley explained, the legislators have mobility while women at lower levels of government have neither the time nor budget to travel around the state.

The time and cost involved in bringing women officeholders together for a meeting in a large state can pose barriers to participation, especially for local officeholders. Kreamer of Maryland cited prohibitive costs as the reason why she seeks underwriting for some of MAEW's annual conference: "We've got to make it very financially easy for women to participate because we have such a range of salaries, and most women in office don't get enough of a budget to afford to participate." Time and cost were also factors that led CEWAER to collapse two previously separate statewide events--an annual meeting and a legislative day--into an annual two-day meeting in the state capital. In its early years, CEWAER held a legislative day in Sacramento plus a separate annual business meeting. However, in 1983, the organization combined these two events, resulting in "increased attendance and renewed interest and visibility for CEWAER," according to Barbara Shipnuck who led the organization in making this change when she was president.

As the number of women in office has increased, CEWAER has also begun to decentralize. In CEWAER's early years, women officeholders needed support and centralization because there were so few women in office. Yet, in the 1980s, "instead of trying to pull people in, to

centralize, we have to decentralize because people on school boards can't afford a statewide meeting," explained Barbara Shipnuck. "They don't have travel budgets. An annual meeting can be very expensive." CEWAER provides the seed money for the first organizing meeting of any regional chapter in the state.

The Pennsylvania Elected Women's Association (PEWA) has also dealt with the problem of geographic distance by instituting regional chapters. With chapters in four counties, PEWA attracts women at the regional level who cannot come to a statewide meeting. Local chapters have also begun to assume some administrative responsibility for the organization. Initially, the central organization collected dues and sent money back to local chapters, but now regional chapters conduct membership drives, collect dues, and send a portion of the dues to the central organization. Meeting times are also varied to facilitate participation.

Minnesota Women Elected Officials (MWEO) struggles not only with the large physical size of Minnesota but also with the urban/rural division within the state. Julie Bjorklund identified one of MWEO's major problems: all the MWEO board members live in the counties in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Bjorklund said the organization "has a really hard time encouraging women from other parts of the state to join." She articulated the question MWEO needs to answer: "How do we encourage those women--we know they're out there on school boards and in other municipalities--to belong to our organization and make them feel as if they have some vested interest in us?" The organization is considering holding programs in northern Minnesota as one possible solution.

Three Examples

To some extent, an association's ability to attract diverse female officials depends on the viability of the group's services and programs. Most associations publish newsletters and compile state directories of women officeholders--services useful to women regardless of their party affiliations, levels of office, or geographic locations. Virtually all associations hold annual meetings which typically include substantive workshops as well as business sessions to elect officers and handle organizational tasks. The executive boards of the organizations usually meet at least a few additional times. Within this general format, however, associations have developed different ways of meeting the needs of the diverse women in their states. The programs of associations in Maryland, California, and Washington serve as examples of what might be characterized as three different approaches--the personal growth approach, the political education approach, and the project approach.

Common to most associations is a program oriented toward officeholders' advancement. Here the organization addresses the need for personal and professional development, a need common among women officials notwithstanding their other differences. Annual meetings of the Maryland Association of Elected Women (MAEW) have exemplified this personal growth approach. First, MAEW made the decision to hold its annual meetings over a weekend, away from central metropolitan areas. "People had to decide 'we're going to take a night and a day to go to this and just be part of this. We're not going to be off answering our phone messages,'" explained Barbara Kreamer. Along with a format conducive to sharing and exploration, the meeting is

usually tied together by a general theme relating to professional and personal development. Barbara Kreamer characterized the theme of the 1983 meeting as "maintaining yourself to keep going." Workshop topics included: coping with stress; dealing with the problem of being overburdened; learning to say "no"; and developing a personal physical fitness plan. The program also featured a workshop on ethics for women in government. The 1984 annual meeting theme, "Being Effective Now That You're In," linked workshops on press relations, money management, how to "win friends and influence people," and responsibility toward feminism.

Professional development often involves political education. An example of a program which focuses on political skills and issues is CEWAER's annual meeting and legislative day. Like Maryland's personal growth program, CEWAER's program is held over two days in a locale away from most people's offices. The program takes place during a work week in Sacramento, the capital city. This choice of time and place allows CEWAER a more political focus. The meeting always includes a session with women legislators and a legislative breakfast attended by male and female lawmakers. In addition, CEWAER has drawn on prominent politicians as speakers--for example, Geraldine Ferraro, Carol Bellamy (then New York City Council President), Maureen Reagan, John Von De Kamp (the Attorney General of California), and C. Delores Tucker (past Secretary of State in Pennsylvania). Workshops at the CEWAER event usually focus on issues of professional development such as constituent relations, fundraising, dealing with the media, relations with staff, professional visibility, and "life after elective office." A meeting

might also include an informational session on a policy issue such as comparable worth. In 1984, the legislative day/annual meeting was also cast as a tenth anniversary celebration.

No rigid division exists between the personal growth and political education approaches. Most associations' annual meetings include some political education in the form of speakers or sessions on policy issues and some opportunity for skills development in the form of workshops geared to enhance women's performance as officeholders.

A third kind of program, quite distinct from the first two, involves sponsoring a major project. At the time of CAWP's meeting, Elected Washington Women--which also holds annual meetings like those described above--was the only association conducting large, long-term projects that receive outside funding and require staff. The first such project, entitled "Political Pioneers," was a history of women legislators in the state of Washington. EWW received a \$14,000 grant from the Washington Commission for the Humanities and sponsorship of the Washington legislature for the project. The end products included a thirty-minute slide-tape show, a photography exhibit, and a book with biographies of 97 women who served in the Washington state legislature between the years 1912 and 1981. The show has been distributed widely for use in schools and meetings. Judge Carol Fuller, one of the 1984 co-chairs of EWW, described the extent of distribution: "We have a big state, and it's gotten into every corner."

The success of "Political Pioneers" led EWW to undertake a new project--a history of women judges in Washington state. Co-

sponsoring the women judges project with the Northwest Women's Law Center, EWW received financial support from the Washington Humanities Commission and the National Association of Women Judges. The project resulted in a lecture series on the history of women judges which three speakers delivered across the state. At the time of CAWP's meeting, EWW was raising private sector money to develop a companion videotape on the history of women judges.

Judge Fuller pointed out that the projects "publicize EWW and have put that organization in a very favorable light throughout the state." EWW co-chair Jeanne Hansen described the work as "a service to the students in our state. The women are mentors again even though they're long gone." EWW's projects are also inspiring similar efforts elsewhere, including a radio tape project in Wisconsin and a national history of women judges.

Recruiting New Members

No matter what their programs, statewide associations need to regularly recruit new members. Otherwise, elected women's organizations encounter the situation Betty Gardner of Maryland described when she said, "We've kind of worn out the people that were on the first steering committee." One of her goals for Maryland's association is "to recruit some new blood into it."

To some extent, the activities of the organization act as a recruiting tool. If an association's programs target and meet female officeholders' needs accurately, the association will attract members. Programs which make an organization very visible--such as EWW's educational projects or CEWAER's annual legislative breakfasts--also draw in new members.

In general, however, the associations must make conscious outreach efforts. Many associations recruit members by sponsoring gatherings of women at state conventions of other groups such as associations of municipal or county elected officials. For example, CEWAER routinely holds breakfasts at the city and county associations' annual meetings. While CEWAER charges people to attend these breakfasts, they are so institutionalized that the jurisdictional associations automatically list them on their programs and collect the breakfast fees with general registration. Barbara Shipnuck says the breakfasts provide a mechanism for gauging interest in CEWAER, spotting potential board members, and recruiting newly elected women.

Another strategy for attracting new members is to contact people individually. In 1984, MAEW designated someone in each county in Maryland to bring new people to the annual meeting. Groups also build membership by inviting selected women to participate in workshops or serve on the board.

Recruiting newly elected women is probably the most important activity for sustaining a statewide association over time. Here again, individual contact may be the most effective way. In California, each CEWAER board member takes responsibility for writing to newly elected women in her geographic area, regardless of the new officeholders' levels of government. In New Jersey, the association solicits the names of newly elected women from county clerks and sends the newcomers a newsletter, informational brochure, and letter of invitation. In a state like Pennsylvania, the structure of government makes obtaining lists of new officeholders difficult.

Consequently, PEWA contacts them by sponsoring hospitality suites at other meetings, and local chapters hold "area coffees" for women candidates.

The ideal situation for recruiting members may be the one described by Phyllis Kavett, the founding president of NJAFEWO and subsequently its executive secretary. According to Kavett, in New Jersey "It has become rather stylish--something like motherhood and apple pie--to write on your record that you're a member of the New Jersey Association for Elected Women."

Summary

Without the active participation of members and the continual influx of "new blood," statewide associations risk losing their value as a useful and responsive resource for women officeholders. The ability of an association to build and sustain participation depends both on the group's recruitment efforts and on the viability of its services and activities. No one activity or approach works in all places at all times. Associations continually modify their programs and meetings in order to change with the changing situation of women officeholders. Nonetheless, whether offering personal and professional development, providing political education, or conducting educational projects, an organization's programs must be aligned with its basic goals. The most successful activities give women opportunities to transcend their differences and explore the issues, dilemmas, and history they share as women in politics.

CONCLUSION

The growth of statewide associations of elected women is one of the exciting developments that has accompanied women's entry into politics since the 1970s. Growing from one to about a dozen in the decade between 1975 and 1985, these organizations of elected women have contributed in several states to women's entry and advancement in politics.

Meeting with one another in statewide organizations, political women receive support to express their aspirations and pursue their goals. Female officeholders who are isolated on their governing bodies share experiences and explore dilemmas with similarly-situated women. Women who are new to politics sharpen their political skills through associations' programs. Political activists find support for running for office, and officeholders receive encouragement and advice for advancing to higher levels of office. By participating in statewide associations, female officials also inspire each other to retain distinctive political voices; rather than modeling themselves solely after their male counterparts, women receive support in their associations to value and preserve whatever special perspectives they bring to politics as women.

Notwithstanding a ten-year history of achievements, statewide associations of elected women are still very much in the process of development--a process of growth, learning, and change. Because the situation of women officeholders is itself evolving, elected women's groups must remain flexible enough to change over time. In their first decade, associations helped empower women who were political pioneers and pathbreakers. The next decade surely will bring new

challenges. New issues are already surfacing. Added to the question of how to cope with being the only woman on a governing board are new questions about how to cope with differences among women officeholders. Added to the question of how to encourage more women to run for office are questions about how to help women who have lost re-election to maintain their political careers.

The continued vitality of associations will also require members' work and attention. Attracting new members and planning programs that appeal to diverse women are essential and constant tasks. As a guide to planning activities and making organizational decisions, leaders will need to maintain a clear vision of purpose. For the leaders present at CAWP's meeting, statewide associations are worthwhile because of their unique purpose: they bring together diverse women in politics and help them realize their individual and collective political potential.

The growing number of statewide associations of elected women and their internal progress suggests that women in office will continue to organize and meet in the years ahead. The task for the future is not only to strengthen existing groups but also to encourage political women in other states to develop their own new networks.

APPENDIX

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