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For immediate release

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## **Vermont House Women Constitute a Majority of the Majority: Third Time in History of State Legislatures**

With the appointment of Democrat Marjorie Ryerson to fill a vacant seat in the Democrat-led Vermont State House of Representatives, a majority of Democrats in that body are women. According to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), Vermont is the third state where women have comprised the majority of members within the majority party in a state legislative chamber. In each case, Democrats have been the majority party.

“With women holding only about a quarter of all state legislative seats across the country, it’s rare to see women holding the balance of power,” observed Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP.

### **Vermont**

Democratic women now hold 49 of the 96 seats in the Democratic caucus, which holds the majority in the 150-seat State House. That means that women are 51 percent of the majority caucus. Vermont now leads the nation with 41.1 percent women in its state legislature.

### **Washington State**

The first instance involved both houses of the Washington State Legislature between 1995 and 2006. In all but two legislative sessions over those years, Democrats were the majority in the State Senate; during that period, women were anywhere from 58 percent to 68 percent of the Democratic senators. In 1995-96, Democratic women were also the majority within their party caucus in the State House, although the Democrats were the minority party. Also in 1995-96, the Washington Senate President Pro Tempore was a woman, Lorrain Wojahn, and 7 of the 15 committee chairs (47 percent) were women.

WA State	Senate Total	Senate Women	Women as % of Democratic Party Caucus
95-96	49 (25D, 24R)	20 (14D, 6R)	<b>56%</b>
97-98*	49 (23D, 26R)	22 (15D, 7R)	<b>65%</b>
99-00	49 (27D, 22R)	23 (18D, 5R)	<b>67%</b>
01-02	49 (25D, 24R)	23 (17D, 6R)	<b>68%</b>
03-04*	49 (24D, 25R)	21 (16D, 5R)	<b>67%</b>
05-06	49 (26D, 23R)	20 (15D, 5R)	<b>58%</b>
	House Total	House Women	
95-96	98 (34D, 62R, 2 vacancies)	38 (20D, 18R)	<b>59%</b>

\*Years when Democrats were in the minority in Washington State.

### **New Hampshire**

In New Hampshire in 2007-08, women were a majority of the State Senate (58 percent) and also a majority (79 percent) of the Democratic caucus. In the 24-member Senate (14D, 10R), there were 13 women (11D, 2R). In that session, both the Senate President (Sylvia Larsen) and the Senate President Pro Tempore (Margaret Wood) were women. At the time, the Governor of New Hampshire was also a woman, Jeanne Shaheen, and the State

House was led by a woman Speaker, Terie Norelli. Women were also a majority of the Democratic caucus (5 of 9 Democrats) in the 24-member New Hampshire Senate in 1997-98, when their party was in the minority.

**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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