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Published May 08, 2009 12:27 am - Oklahoma gubernatorial candidates Lt. Gov. Jari Askins and U.S. Congresswoman Mary Fallin will join Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, to share their perspectives regarding efforts to increase the number of women involved in politics and public service in Oklahoma during the 2009 NEW (National Education for Women's) Leadership reception May 21 at the Oklahoma History Center, 2401 N.

Reception to focus on increasing the number of women in politics and public service

Transcript Staff

Oklahoma gubernatorial candidates Lt. Gov. Jari Askins and U.S. Congresswoman Mary Fallin will join Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, to share their perspectives regarding efforts to increase the number of women involved in politics and public service in Oklahoma during the 2009 NEW (National Education for Women's) Leadership reception May 21 at the Oklahoma History Center, 2401 N. Laird, Oklahoma City.

Scheduled from 8 to 10:30 a.m., the public event will honor the award-winning, non-partisan NEW Leadership program offered through the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center at the University of Oklahoma. The goal of NEW Leadership is to educate, inspire and empower women to become leaders in politics and public service.

The Carl Albert Center invited Walsh to Oklahoma to discuss national trends in women's political leadership and to place in context Oklahoma's dwindling number of elected women. As the director of the Center for American Women and Politics, Walsh oversees research and programs that address cutting-edge issues in women's political leadership as well as campaign training and educational programs that empower women of all ages and all political persuasions to participate fully in politics and public life.

In addition to her analysis on women's political leadership, Walsh will outline effective strategies for increasing the number of women involved in politics and public service. Attendees will learn about training and educational opportunities available for Oklahoma women and have the opportunity to exchange ideas and network with others who share a commitment to women's participation in politics and public service.

"Drawing attention to Oklahoma women's involvement in politics and public life is important," said Katie Fitzgerald, director of the Women's Leadership Initiative at the Carl Albert Center. "While we are very pleased to have two female candidates running for governor, Oklahoma women -- as a group --

remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government.

"For instance, Oklahoma ranks 49th out of 50 states in the percentage of women serving in our state Legislature at 11.4 percent. All of our neighboring states are doing better. Colorado leads the country with women comprising 39 percent of its legislature, while neighboring New Mexico has 30 percent, Kansas 29 percent, Arkansas 23 percent, Texas 23 percent, and Missouri 21 percent."

It is not just in the state Legislature where women can and do make important contributions to their communities, said Cindy Simon Rosenthal, director and curator of the Carl Albert Center.

"It is important to have women serving at all levels of politics and community life," she said. "A large body of research shows that women officials and lawmakers broaden the policy agenda and are more likely to advocate on behalf of children, families, communities and underrepresented groups."

NEW Leadership is part of a national training network created by the Center for American Women in Politics. During the annual institute, women gain skills in public speaking, leadership, team building, negotiation and conflict resolution. They meet with more than 50 Oklahoma women leaders and spend time at the Oklahoma Capitol.

To learn more about NEW Leadership or to reserve a seat at the 2009 NEW Leadership reception, call the Carl Albert Center at 325-6372, e-mail carlalbertcenter@ou.edu or visit www.ou.edu/carlalbertcenter/leadership. Tickets for the event are \$35; student tickets are \$15. Proceeds will support the 2009 NEW Leadership program.



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