

Group wants more women in Trenton

Published in the Asbury Park Press 08/18/05

BY [LAUREN O. KIDD](#)
GANNETT STATE BUREAU

TRENTON - New Jersey ranks 41st among the 50 states in the percentage of women serving in its state legislature, and all of the state's 15 congressional delegates in Washington are men.

Citing these statistics, a newly formed bipartisan group called Women Advocating for Good Government, or WAGG, visited the Statehouse Wednesday to endorse four female candidates - including Monmouth County Freeholder Amy Handlin - for state Assembly.

While women account for 57 percent of the Garden State electorate, according to a WAGG study of voter statistics from the last statewide election in New Jersey, only 16 percent of state legislators are women, filling 19 out of 120 seats.

"The political process needs the talent and the energy of everyone, not just half the population," said Handlin, a Republican candidate for Assembly in the 13th District, covering sections of Middlesex and Monmouth counties.

WAGG is pledging to help a bipartisan group of two incumbents and two challengers, including Handlin, win their respective districts.

Also endorsed were incumbents Charlotte Vandervalk, R-Bergen, and Linda Greenstein, D-Mercer, as well as Democratic candidate Pamela Rosen Lampitt, who is vying for an open seat in Camden County now held by Democratic Assemblywoman Mary Previte.

If Handlin were to win election, she would replace an incumbent in her party, Assemblyman Joseph Azzolina, R-Monmouth; she defeated him in the primary.

The group wants to "elect progressive women to the New Jersey Legislature and other levels of government, to educate women in the political process, to empower women to take political party leadership positions, and to raise funds to support these goals," according to its mission.

Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics, said New Jersey's "very strong party system" holds women back.