



CAWP

Election Watch

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Contact: CAWP (732) 932-9384
Debbie Walsh, director, x227

SIX WOMEN NEWCOMERS JOIN N.J. LEGISLATURE; NO LONGER ONE OF TEN WORST STATES

Women Gain in Virginia Legislature, and Women Mayoral Candidates Fare Poorly

When the New Jersey legislature convenes in January 2006, 23 women will hold seats, setting a new record and lifting the state out of its status as one of the ten worst states for women's representation. In other elections, women gained two seats in the Virginia legislature, and Atlanta's incumbent was the only woman to win a big-city mayoral race.

New Jersey

Sixteen women (11 D, 5 R) will serve in the Assembly and seven (5 D, 2 R) in the Senate, for a total of 19.2 percent of the state's legislators, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics. That places New Jersey in the low 30's for representation of women in state legislatures.

Newcomers to the Assembly will include Pamela Rosen Lampitt (D-6), Jennifer Beck (R-12) Amy Handlin (R-13), Marcia Karrow (R-23), and Valerie Vainieri Huttle (D-37). Also taking office in January will be Evelyn Williams (D-28), who was chosen by the Essex County Democratic committee to fill a vacancy caused by a death. In addition, Loretta Weinberg (D-37) won a special election to fill a Senate seat that was vacant because of a retirement. Weinberg had earlier been chosen by the Bergen County Democratic Committee to fill the Senate seat temporarily, but had not been sworn in to the Senate before the special election.

Two women retired from the Assembly and Weinberg moved up to the Senate, so the net gain will be three seats in the Assembly and one in the Senate. The previous record for women in the New Jersey legislature, set in 1998 and again in 2003, was 20.

"The progress women have made this year reflects the importance of the pipeline – electing women at the local level and giving them the visibility and experience to move up," notes CAWP director Debbie Walsh. "Of the newcomers to the Assembly, three have served as freeholders in their counties, and two have been local councilwomen."

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS

Center for American Women and Politics
Eagleton Institute of Politics
191 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8557
Phone: (732) 932-9384 • Fax: (732) 932-0014
www.cawp.rutgers.edu

Walsh also credits Governor-Elect Jon Corzine for promoting Weinberg's Senate bid. "He went out on a limb, choosing sides in a tough intra-party battle. As a result, we have a new woman in the Senate, and her successor in the Assembly is also a woman. Party leaders must recognize that having more women in office matters and use their clout to ensure a fair, open process."

Three of the newly elected women won open seats. Beck defeated a Democratic incumbent.

Virginia

In Virginia, where voters chose new statewide officials and members of the House of Delegates, the number of women in the lower house will increase by two. Newcomers to the House of Delegates will include Anne B. Crockett-Stark (R-6), Katherine B. Waddell (I-68), Jennifer L. McClellan (D-71), and Roslyn C. Tyler (D-75). When new legislators are sworn in, Virginia will rank in the upper 30's among the states for representation of women in its legislature.

The Virginia newcomers include two challengers and two women who sought open seats. Two women left the legislature; one retired and one lost a primary bid for statewide office.

The one woman running for statewide office, former Congresswoman Leslie Byrne (D), narrowly lost her bid for lieutenant governor.

Other Elections

Women were candidates for mayor in five major cities. Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta was re-elected, but in each of the other cities – including Cleveland, where incumbent Jane Campbell was on the ballot – the woman candidate was defeated. The remaining candidates were City Councilor Maura Hennigan in Boston, Councilmember Donna Frye in San Diego, and former Councilor Joanie Mahoney in Syracuse.

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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