

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GOVERNOR TAKES PART IN GOP WOMEN LEADERS FORUM, HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE**

Gov. Christie Whitman today discussed the status of the Republican Party and the important role the women are playing in public office and in business during her address to the Republican Women Leaders Forum.

"Republican women at the local, state, and national levels have long shown they care about people. They are in the forefront of public and private efforts to enhance the quality of life for all Americans," said Gov. Whitman.

"One thing I know we Republicans agree on: all issues are women's issues. Women, like men, want a balanced budget, less government, and a strong America. We want safe streets, and a better, more accountable education system," said the Governor.

The Republican Women Leaders Forum runs from April 28-30 and is being sponsored by the women members of Congress, the Republican National Committee Co-Chair's Office and the National Federation of Republican Women. Attendees will include small business owners, corporate executives, educators, health-care professionals, government leaders, humanitarians, and community activists.

A copy of the Governor's remarks is attached.

**GOVERNOR WHITMAN'S REMARKS  
REPUBLICAN WOMEN LEADERS FORUM  
WASHINGTON, DC  
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1998**

Thank you, Marge (Roukema), and good evening, everyone. I am delighted to join the impressive group of speakers and participants taking part in this important conference.

It's essential that we meet to help shape the future of our party - and to figure out how to communicate our message of hope and opportunity more effectively to women around the country.

Jane Austen, a fine author much in vogue these days, wrote, "One cannot have too large a party." Although she was referring to parties of the social kind, her sentiment applies equally as well to political parties today.

In a society in which thousands of organizations compete for the same limited amount of interest, time, and talent, parties, like most other groups, strive to be inclusive. No political party wants to narrow its base. The more support it can attract, the more likely it is to be infused with fresh ideas and energy -- and to advance its goals.

That's why the Permanent Majority Project is so important. As research shows, many women agree with us on the issues. We're just not communicating effectively

with them. It's not our ideas that need changing, it's our delivery. Conference topics like "Communicating Our Way to the Top" will go a long way toward ensuring our party's success.

I know our party has a good story to tell and that as women we may have the best chance of telling it. Republican women have always had a special talent for bringing the right mix of intelligence, common sense, and compassion to government.

I'm sure many of you remember the great Millicent Fenwick, who added style and candor not only to New Jersey's politics but also to the U.S. House of Representatives, where she served four terms. Millicent once said, "The only people who should be in government are those who care more about people than they do about power."

Republican women at the local, state, and national levels have long shown they care about people. They are in the forefront of public and private efforts to enhance the quality of life for all Americans.

The application of real life experiences to real life issues makes Republican women effective legislators.

We have to let the rest of the country know that we have a diverse group of decision-makers at every level of the party. I'm proud of our party's record of support for women candidates. According to the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, increases in Republican women accounted for most of the gains for women at all levels of politics since 1994.

Republican women hold 45 of the nation's elected statewide offices, compared to 34 held by Democrat women. Ten of the 18 women lieutenant governors in the country are Republicans. And two out of three women governors in the country are Republicans – and believe me, I'm glad to have the company.

The number of women in Congress is at an all-time high, both in the Senate and in the House. It is true that in Congress, Democrat women outnumber Republicans, and have for quite a while. However, when Republicans gained the majority in Congress, an historic number of women gained long-overdue appointments to prominent committees and leadership positions. They are in positions of authority that Democrat women could only dream of in the past. For example, New Jersey can boast that its only congresswoman, Republican Marge Roukema, chairs a key subcommittee on banking.

Believe me, the Republican Party is not a jenny-come-lately to inclusiveness. As the party of Lincoln, we paved the way for many "firsts" -- both elective and appointive.

In 1916, Republican Jeanette Rankin of Montana was the first woman elected to the House of Representatives. President Eisenhower appointed the first woman Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Oveta Culp Hobby. He also appointed Republican Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce as the first woman to serve as a United States ambassador to a major power, Italy.

During the Nixon administration, Anne Armstrong of Texas became the first national co-chair of either party and first woman keynote speaker at a major political party's national convention. In 1975, Gerald Ford appointed the first woman Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Carla Hills. President Reagan appointed the first woman to the United States Supreme Court. Over the course of two terms, he selected women for over 1,400 high-level policy-making positions and was the first to have three women serving concurrently in his cabinet.

And opportunity in Republican administrations continued to climb. In just one term, President Bush appointed about 2,500 women to high-level positions, including five to cabinet-level posts.

All these women flourished after taking the most important step -- getting involved in public service. And it's so important that we do. It's more than a matter of equity. We bring a different perspective to the table on many issues. We may choose different issues to focus on than our male colleagues, and we tend to be consensus builders. As Susan B. Anthony once said, "There will never be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers."

I don't think the world would be perfect if all legislators and leaders were women. But we need to be fully represented. The more diversity in the process, the more likely the process will work. And as Republicans, we'll be better able to attract more people to our mission and our message.

One thing I know we Republicans agree on: all issues are women's issues. Women, like men, want a balanced budget, less government, and a strong America. We want safe streets, and a better, more accountable education system. And we want the same opportunity to succeed -- or fail -- that is afforded to men.

As a party, we want to work toward these opportunities with as many of our fellow citizens as possible. We want to ensure that more Americans are at the table than ever before -- not looking in through the window with their noses pressed up against the glass.

What's next for the GOP? I believe we need to maintain our core values -- lower taxes, less government red-tape, greater freedom for the individual, and more authority moving to those levels of government that are closer to the people.

We need to do this without scaring people with harsh rhetoric that doesn't mirror reality. We need to let people know that we believe in government that is responsible and caring.

And that we trust the people to decide what's best for them. That's the glue that unites all Republicans. And it should be a message that appeals to all Americans -- male or female.

Let's let them know they are welcome to join our party. As Jane Austin said, it can never be too large.

Thank you.