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Campaign Targets More Women to Run in 2012

“The 2012 Project” Will Leverage Opportunities in Seats Created by Redistricting

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J., July 20, 2010 -- Aiming to capitalize on the large number of open congressional and state legislative seats expected to be created by post-census reapportionment, The 2012 Project, a campaign of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University, today announces a national, non-partisan effort to mobilize an unprecedented number of women to run for office in 2012.

“We have a once-in-a-decade opportunity to make big gains for women in 2012. It will take a coordinated national effort to be successful, and we must not miss this moment,” said Mary Hughes, founder and director of The 2012 Project and a longtime political consultant based in California who brought the Project to CAWP.

The 2012 Project distinguishes itself from other efforts to encourage women to run for office by:

- taking advantage of open and new seats created by reapportionment in Congress and state legislatures, since women are historically more successful in such races.
- targeting women 45 and older – the baby boomer generation – who are well positioned as potential candidates. They are typically advanced in their professions, have fewer family responsibilities, are more likely to be financially stable, and have deeper roots in their communities.
- focusing on women from eight fields that are underrepresented in government and critical to the nation’s future: energy and environment, finance, science and technology, health, international relations, and small business.

The U.S. has a poor track record in electing women. Although they are more than half the nation’s population, women make up 17 percent of Congress and 24 percent of state legislatures. The last major spike in the number of women elected to office was in 1992, labeled by many as “The Year of the Woman.” In that election, 24 new women were elected to Congress; of those, 22 won open seats.

“The number of women elected to office has flat-lined in the last two decades,” observed Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP. “We know that when women run, women win. So the goal is to prepare as many accomplished women as possible to run.”



The campaign will reach out to communities of women in the targeted fields with a three-pronged strategy: “educate, inspire, connect.” A faculty of former elected women will speak to potential candidates about what motivated them to run initially and how they made a difference in office. Women interested in taking the next steps will be connected to training and leadership programs, fundraising networks, and political support organizations that can provide the roadmap to a successful campaign.

The 2012 Project will educate potential candidates and others about why it matters to have more women in office. In addition to the goal of more fairly representing the American electorate, research by CAWP shows that while women have legislative agendas as varied as their male counterparts, they are more likely to place issues relating to women, children and families on a legislative agenda.

The 2012 Project is online at 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.