



**Delaine Eastin**  
 Former Cal State Superintendent of Public Instruction

[Read Bio](#)



« Stand Up for... | Main

## Because We Can Do Better

[Tweet](#) 16 [share](#) 41

When I was a candidate for the 18th Assembly District, I was aware that very few women had served in the California legislature.

I had developed a workshop at De Anza College, titled Women: See How they Run, in the mid-1970s where Assemblywoman Leona Egeland spoke. Asked if there was a women's caucus in the legislature, she replied, "If we were a caucus, we could meet in a phone booth. We are both excited that two more women will join us in the legislature." At that time the first woman in history was elected to be the governor of a state in her own right, and San Jose had the distinction of recently becoming the first American city of over 100,000 to have a female mayor.

So in 1986, my slogan for my first campaign for the Assembly was "Because We Can Do Better".

Here in California, after some years where it appeared we would achieve gender equity in my lifetime, our efforts to elect more women have stalled -- helped along by the male leadership of both parties, who pushed 8 women out in the last reapportionment (6 Democrats and 2 Republicans). Even before the recent election, California was only No. 17 in the U.S. in terms of female representation, according to the [Center for American Women and Politics \(CAWP\)](#) at Rutgers University. California is now tied for 18th. Nationally, the numbers for women in state legislatures plummeted by more than 100 in the midterms. We can and must do better.

As many of you know, I care deeply about education and public policy. I also believe in enlisting more women into the ranks of those seeking to solve the great challenges of our country. I'm one of more than 50 former officeholders now serving as faculty members for [The 2012 Project](#), a national, nonpartisan campaign affiliated with CAWP to inspire record numbers of women to run for office.

Why 2012? It's a once-in-a-decade opportunity for women to significantly increase their numbers in office. Based on the 2010 census, every congressional and state legislative district in the country will be redrawn, and new and open seats will be created. Reapportionment creates open seats, which newcomers can win more easily than they can defeat incumbents.

In California, in 1991, then Governor Pete Wilson vetoed the bill that the Democratic and Republican leadership sent him, and sent the matter of reapportionment to the courts. The result: the Democrats picked up more seats than they imagined because formerly gerrymandered seats were more fairly drawn. Several races became more competitive and new faces were victorious. Two years later, the Republicans took back the lower house. I would argue that again, the races were more competitive, and members had to stand for something to hold onto a seat.

Significantly increasing the number of women who run in each state during the post-reapportionment election year should increase the number of elected women. When women step forward, The 2012 Project will put them in touch with leadership networks and resources to support them.

The campaign is placing special emphasis on recruiting women from fields and industries that have been underrepresented in public office. To reach women in science, I recently spoke in San Francisco to a terrific group at the annual conference of the American Geophysical Union with Republican Bev Hansen, former state assembly member, and The 2012 Project's campaign manager Stacy Mason. We shared our experiences and views on why the country needs women in science to run for office.

Editor's note: This is an SFGate.com City Brights Blog. These blogs are not written or edited by SFGate or the San Francisco Chronicle. The authors are solely responsible for the content.

### ABOUT CITY BRIGHTS

City Brights are prominent local citizens and experts with a unique Bay Area perspective that is often enlightening, sometimes infuriating and always thought-provoking. [All City Brights Authors](#)

CONTACT: [citybrights@sfgate.com](mailto:citybrights@sfgate.com)

### RECENT ENTRIES

- Because We Can Do Better
- Stand Up for California's Children and America's Future
- Class size reduction: California drops the ball

### CATEGORIES

- California education (2)
- Class size (1)
- Women in politics (1)

### ARCHIVES

« DECEMBER 2010						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

### FEATURED CITY BRIGHTS



#### DR. JIM TAYLOR

Ph.D., Psychology, author, speaker

[What to Get My Kids for Christmas](#)



#### CHRISTY COLCORD

Co-owner *Lost Weekend Video*

['Wall Street 2', 'Easy A', 'Best Worst Movie', 'Salt' & 'Devil' all out this week](#)



#### ZENNIE62

Exec Producer, Host: *The Blog Report With Zennie62*  
[Washington Redskins Bruce Allen Must Fire Mike Shanahan ASAP](#)

[More City Brights](#)

The 2012 Project is also targeting women in finance, technology, energy, health, environment, small business and international affairs. Women over 45 -- the baby boomer generation -- are the focus of the campaign. These women, typically at the top of their professions, have fewer family responsibilities, are likely to be financially stable, and have deep roots in their communities. Outreach to women of color and diverse backgrounds is also a priority.

Whenever we speak, we will share the facts about women's underrepresentation in public office and the distinctive qualities women bring to government. International research confirms that when elected bodies surpass 30% female representation, priorities change. More resources are given to education, health, human services and child development. Never before has our state and our nation needed to reorder its priorities more than on this morning in America.

We literally have no time to waste. Four states (Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia) have statewide elections in 2011. We need to move quickly and find some great women to run in those states, as well as many more to gear up for 2012.

Have you considered running? Please check out [www.the2012project.us](http://www.the2012project.us).

Posted By: [Delaine Eastin \(Email\)](#) | December 18 2010 at 09:52 AM

Listed Under: [Women in politics](#)

 [Share](#) | [Email](#)

[« Stand Up for... | Main](#)

**Advertising Services:** [Advertise with us](#) | [Place a Classified](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | [Public Notices](#) | [Local Businesses: Business Directory](#)

**Reader Services:** [Home Delivery](#) | [Subscribers](#) | [E-Edition](#) | [Mobile](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Buy Photos](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Get Us](#)

**Company Info:** [Contact Us](#) | [Hearst Corp.](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Chronicle in Education](#) | [Events & Promotions](#) | [Submissions](#)

© 2010 Hearst Communications Inc.

**HEARST** *newspapers*