

For immediate release
November 13, 2008

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Obama Can Break Record for Appointing Women to Cabinet: Clinton Administration Set Standard to Beat

As President-elect Barack Obama selects appointees for cabinet and cabinet-level posts, he has a standard to meet or beat: the record proportion of women appointed under President Bill Clinton. 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, Clinton's administration included at one time nine women out of a total of 19 cabinet members and cabinet-level appointees, or 47 percent women.

"Women's votes were a significant factor in the victory of President-elect Obama," says CAWP director Debbie Walsh. "Now we hope his administration will reflect the nation's diversity, including many strong women like those who have helped to shape his life and career."

Walsh noted that since the first woman appointed to a presidential cabinet, Frances Perkins, who was named Secretary of Labor by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, women have been appointed by every president except Truman and Kennedy. Five women currently serve in the administration of President George W. Bush out of a total of 21 cabinet or cabinet-level posts, the largest number to serve concurrently during his presidency.

The number of positions considered cabinet or cabinet-level has varied considerably under different administrations, but President Clinton appointed women to a total of 14 positions, more than any other chief executive.

President	Total # of Women Appointed	Maximum # of Women Serving Concurrently	# of Cabinet or Cabinet-Level Positions	% of Women at Maximum Level
Carter	4	2	15	13
Reagan (first term)	2	2	18	11
Reagan (second term)	2	2	18	11
G.H.W. Bush	4	2	21	10
Clinton (first term)	7	7	19	37
Clinton (second term)	9	9	19	47
G.W. Bush (first term)	4	4	18	22
G.W. Bush (second term)	5	5	25	20

The Obama transition office has established a website for people interested in being considered for federal appointive offices. The address is www.change.gov/page/s/application.

CAWP's fact sheet providing the history of women in presidential cabinets is available here.

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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