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For immediate release

Contact: Kathy Kleeman
(848) 932-8717

Report Card for Women Officeholders: Most Counties Need Improvement

Most New Jersey counties continue to draw poor to mediocre grades for their efforts to elect women as freeholders and mayors, but do somewhat better in electing women to local councils. Mercer County sits at the head of the class overall, while Warren County seems to need remedial work.

These are the findings of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. CAWP compiled 2017 data on both numbers and percentages of women freeholders, mayors and council members in New Jersey's 21 counties. **(Detailed tables attached.)**

Six counties would receive honors marks for electing women freeholders (40 percent or better), while Warren County would flunk with zero. Electing women mayors seems to present an even greater challenge, with just two counties (Union and Mercer) at or exceeding 25 percent, and all but four counties below 20 percent. Only one county, Mercer, can boast having more than a third of its city or town council seats filled by women (41%). A total of eight counties have over a quarter of women on councils, while Atlantic County ranks lowest with just 13% of their councils comprised of women.

Bergen County, with more than half of its freeholders (57%) women, leads the way; Essex follows at 44%, trailed by Middlesex, Morris, Burlington and Monmouth, all at or above 40% women. Nine counties have only one woman among their freeholders, while Warren County has none.

The picture could change in 2018, since thirty-seven women (21D, 16R) are seeking freeholder posts in 2017, the first year in which CAWP has tracked candidates for county boards. They are 35.2 % of the total of 105 candidates seeking election as freeholders this year. The women include 12 incumbents (10D, 2R) as well as 11 candidates for open seats (7D, 4R).

A total of 62 freeholder seats are up for election this year, and women are running for all but 13 of those seats (three in Essex County, seven in Hudson County, two in Salem County and one in Sussex County). Morris County has only women running for its one available seat, while Salem and Sussex Counties have no women running. (Both Salem and Sussex Counties have one woman freeholder not up for election this year.)

At the mayoral level, Union County leads the way at 33% percent, followed by Mercer, Hunterdon and Sussex Counties, the only ones to break 20%. Seven counties have fewer than

10% women among their mayors, with Ocean County and Passaic counties the worst (6%) and Salem only marginally better (7%).

“New Jersey has improved in recent years at the state legislative level, now with 30% women, and we’re consistently among the top 15 in the country for women’s representation,” noted CAWP associate director Jean Sinzdak. “But most of our counties have much more work to do to improve representation at the local level. We call upon the powerful county party leaders to use their influence to create tickets that better reflect the people officeholders serve.”

Sinzdak invited Garden State women to learn more about running by attending Ready to Run®, CAWP’s non-partisan campaign training for women, which will take place March 9-10, 2018 in New Brunswick. “More and more women are deciding that they can make a difference on the issues that matter to them by running for office. Ready to Run® gives them essential tools to prepare for their political future.”

Information and registration is available [on the CAWP website](#).

Other resources on women in New Jersey politics:

CAWP Fact Sheet: [Women in New Jersey Government](#)

Press release: [2017 Women candidates in NJ and VA](#)

A Closer Look: [Women Running in 2017: Assessing NJ and VA State Legislative Elections](#)

About CAWP

The [Center for American Women and Politics](#), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women’s political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. CAWP’s education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women’s under-representation in political leadership with effective, imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP’s over four decades of analyzing and interpreting women’s participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.

Proportion of Women Freeholders by County - 2017

Source: N.J. Association of Counties.

County	Total Freeholders	Women: Freeholders	%	Rank
Bergen	7	4 (+1)	57%	1
Essex	9	4	44%	2
Middlesex	7	3 (+1)	43%	3
Morris	7	3	43%	3
Burlington	5	2	40%	5
Monmouth	5	2	40%	5
Union	9	3	33%	7
Camden	7	2	29%	8
Cumberland	7	2	29%	8
Mercer	7	2	29%	8
Atlantic	9	2 (+1)	22%	11
Cape May	5	1 (-1)	20%	12
Hunterdon	5	1	20%	12
Ocean	5	1	20%	12
Somerset	5	1	20%	12
Sussex	5	1 (+1)	20%	12
Gloucester	7	1	14%	17
Passaic	7	1	14%	17
Salem	7	1 (-1)	14%	17
Hudson	9	1	11%	20
Warren	3	0	0%	21
Total	137	38	28%	

Proportion of Women Mayors by County - 2017

Source: N.J. League of Municipalities.

County	Total: Mayors	Women: Mayors	%	Rank
Union	21	7 (+2)	33%	1
Mercer	12	3	25%	2
Hunterdon	26	6 (-1)	23%	3
Sussex	24	5 (-1)	21%	4
Camden	37	7	19%	5
Monmouth	53	9	17%	6
Morris	39	6 (+5)	15%	7
Somerset	21	3 (-1)	14%	8
Essex	22	3 (+1)	14%	8
Burlington	40	5 (-3)	13%	10
Cape May	16	2	13%	10
Gloucester	24	3	13%	10
Middlesex	25	3 (-1)	12%	13
Bergen	70	8 (-1)	11%	14
Warren	22	2 (-1)	9%	15
Atlantic	23	2	9%	15
Hudson	12	1	8%	17
Cumberland	14	1 (+1)	7%	18
Salem	15	1	7%	18
Passaic	16	1 (-1)	6%	20
Ocean	33	2 (-1)	6%	20
Total	565	80	14%	

Proportion of Women Council Members by County

Source: Center for American Women and Politics

County	Total:	Women:	%	Rank
Mercer	68	28 (+2)	41%	1
Camden	201	61 (+4)	30%	2
Hudson	76	22 (+1)	29%	3
Hunterdon	134	38 (+6)	28%	4
Union	135	37 (-2)	27%	5
Middlesex	148	38 (-1)	26%	6
Cape May	72	18 (-1)	25%	7
Essex	132	33 (+2)	25%	7
Gloucester	135	33 (+3)	24%	9
Bergen	408	98 (-3)	24%	9
Monmouth	267	62 (-5)	23%	11
Ocean	181	42 (+2)	23%	11
Salem	69	16	23%	11
Morris	231	53 (+3)	23%	11
Passaic	105	24	23%	11
Sussex	119	25 (-1)	21%	16
Somerset	121	25 (-2)	21%	16
Burlington	203	41 (-4)	20%	18
Warren	96	17 (-7)	18%	19
Cumberland	64	10 (+2)	16%	20
Atlantic	132	17	13%	21
Totals	3097	738	24%	

2017 Women Freeholder Candidates by County

Source: Center for American Women and Politics

	D	R	Total
Incumbents	10	2	12
Challengers	4	10	14
Running for Open Seat	7	4	11
Total	21	16	37

County	Total Women	Incumbents	Challengers	Open
Atlantic	3D	-	1D	2D
Bergen	1D	1D	-	-
Burlington	1R	1R	-	-
Camden	1R	-	1R	-
Cape May	1D	-	1D	-
Cumberland	1D, 1R	1D	-	1R
Essex	3D, 2R	3D	1R	1R
Gloucester	1D, 3R	1D	3R	-
Hudson	1D, 1R	1D	1R	-
Hunterdon	1D	-	-	1D
Mercer	1D, 1R	1D	1R	-
Middlesex	2D, 2R	2D	2R	-
Monmouth	1D, 1R	1R	-	1R
Morris	1D, 1R	-	-	1D, 1R
Ocean	1D	-	1D	-
Passaic	1R	-	1R	-
Salem	-	-	-	-
Somerset	1D	-	-	1D
Sussex	-	-	-	-
Union	1D, 1R	-	-	1D, 1R
Warren	1D	-	1D	-
Totals	37 (21D, 16R)	12 (10D, 2R)	14 (4D, 10R)	11 (7D, 4R)