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Patty Berg's institute to kick off training session

The Times-Standard
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The premier session of the Institute for Elected Women: California will kick off Monday by bringing the eight newly elected women members of the California Assembly together with 19 former and current members for a two-day training session.

Founded by former Northern California Assemblywoman Patty Berg, D-Eureka, in conjunction with co-facilitator and former state Sen. Sheila Kuehl, the institute is a first-in-the-nation, non-partisan program designed to provide a thorough grounding in all aspects of legislative work.

According to a press release, the institute was founded in response to studies showing that, until an elected body is made up of 40 percent or more of women, newly elected women are slightly less successful in carrying through their legislative agendas.

"It is very important that women are prepared to be successful from the first moments of their election," said Berg in the release.

The institute is also designed to serve as a model for other states and is joined by two national partners: The National Conference of State Legislatures Foundation and the Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University in New Jersey. The California Assembly is also a partner in the institute, according to the release.

"I think it's wonderful and very important that we have gathered 32 women who are distinguished former and current members of the state Legislature, Democrat and

Republican, to serve as trainers in November and January," said Kuehl in the release. "Dozens more have agreed to serve as mentors over the entire two-year session."

Berg said she and Kuehl will facilitate the institute, the trainings and the mentoring program with the hopes the institute will become a model for other states to follow.

"The training sessions will cover every aspect of the life of an Assembly member, in Sacramento and the district, from selecting a staff, to working with colleagues and the Third House (lobbyists), to getting through legislation and much, much more," she said.

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