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Northern New Jersey

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**YWCA Northern New Jersey, the Center for American Women and Politics, and New Jersey State Senator Loretta Weinberg Hold Roundtable Discussion on Preventing Sexual Harassment and Assault in New Jersey Politics**

Today, in commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the emergence of the global #MeToo movement and the 50th anniversary of the enactment of Title IX, YWCA Northern New Jersey (YWCANNJ) and the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) hosted a roundtable discussion featuring a diverse panel of experts on harassment, sexual assault, and misogyny in New Jersey politics, titled “Creating Safe Workplaces in NJ Politics.” The conversation highlighted YWCANNJ’s [recently unveiled workplace training video](#) for political campaigns on creating a safer environment for staffers, expert advice on identifying sexual harassment in the workplace, and what legal rights and resources victims have when experiencing harassment.

Panel participants included **Loretta Weinberg**, former New Jersey State Senator; **Helen Archontou**, CEO of YWCANNJ; **Jean Sinzdak**, Associate Director of CAWP; **Adrian O. Mapp**, Mayor of the City of Plainfield; **Kirsten Scheurer Branigan**, Managing Partner of KSBranigan Law; **Kathleen N. Fennelly**, President of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation; **Mona Lena Krook**, Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Women & Politics Ph.D. Program at Rutgers University; **Sabeen Masih**, Senior Vice President of Capital Impact Group; and **Petra Gaskins**, Chief of Staff for New Jersey State Senator Andrew Zwicker.

“Ever since the #MeToo movement reached global prominence in October 2017, women have been empowered to call out toxic work environments and demand systemic change that creates workplaces free from harassment, intimidation, and sexual violence. New Jersey politics is no different. We are grateful to the women who have come forward to shine a light on this harrowing issue and to our allies who have taken the time today to join us for this important conversation on creating a solutions-focused plan for establishing a safe work environment,” stated YWCANNJ CEO Helen Archontou. “I want to thank Senator Loretta Weinberg for being a champion for women in New Jersey politics and for her tireless effort to push for solutions within the legislature even after her retirement, and to my fellow panelists, the New Jersey State Bar Foundation and the Center for American Women and Politics, for helping us continue to raise awareness of this critically important topic.”

“The Center for American Women and Politics is honored to co-host this panel with YWCA Northern New Jersey and alongside experts and practitioners of workplace safety policy and

politics. Since our founding, CAWP has been at the forefront of not only advocating for greater representation of women in politics but also championing women's rights at the policy level," remarked CAWP Associate Director Jean Sinzdak. "Our research shows that out of New Jersey's 120 legislative seats, just 41 are occupied by women. Many women who have reached positions of political leadership began their careers as political staffers, while just as many, if not more, women who had to give up their dream of working in politics because of a toxic culture, weakening the women's leadership pipeline. Today's event is an important reminder that sexual harassment and assault have no place in New Jersey politics."

YWCANNJ unveiled their workplace training video featuring Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, Senator Loretta Weinberg, and other experts in April 2022 to help train campaign and political office staff on creating a safer, more respectful work environment. The video, "Creating Safe Workplaces in NJ Politics," is based on the findings of the ["Report of the Workgroup on Harassment, Sexual Assault and Misogyny in New Jersey Politics,"](#) developed by Senator Weinberg's workgroup.

### **About YWCA Northern New Jersey**

#### **About YWCA Northern New Jersey**

For over a century, YWCA Northern New Jersey has improved the lives of thousands of women, girls, and families and is on the forefront of the fight against gender and racial discrimination. We work to build more just and inclusive communities through programs for women and girls, anti-racism training, and policy advocacy. We operate healingSPACE, Bergen County's only Sexual Violence Resource Center (hotline number: 201-487-2227) and provide year-round child care, and senior wellness programs. YWCA Northern New Jersey serves Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, and Passaic counties. Learn more by visiting [ywcannj.org](http://ywcannj.org), and following [@ywcannj](#) on social media.

### **About the Center for American Women and Politics**

The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about women's political participation in the United States. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about the role of women in American politics, enhance women's influence in public life, and expand the diversity of women in politics and government. CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's underrepresentation in political leadership with effective, intersectional, and imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's five decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.

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