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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: November 17, 1999

Governor Whitman and Secretary of State Soaries to Advance Faith- Based Initiatives at the Republican Governors Association Annual Conference

Governor Christie Whitman tomorrow is taking her message of faith-based community revitalization to the Republican Governors Association's (RGA) Annual Conference in Carlsbad, California. The Governor will be joined by New Jersey Secretary of State DeForest B. Soaries, Jr.

"While New Jersey is a state with many faces, I have always believed we are essentially one family. By distributing funds to faith-based organizations for the development of community services and outreach, we are helping the many faces of our state to improve their lives. That's what being a supportive family member is all about," said Gov. Whitman.

"Faith-based assistance is an important tool for making New Jersey a better place for all residents in which to live, work and do business. At the end of the day, improving the lives of all New Jerseyans is what is most important," the Governor added.

The theme of this year's conference, Helping Every Family Achieve the American Dream, will focus on how Republican Governors across the nation are partnering with community leaders in creative, new ways to help revitalize communities and enhance the quality of life for all people.

The highlight of the plenary session will be remarks by Secretary of State, DeForest B. Soaries, Jr., a member of the Whitman cabinet and a pioneer of faith-based programs.

According to Gov. Whitman, Secretary Soaries, who is also a senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, is deeply committed to helping enrich the quality of life for all people, which starts at home in the communities of New Jersey.

Citing New Jersey's faith-based programs as an example for the nation, Secretary Soaries said, "It is an honor to join Governor Whitman and share with the Republican Governors Association about the exciting impact that faith-based and non- traditional revitalization initiatives have yielded in our communities, our state, and across this great land. As we look to the future, we must look

for new and creative ways to ensure that everyone can achieve the American Dream."

Over the past year, New Jersey's Faith-Based Initiative has invested over \$5 million in more than 60 neighborhood organizations. These groups provide day care, job readiness training, community revitalization, and senior citizen programs.

As senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Secretary Soaries helped found the First Baptist Community Development Corporation; Renaissance Community Development Credit Union; CDC Properties housing company; Renaissance Employment and Training Academy; and helped develop numerous economic, spiritual, and educational programs for church and community members. Under his leadership and progressive ministry, his church has added 3,500 new members and is considered one of the fastest growing African-American churches in the state.

