

CAWP

Election Watch



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**Garden State Elects Woman as First Lt. Gov., But Women Lose Ground in NJ Legislature
Women Inch Upward in Virginia Legislature
Women Mayoral Candidates in Run-Offs in Atlanta, Houston**

Election 2009 saw a few landmarks for women, but also some setbacks, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

New Jersey Lieutenant Governor

Sheriff Kim Guadagno, elected on the ticket of Republican Governor-elect Chris Christie, will be New Jersey's first lieutenant governor, assuming an office created to establish a clear line of gubernatorial succession.

Guadagno's election takes on added significance in light of a 2006 National Lieutenant Governors Association study showing that more than a quarter of all governors had previously served their states as lieutenant governors. Thus, New Jersey's first lieutenant governor is well-positioned, should she choose some day to run for the top spot.

"As New Jersey's first lieutenant governor, Kim Guadagno will have the opportunity to shape that office," notes CAWP director Debbie Walsh. "It remains to be seen how much power the lieutenant governor will have and how she'll use it."

Guadagno has been sheriff of Monmouth County since 2007. She served as a prosecutor in the office of the U.S. Attorney in Newark, an assistant attorney general and deputy director of New Jersey's Division of Criminal Justice, and a Monmouth Beach commissioner.

New Jersey Legislature

When the New Jersey legislature is sworn in on January 12, 2010, it will have 34 women (28.3 percent) among its 120 members. New Jersey will rank 15th in the nation for the proportion of women in its legislature. The peak was 31.7 percent in late 2009, briefly placing New Jersey 7th among the states.

The new legislature will include 26 women elected to the Assembly on Tuesday (17D, 9R). All were re-elected incumbents; no women won open seats or defeated incumbents. The number of women in the Assembly will drop from the 2009 total, since two assemblywomen did not seek re-election.

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There were no regular elections for the New Jersey Senate this year, but eight holdovers (6D, 2R) will remain in office. The number of women in the Senate dropped by two; Senator Marcia Karrow lost her primary, and Senator Dana Redd, who was elected Mayor of Camden, will step down to assume that post.

Virginia

When the Virginia legislature convenes in January 2010, it will have 25 women (17.9 percent) among its members. Virginia will likely escape its past standing among the ten worst states in the nation for the proportion of women in its legislature.

The new legislature will include 17 women elected to the House of Delegates on Tuesday. Thirteen incumbents (9D, 4R) were re-elected, and they will be joined by one woman (D) who won an open seat and three women (2D, 1R) who defeated incumbents, for a total of 12 Democrats and five Republicans. Eight women will remain in the Virginia Senate, where there were no elections this year.

Jody Wagner, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor in Virginia and the only woman running for statewide office there, was defeated.

Gender Gap in Gubernatorial Races

An eight point gender gap was evident among New Jersey voters in the gubernatorial race. Exit poll data provided by Edison/Mitofsky showed that 51 percent of men, but only 43 percent of women supported Governor-elect Christie.

In Virginia, the gender gap was 11 percentage points. 60 percent of men, but only 49 percent of women, chose Governor-elect Bob McDonnell, according to Edison/Mitofsky exit polls.

A gender gap in voting refers to the difference in the percentage of women and the percentage of men voting for the winning candidate. These races fit a pattern evident since 1980; gender gaps have been seen in most major elections, with women more likely than men to prefer the Democratic candidate.

New York

One of the most watched off-year races, a special election for New York's 23rd Congressional District, lost its only woman candidate when moderate Republican Dede Scozzafava suspended her campaign less than a week before Election Day. Her name remained on the ballot, but under pressure from conservatives in her party who threw their support to a Conservative Party candidate, she withdrew and later endorsed the Democratic candidate, who won.

Other Races

In both Houston and Atlanta, women mayoral candidates led the fields and now compete in December run-off contests because no candidate in either race won 50 percent of the vote. Houston city controller Annise Parker faces former city attorney Gene Locke; if Parker wins, she will be the first openly gay mayor elected in one of the nation's largest cities. In Atlanta, Councilwoman Mary Norwood will meet State Senator Kasim Reed; if Norwood wins, she will be the city's first white mayor since 1973.

About CAWP

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a university-based research, education and public service center. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's changing relationship to politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. CAWP is a leading authority in its field and a respected bridge between the academic and political worlds.

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