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“The 2012 Project” Builds Momentum To Recruit Women Candidates Campaign Targets Professionals 45 Up With Help of Political Alums

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. and PALO ALTO, Calif., Oct. 7, 2010 – As evidence mounts that women in elected office could lose seats for the first time in 30 years, The 2012 Project – a national, nonpartisan campaign to encourage record numbers of women to run in the next election cycle – is gaining steam.

The campaign has lined up a faculty of dozens of distinguished former elected women to make the case to accomplished women 45 and older across the nation that the post-redistricting election is their best opportunity to run and win office. Today, The 2012 Project, a campaign of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, announces five faculty co-chairs:

- Polly Baca, first Latina elected to the Colorado State Senate and former vice chair of the Democratic National Committee;
- Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, first African American woman elected to Congress from a western state and first woman chair of the Congressional Black Caucus;
- Jo Ann Davidson, first woman Speaker of the Ohio State House and former co-chair of the Republican National Committee;
- Madeleine Kunin, first and only woman governor of Vermont; and
- Connie Morella, first woman elected to Congress from her district in Maryland.

For a full list of faculty, visit www.the2012project.us.

“Predictions of a decline in the number of elected women underscore the urgent need for The 2012 Project,” said Mary Hughes, founder and director of the campaign. “The number of women in elected office has increased only slightly over the last 20 years and flat-lined the last 10. With the creation of new and open seats through reapportionment, the election of 2012 is our best chance in a decade to add significant numbers of women in Congress and the state legislatures.”

The 2012 Project targets professional, “baby boomer” women in the fields of finance, technology, science, energy, environment, international relations, health, and small business.

Last month, the faculty of former elected women began speaking to these audiences seeking to interest potential candidates. The veterans shared what motivated them to run initially and how they made a difference in office. Women interested in taking the next steps are connected to training and leadership programs, fundraising networks, and political support organizations that can provide the roadmap to a successful campaign.

“The women who have agreed to serve on The 2012 Project faculty and as co-chairs form the backbone of our campaign,” said Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP. “ Their stories and experiences will provide the inspiration that will move new women to run. And we know that when women run, women win.”

Women make up 17 percent of Congress and 24 percent of state legislatures. The US ranks 73rd in the world in the number of women in elected office, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The last major increase in the number of elected women occurred in the post-reapportionment election of 1992, known as “The Year of the Woman.” In that election, 24 new women were elected to Congress.

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.