

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: February 24, 1999

GOVERNOR SWEARS IN REV. DEFOREST "BUSTER" SOARIES OF FRANKLIN PARK AS SECRETARY OF STATE

Gov. Christie Whitman today swore in Rev. DeForest "Buster" Soaries of Franklin Park as Secretary of State.

"This is an office that's very much about people - the people who make history and the people who are the fabric of its culture," the Governor said. "And who better to reach out to people than Buster Soaries?"

"Buster is a minister and a mentor, renowned for his work with teenagers. He's a builder of communities, using economic and business savvy to jump-start redevelopment efforts in New Brunswick and Franklin Township," she said.

"Dr. Soaries has long provided guidance to this administration, and I'm especially pleased he'll be doing so in an official capacity as a member of my cabinet," Gov. Whitman said. "I'll look to him for advice concerning urban affairs and community development, for inspiration in promoting a sense of personal responsibility in our young people, and for leadership in celebrating the cultural diversity that makes our state so vital."

"Though these issues expand the traditional boundaries of the Secretary of State's office, remember that this office is first and foremost about the people of New Jersey," the Governor said. "And I know Dr. Soaries will serve our state with dignity. He has distinguished himself as a leader, a mentor, and a builder of communities."

The Secretary of State oversees and promotes 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 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 by 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.