

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Whitman Nominates Franklin Pastor Rev. DeForest "Buster" Soaries as Secretary of State

NJ Gov. Christie Whitman today nominated Rev. Dr. DeForest Soaries, of Franklin Park, to be the next NJ Secretary of State. Rev. Soaries will replace Carol Cronheim, who has been serving as Acting Secretary of State since July.

The Secretary of State oversees the arts, humanities, and historical treasures of New Jersey, as well as leads the Martin Luther King Commission, and the state's "Many Faces, One Family" initiative.

"Dr. Soaries has long provided guidance and advice to this administration. In nominating him today, I am looking to him to become a partner with me in our efforts to instill a sense of personal responsibility in adults and young people in New Jersey," Gov. Whitman said.

"Rev. Soaries' abilities are so extensive and varied that I expect that he will be an advisor on issues that transcend departmental lines. He will be actively involved in advising me on issues beyond the traditional responsibilities of the Secretary of State, including urban redevelopment and community development.

"Starting a dialogue that imbues our children with an understanding of personal responsibility is one of the most important legacies we can leave. I can think of no one in America more qualified to help advance that discussion than Rev. Soaries," she said.

"In addition to being a partner in our mission of personal responsibility, I will ask Rev. Soaries to head up our `Many Faces One Family` initiative and help lead our outreach efforts to ensure that every New Jerseyan feels that he or she is a respected member of our community," the Governor said.

"There are few people with the depth of experience and understanding that Dr. Soaries possesses, and I am excited to make him an official member of the Administration," she said.

"I want to thank Carol Cronheim for stepping in as Acting Secretary of State during a very critical time and ensuring that the Department of State reorganization proceeded seamlessly. I am looking forward to having Carol rejoin my staff as a senior advisor," said Gov. Whitman.

Dr. Soaries is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset. Since he became the leader of that church in 1990, it has increased its membership by 3,500 people. With more than 5,000 members, it is one of the fastest growing African-American churches in the state.

Dr. Soaries also founded the First Baptist Community Development Corporation, which has worked at revitalization efforts in New Brunswick and Franklin. He also founded the Renaissance Community Development Credit Union, CDC Properties housing company, and several other economic, spiritual and education programs for church members and the Franklin and New Brunswick communities.

An internationally renowned speaker and author, he is the host of New Jersey Network's "Straight Up with Buster Soaries," which focuses on helping teens find solutions to their problems. He has appeared in many video and audio tapes used for educational and religious organizations.

Dr. Soaries holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fordham University of New York, a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

Dr. Soaries lives in Franklin Park with his wife, Donna, and their twin sons, Malcolm and Martin.

Rev. Soaries can be contacted through Carla Beverly at (732)247-3987. He will attend tomorrow's Law Enforcement Summit with Gov. Whitman at the Meadowlands Sheraton.