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For immediate release

Contact: [Chelsea Hill](#)  
(848) 932-8179

### **Women in County and Municipal Government: NJ Must Do Better**

The latest census of women elected to county and municipal offices in New Jersey raises an urgent question: Why is progress painfully slow -- or non-existent?

The new data, including women in office as of January 2018, come from the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. The numbers have edged upward since 2017, but women – who constitute more than half the state’s population – still hold only 29 percent of freeholder positions (compared with 26 percent in 2017), 25 percent of council seats (compared with 24 percent), and a paltry 14 percent of mayoralities (compared with 15 percent). (Detailed tables are attached.)

“Across the nation and throughout New Jersey, the flood of women stepping up to run has been front-page news,” observed CAWP director Debbie Walsh. “CAWP has trained record numbers of women to run, and they’re eager to serve now,” added Walsh. “But until the powerful county party chairs on both sides of the aisle make it a priority to include more women on their tickets, our best efforts won’t alter the picture significantly.”

Walsh noted that in most of New Jersey, unlike other states, county party chairs (still overwhelmingly male) control the ballot placement of primary candidates, determining which candidates get the “line” or favored positions. Those who run “off the line” have difficulty reaching the general election.

Union and Mercer Counties show the most success electing women, ranking first and second among the counties overall. Mercer has the highest proportion of women on councils (37 percent) and Union has the highest proportion of women mayors (29 percent). Bergen County, which shares the overall fourth place rank with Hunterdon and Burlington Counties, shares the top ranking for women freeholders with Morris County, 57 percent. Camden County ranks third overall among the 21 counties.

Warren County ranked at the bottom of the list. It is the only county with no women on its board of freeholders.

The Garden State has done better electing women to its legislature, Walsh reported. Women constitute 29.2 percent of the state’s senators and assembly members, besting the national average of 25.3 percent and placing New Jersey 16<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states. “We’ve improved our standing among state legislatures dramatically since 2004, when we were in the bottom ten. Today, we have a strong and diverse group of women in Trenton. We should be making similar progress in county and municipal government.”

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CAWP's non-partisan campaign training, Ready to Run®, teaches New Jersey women the nuts and bolts of running for office in the state and connects potential candidates with experts and resources. "Women have long been active agents of change and progress in their communities; now many are ready to take on new leadership roles as elected officials," commented CAWP's associate director, Jean Sinzdak. "Our training gives them essential tools for political success."

**The next Ready to Run® is scheduled for March 9-10 at the Douglass Student Center on the Rutgers-New Brunswick campus. Registration information is available at [cawp.rutgers.edu/education\\_training/ready\\_to\\_run/newjersey](http://cawp.rutgers.edu/education_training/ready_to_run/newjersey)**

#### **About CAWP**

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University – New Brunswick 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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## Proportion of Women Freeholders by County: 2018

Source: N.J. League of Municipalities.

County	Total Freeholders	Women: Freeholders*	%	Rank
Bergen	7	4	57%	1
Morris	7	4 (+1)	57%	1
Atlantic	9	4 (+2)	44%	3
Middlesex	7	3	43%	4
Burlington	5	2	40%	5
Essex	9	3 (-1)	33%	6
Union	9	3	33%	6
Camden	7	2	29%	8
Cumberland	7	2	29%	8
Mercer	7	2	29%	8
Cape May	5	1	20%	11
Hunterdon	5	1	20%	11
Monmouth	5	1 (-1)	20%	11
Ocean	5	1	20%	11
Salem	5	1	20%	11
Somerset	5	1	20%	11
Sussex	5	1	20%	11
Gloucester	7	1	14%	18
Passaic	7	1	14%	18
Hudson	9	1	11%	20
Warren	3	0	0%	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>29%</b>	

## Proportion of Women Mayors by County: 2018

Source: N.J. Association of Counties.

County	Total: Mayors	Women: Mayors*	%	Rank
Union	21	6 (-1)	29%	1
Mercer	12	3	25%	2
Hunterdon	26	6	23%	3
Camden	37	7	19%	4
Gloucester	24	4 (+1)	17%	5
Sussex	24	4 (-1)	17%	5
Monmouth	53	8 (-1)	15%	7
Burlington	40	6 (+1)	15%	7
Cumberland	14	2 (+1)	14%	9
Essex	22	3	14%	9
Salem	15	2 (+1)	13%	11
Bergen	70	9 (+1)	13%	11
Morris	39	5 (-1)	13%	11
Cape May	16	2	13%	11
Middlesex	25	3	12%	15
Ocean	33	3 (+1)	9%	16
Warren	22	2	9%	16
Atlantic	23	2	9%	16
Hudson	12	1	8%	19
Passaic	16	1	6%	20
Somerset	21	1 (-2)	5%	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>14%</b>	

\* Numbers in parentheses indicate changes since 2017.

## Proportion of Councilwomen by County: 2018

Source: Center for American Women and Politics

County	Total Council	Council Women*	%	Rank
Mercer	68	25 (-3)	37%	1
Union	135	45 (+8)	33%	2
Camden	201	61	30%	3
Hudson	76	23 (+1)	30%	3
Hunterdon	134	38	28%	5
Essex	132	37 (+4)	28%	5
Middlesex	148	39 (+1)	26%	7
Burlington	207	54 (+13)	26%	7
Bergen	407	106 (+8)	26%	7
Passaic	105	26 (+2)	25%	10
Gloucester	136	33	24%	11
Morris	230	55 (+2)	24%	11
Monmouth	272	64 (+2)	24%	11
Salem	69	16	23%	14
Ocean	181	40 (-2)	22%	15
Somerset	121	26 (+1)	21%	16
Sussex	119	25	21%	16
Cape May	72	15 (-3)	21%	16
Cumberland	64	10	16%	19
Warren	96	15 (-2)	16%	19
Atlantic	133	20 (+3)	15%	21
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3106</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>25%</b>	

\* Numbers in parentheses indicate changes since 2017.

## Overall County Average/Rank: 2018

County	Freeholder Rank	Mayor Rank	Council Rank	Average of Rank	Overall Rank
Union	6	1	2	3.0	1
Mercer	8	2	1	3.7	2
Camden	8	4	3	5.0	3
Hunterdon	11	3	5	6.3	4
Bergen	1	11	7	6.3	4
Burlington	5	7	7	6.3	4
Essex	6	9	5	6.7	7
Morris	1	11	11	7.7	8
Middlesex	4	15	7	8.7	9
Monmouth	11	7	11	9.7	10
Sussex	11	5	16	10.7	11
Gloucester	18	5	11	11.3	12
Cumberland	8	9	19	12.0	13
Salem	11	11	14	12.0	13
Cape May	11	11	16	12.7	15
Atlantic	3	16	21	13.3	16
Hudson	20	19	3	14.0	17
Ocean	11	16	15	14.0	17
Somerset	11	21	16	16.0	19
Passaic	18	20	10	16.0	19
Warren	21	16	21	19.3	21