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For immediate release

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Opportunity Knocks for NJ Women in State Elections Record Number of Women Will Vie for Legislative Seats First Democratic Woman Nominated for Governor

June 2013 is a moment of opportunity for political women in the Garden State. With primaries completed and general election tickets now set, New Jersey boasts a record number of women candidates for the state legislature, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). Democrats have nominated State Senator Barbara Buono to oppose Governor Chris Christie in his bid for re-election, the first time the party has chosen a woman for its top ballot slot. Christie will once again have a woman – Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno – as his running mate. In addition, two women, New Jersey Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver and Piscataway physician Alieta Eck, are among the five candidates running for the U.S. Senate seat formerly held by Senator Frank Lautenberg.

“New Jersey’s record on electing women was miserable as recently as a decade ago, but we’re making great strides now,” noted CAWP Debbie Walsh. “Our legislature has welcomed many more women in recent years, and we’re poised for even more progress.”

A total of 67 (35D, 32R) women will be on the November ballot for the legislature, including 15 candidates for the 40-seat State Senate (9D, 6R) and 52 for the 80-seat Assembly (26D, 26 R). The previous record total number of women candidates was 65, set in 2011.

The 52 women running for the Assembly far exceed the previous high of 45, set in 2011. They include 24 (15D, 9R) incumbents running for re-election, 23 (8D, 15R) challengers facing off against incumbents, and 5 (3D, 2R) women seeking open seats.

The 15 women running for the State Senate reflect a drop-off from 2011, when a record 20 women were nominated. The 2013 candidates include 10 incumbents (7D, 3R) and 5 challengers (2D, 3R); no women are running for open Senate seats.

New Jersey currently ranks 11th among the states for the proportion of women in its legislature. The addition of even one more woman would boost the state into the top 10, a significant rise from 2004, when New Jersey ranked 43rd out of the 50 states.

Candidates for lieutenant governor are selected by the gubernatorial candidate after the primary. Christie has already announced his intention to keep Guadagno on his ticket; Buono has yet to announce a running mate.

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.