



EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

CENTER FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND POLITICS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 6, 2006
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New Jersey Counties Again Earn Low Marks on Electing Women

Despite a record number of women serving in the state legislature, New Jersey continues to see only slight progress in electing women as mayors or freeholders.

An annual report card issued by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, labeled all but three counties unsatisfactory for their record in electing mayors, and almost half the counties “unsatisfactory” on freeholders. Only Bergen County received an excellent grade for electing freeholders, and no county had an excellent record on mayors. Seven counties rated unsatisfactory on both measures.

Overall, the report card showed the numbers of women edging upward from 2002 to 2006, but the growth was uneven, with setbacks in a number of counties at each level.

“There are women in every county who are well prepared to serve their communities,” noted Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP. “Many have attended our *Ready to Run* campaign training,” she added, “and all they need now is a place on the ticket. The leaders of both parties can do much more to recruit and support women candidates at every level.”

CAWP’s *Ready to Run* program has provided a valuable boost to many women candidates in New Jersey. Since 1998, more than a quarter of the women who attended the program ran for office, and 68% of those who ran won their races.

Walsh pointed out that the 23 women now serving in the legislature – seven in the Senate and 16 in the Assembly – constitute a record number, moving New Jersey from 41st to 31st among the states for representation of women in state legislatures.

“Six new women entered our legislature this year,” she observed, “and five of them first held county or municipal offices. Unless we bring more women in at those entry levels, we can’t sustain our progress in higher offices.”

To earn a rating of excellent requires 50% or more women in office. From 27.4% to 49.9% women draws a rating of satisfactory, while a figure below 27.3% is considered unsatisfactory.

CAWP offers the Ready to Run campaign training program each year to encourage women in New Jersey to seek public office. The next session is scheduled for Saturday, March 11 at the Douglass College Student Center. Elección Latina, a special program for Latinas considering public office, takes place on March 10 at Eagleton, with participants joining Ready to Run the next day. Information is available at www.cawp.rutgers.edu or by calling 732/932-9384, ext. 260.

CAWP 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. A unit of Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, CAWP is a leading authority in its field and a respected bridge between the academic and political worlds.

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