

Ohio's First Female Speaker of the House, Jo Ann Davidson to Participate in Conference Call For Women To Run

Posted By [Jill Miller Zimon](#) On November 5, 2010 @ 3:42 pm In

[Congress, Elections, Gender, Government, Politics, Women, democracy, leadership](#) | [No Comments](#)

Has the time come? Some would probably say it's long overdue, but on **Monday, November 8, 2010 at 2:30PM EST/11:30AM PST**, [The 2012 Project](#) ^[1] will host a live telephone discussion about how to stop the backslide of women's numbers in elected office at the federal and state levels. [From today's press release](#): ^[2]

"Before Tuesday, we knew we had to address this problem. Now, we have to stop the backslide," said Mary Hughes, founder and director of [The 2012 Project](#) ^[1]. "The 2012 election is the best chance for women to reverse course and make big gains."

To learn more about the unique opportunities of 2012 and this new strategy to elect more women, join us on a press conference call on Monday, Nov. 8th at 2:30 p.m. EST/11:30 a.m. PST. Speakers include [\[Debbie\] Walsh](#), director of CAWP [\[Rutgers' Center for American Women in Politics](#) ^[3]]; Hughes, founder and director of The 2012 Project; and two of five faculty co-chairs of the campaign: Polly Baca, the first Latina elected to the Colorado State Senate and former vice chair of the DNC, and Jo Ann Davidson, first woman Speaker of the Ohio State House and former co-chair of the RNC. To RSVP for the call, e-mail laurie@the2012project.us.

According to the release, nearly 70 groups have signed on as partners for the project. They include familiar names such as the White House Project and EMILY's List but also Republican Majority for Choice, National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women and Maggie's List/National Republican Women's Network. You can view the full list [here](#). ^[4]

The 2012 Project has emphasized repeatedly that it is nonpartisan and that its role and mission exclude the endorsement of candidates and the support of any partisan agenda. As noted in *Women's eNews* last month:

Walsh says the invitation element at the heart of the 2012 Project is essential for expanding women's numbers in Congress.

Fifty-three percent of women elected to state legislatures had not seriously thought about running until they were asked, she says, compared to 28 percent of men.

When you look at representatives who say running was their own idea those gender figures change places: 43 percent of men compared to 26 percent of the women.

"Women don't get asked as much by party leaders," said Walsh. "If either party wanted more women in office, there would be more women in office."

...

Once women announce their candidacies the project will help them take the next step by connecting them with training and leadership programs, fundraising networks and political support organizations across the political spectrum.

"We don't endorse candidates, we don't give them money. We connect them to available resources," said Walsh. [emphasis added]

I posted an interview with Mary Hughes, the founder, yesterday and you can read that [here](#) ^[5]. She talks more about the catalysts for this project and the opportunities that redistricting sets up for women to run without concern for incumbents.

Disclaimer: I've been speaking with one of the 2012 partners on and off for about three or four weeks on a volunteer basis to brainstorm about how to get the word out and where and so on. Anyone who has read this blog for any length of time knows that gender parity and women in political leadership is a huge passion of mine, made more obvious exactly four years ago when I first interviewed Marie Wilson of [The White House Project](#) ^[6], which is also a non-partisan national organization for identifying, recruiting, training and supporting women candidates (though it's really branched out lately).

The feeling is that this backslide of total numbers of women in the state and federal levels of elected office that's occurred this year is absolutely unacceptable. The project was conceived several months ago without the eventually strong expectation that there would be a backslide. But now that it's clear that there were not overall gains, despite the quantity of women that ran, the reason to move forward with this project seems more necessary than ever.

I know some people have trepidation about the nonpartisan nature of the project and other than explaining why I am okay with it (and believe me, I've had numerous chats with people close to the project about this multiple times!), I respect that supporting or promoting this kind of program is not for everyone. I've drawn the line at and categorically reject approaches to gender parity in elected officeholders that stress "hold your nose and vote for any and every woman." **I cannot and will not urge anyone to vote for a woman just because she's woman.**

However, this project does not require that we have any plans to vote for any specific woman. And I'm a realist who knows that there will always be a minority and a majority, and so long as we agree on wanting our democracy to work, we must work together to some extent. And then, so long as we have to work together to some extent, I want the side opposite me to have women leaders and members with whom I know I will share at least some things because we are both women. And even then, we could be 100% opposite on positions, but just by our presence, we invite other women to challenge and come in to replace us.

If we women aren't there, then not only don't we have women engaged in agenda-setting and policy-making, but we don't **see** women doing either of those things.

I am not willing to let that continue. It is too great a loss to tone, agenda, process and results.

I could go on and on but no one wants to hear from me. Please consider joining the call on Monday and ask your own questions about how this will work and why the founder and partners think it is necessary and can work. And of course, this is still a blog – you can leave comments below.



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URLs in this post:

[1] The 2012 Project: <http://the2012project.us>

[2] From today's press release: http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/press_room/news/documents/PressRelease_11-05-10-2012.pdf

[3] Center for American Women in Politics: <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/index.php>

[4] here.: http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/education_training/2012Project/partners.php

[5] here: <http://www.writeslikeshetalks.com/2010/11/04/introducing-the-2012-project/>

[6] The White House Project: <http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/>

[7] Image: <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&username=Jill>