

Group supports women candidates

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Democrats and Republicans in statewide elected office here in New Jersey disagree on many things, but the majority of them share one characteristic: They're men.

In a state with one of the lowest levels of women elected to state government across the nation, a new bipartisan group has recently sprung up with the hope of changing all that.

The group, Women Advocating for Good Government, wants to lure more women into politics and to help out the few who are already in office.

Members of the organization, which is affiliated with the Women's Political Caucus of New Jersey, gathered at the State House yesterday to endorse four candidates from both parties for the state Assembly.

Leaders vowed to launch a grass-roots campaign to help incumbents in tough races as well as newcomers to the political process.

The group picked two incumbents, Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein, D-Plainsboro, and Assemblywoman Charlotte Vandervalk, R-Montvale, as well as two challengers, Pamela Rosen Lampitt, a Democratic candidate in the 6th District, and Amy Handlin, a Republican candidate in the 13th District.

Greenstein said yesterday the political structure doesn't always favor women getting involved in politics, noting that some women are wary of harsh campaigns.

"This is a wonderful movement," said Greenstein, who is running in the 14th District, one of the most-watched races in the state. "We will continue to make this a more fair and better state. The political process needs the talent and energy of everyone."

There are no women in the state's 15-member congressional delegation.

Only 15.8 percent of the Legislature is made up of women, ranking New Jersey 41st in the nation for female representation in the state legislature, according to the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

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