

**Press Release  
From the Office of  
State Representative  
Gale D. Candaras**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CANDARAS AND ROGENESS JOIN COLLEAGUES COMMEMORATING 30<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF CAUCUS OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS**

**STATE HOUSE** -- Representatives Gale D. Candaras (D-Wilbraham) and Mary Rogeness, (R-Longmeadow) joined house and senate colleagues to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators at the State House late last month.

The Caucus of Women Legislators is a bi-partisan organization of women legislators whose mission it is to advance the interests of women throughout the Commonwealth. Executive Director of the Caucus, Erica Mattison, noted that when the Caucus was first formed in January of 1975, there were 17 female legislators in Massachusetts. Today, 25 percent of the 200 House and Senate members are women. The number of women legislators has remained fairly constant over the past ten years.

The Caucus provides support for women legislators and their initiatives. The members produce an annual agenda of legislative priorities upon which to focus their efforts. In addition, the Caucus hosts forums on topics such as women in government, domestic violence, health care and financial planning. Lending support to female legislative staffers, the Caucus offers a mentoring program through which females who are new State House employees are paired up with more experienced female staffers.



**Mass. Caucus of Women Legislators**

Front row (L-R) Christine Canavan, Elizabeth Poirier, Lida Harkins, Gale Candaras, Alice Wolf, Ellen Story, Kathleen Teehan, Martha Walz, Deborah Blumer, Linda Forry. Center row (L-R) Patricia Haddad, Harriett Stanley, Susan Pope, Shirley Owens-Hicks, Geraldine Creedon, Mary Grant, Rachel Kaprielian, Ruth Balser, Mary Rogeness. Back row (L-R) Marie St. Fleur, Jennifer Flanagan, Marie Parente, Joyce Spiliotis, Kathi-Anne Reinstien, Patricia Jehlen, Alice Peisch.

Representative Candaras said that the mentoring of women and girls and grooming them for careers in politics is an important function of the Caucus membership. “Most young women do not consider a career in politics as an option. One of the goals of the Caucus of Women Legislators is to raise awareness among young women that they too can pursue careers in public service just as readily as men and it is our mission to help prepare them and to lead the way,” Candaras said.

Commenting on the legislative record of the organization, Representative Rogeness stated, “The Caucus has earned its reputation for effectiveness by welcoming all women

legislators to join together in support of common goals that enhance the lives of the women of Massachusetts. That unity has led to effectiveness beyond our numbers.”

As the Caucus has grown, so has its reach. At its inception, the Caucus’ efforts were centered on the passage and implementation of the state Equal Rights Amendment followed quickly by initiatives addressing the problems of maternity leave, midwifery, childcare, displaced homemakers and equal credit opportunities. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, new issues were added to the agenda such as affirmative action, domestic violence, sexual harassment and services for the elderly. The mid-to-late 1980s saw the Caucus focus on health care, pregnant and parenting teens, surrogacy, gender bias in the courts, discrimination, housing, women in the criminal justice system and poverty. Issues of domestic violence and welfare reform dominated the 1990s. For the Caucus, the effect these critical issues and their outcomes have on women and children in Massachusetts have been of paramount importance.