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The Worker Institute at Cornell University and
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RWJBarnabas Health and
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Republican Majority for Choice

Melanie Willoughby
New Jersey Business & Industry Association

Patrizia Zita
Kaufman Zita Group, LLC

*Affiliation for identification purposes only.

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CONTACT:

[Debbie Walsh](mailto:Debbie.Walsh@rutgers.edu), 848-932-8799
[Jean Sinzdak](mailto:Jean.Sinzdak@rutgers.edu), 848-932-8781

Gubernatorial Candidates Respond to Group's Call for Equity in Government, Promise to Appoint More Women

Both major party candidates for governor of New Jersey have pledged that, if elected, they would appoint women to state offices in significant proportions. Although neither candidate committed to a specific number, both acknowledged that women will play key roles in their administration.

That was the outcome of separate meetings between the candidates and representatives of the New Jersey Bipartisan Coalition for Women's Appointments (BCWA). The Coalition, first established in 1981, was reconvened earlier this year by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eggleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, in anticipation of the upcoming gubernatorial election. BCWA's goal is to ensure the appointment of women in key positions in significant numbers throughout government in the new administration.

BCWA representatives from both parties met with the candidates to ask what they would do to ensure women's full representation in state government.

Among the responses:

- Both candidates agreed that appointing a diverse administration including substantial numbers of women is important. The GOP candidate, Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno, noted that diversity matters because, "Policy reflects who has a seat at the table" and Democratic candidate Ambassador Phil Murphy said "That is who we are, and we expect our administration to be rich in diversity," but neither committed to a specific target number.
- Both pointed to their choices of running mates – Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver for Murphy and Woodcliff Lake Mayor Carlos Rendo for Guadagno – as evidence of their commitment to diversity.
- Neither candidate has yet created a transition team structure or named transition leadership, but both committed that women would be well represented.
- Both said their transition teams will meet with BCWA representatives during the transition process and give serious consideration to résumés submitted by the Coalition.
- Both agreed that they would put a mechanism in place to track progress in appointing women, although neither had such a mechanism yet.

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BCWA has four objectives:

- create the expectation within both major parties that women will play significant roles in the transition and in government -- in cabinet and sub-cabinet positions, on the governor's staff, and on boards and commissions;
- help the next governor identify a strong and diverse pool of women candidates for positions within the new administration;
- educate New Jersey women about the thousands of state, county and municipal appointed positions available;
- encourage New Jersey women to submit their résumés for gubernatorial appointments and provide them the tools and information they need to seek appointments.

New Jersey's record on appointing women has improved considerably since BCWA was first convened, but women, more than half the population, have long held well below half of top appointed positions. The Coalition was last convened during the 2005 gubernatorial election, when both major party candidates for governor pledged that, if elected, they would appoint women to state offices in significant numbers. Governor Corzine followed through on that pledge, with women comprising 43% of his cabinet, the highest proportion of any governor in New Jersey history. Governor Chris Christie currently has seven women in his 24-member cabinet, or 29.1 percent.

While appointed positions are important on their own terms, often with significant policy-making authority, they also serve for many women (and men) as a means of gaining the credibility and experience to run for elected positions. The only woman elected governor to date in New Jersey, Christine Todd Whitman, was appointed by Governor Thomas Kean as president of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, a role that bolstered her credentials when she ran for chief executive.

Following the election, BCWA will submit the résumés it receives to the new governor's transition team and continue to advocate on behalf of women interested in serving in appointed office. The Center for American Women and Politics will also monitor the progress of the new and future governors to see how they measure up in appointing women.

More details about the Coalition can be found at: www.cawp.rutgers.edu/bcwa.

About CAWP

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's underrepresentation in political leadership with effective, imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's over four decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.