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Election Underscores Urgent Need for The 2012 Project: Women Suffer First Decline in Congress in Over 30 Years

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J., and PALO ALTO, Calif., Nov. 5, 2010 -- Even in an historic wave of change like Tuesday's, one thing remains the same: women's share of political power. This election underscores the urgent need for The 2012 Project, which has built a coalition of allied organizations across the political spectrum in its campaign to encourage an unprecedented number of women to run for office after redistricting.

The election on Tuesday appears to have produced the first drop in the number of women elected to Congress in more than 30 years, although some races remain too close to call. Preliminary results at the state legislative level indicate that we may see the largest drop in the number and percentage of women serving since CAWP began tracking the numbers in 1971.

Launched last July, The 2012 Project targets baby boomer women who are accomplished in fields, including science, technology, energy, and finance, that are currently underrepresented in state legislatures and Congress. A non-partisan campaign of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, The 2012 Project aims to take advantage of new and open seats that will be created after redistricting.

"This election is a wake-up call for American women," said Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP. "Our country faces tremendous challenges, and we need all of America's talent at the table." Click here to read CAWP's assessment of Tuesday's election results:

http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/press_room/news/documents/PressRelease_11-03-10.pdf

Among the nearly 70 groups who have signed on so far as allies of The 2012 Project: EMILY's List; Republican Majority for Choice; the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative/Women; the Illinois Lincoln Excellence in Public Service Series; The White House Project; MANA, a National Latina Organization; Maggie's List; and many more. To view the growing list of partners, visit www.the2012project.us.

"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. "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 Walsh, director of CAWP; 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.

For more information about The 2012 Project, visit www.the2012project.us.

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.