

For immediate release
August 17, 2009

Contact: CAWP 732-932-9384
Debbie Walsh, director, ext. 227

For First Time, NJ to Join Top 10 States for Women in Legislatures; Misfortunes of Men Fuel Appointments of Women

When Long Beach Township Commissioner DiAnne Gove (R) is sworn in as the 9th District's newly appointed assemblywoman in November, New Jersey will, for the first time, rank among the top ten states for representation of women in state legislatures.

Gove's addition will place the Garden State in a tie with Nevada for 7th among the states, with 31.7 percent women in each legislature, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

"Commissioner Gove's appointment adds to the roster of women who have moved up as legal problems thin the ranks of male officeholders," notes CAWP director Debbie Walsh. "The public perceives women as less vulnerable to corruption, so when vacancies occur, it makes sense for the parties to think of female appointees."

Gove will replace Assemblyman Daniel Van Pelt, who was forced to step down in the wake of his arrest on charges of accepting a bribe.

As recently as 2004, New Jersey ranked 43rd, making it one of the worst states for women's representation. Since that time, seven assemblywomen (including Gove) and two female senators have gained seats resulting in some way from investigations of men's legal problems.

When Gove takes her seat as the legislature reconvenes after the elections, there will be 38 women among the state's 120 lawmakers: 10 senators (7D, 3R, or 25 percent) and 28 assemblywomen (19D, 9R or 35 percent).

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.

#