



For Immediate Release

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‘Hoosier Women Forward’ launches first-ever leadership program aimed at preparing and propelling Democratic women into influential public service roles across Indiana

Indianapolis, Jan. 18, 2018 – The paltry number of women serving in the Indiana legislature. The rise in awareness of sexual harassment and assault. The push for equal pay. These are just some of the issues that drove the founders of [“Hoosier Women Forward”](#) (HWF) to do something – to organize and launch their new nonprofit, which is aimed at preparing and propelling Democratic women into leadership roles across the state, now and in the future.

During a news conference at the Statehouse today, HWF officially kicked off its plans for the new year. Representing the HWF Board of Directors, Cummins Inc. Vice President Marya Rose, State Rep. Terri Austin, City of Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Community Activist Elise Shrock and Attorney and Board Chair Liane Hulka talked about the HWF development program, which will get underway this summer.

“We want to harness the energy and talent that’s out there, all across Indiana, and create a powerful, diverse network of engaged Democratic women,” Hulka said. “Our mission is to increase the number and influence of Democratic women in elected and appointed governmental positions at the local, state and federal levels, and in positions of influence in their communities and the private sector.

“Too often, women feel like their voices aren’t valued, whether it’s in the workplace or when the male-dominated Indiana General Assembly is deliberating women’s issues,” she added. “You can look no further than the #metoo movement to see how powerful our voices can be for change. We want to take that energy and those voices and equip women with the tools they need to excel in leadership positions.”

HWF will select a group of 20 to 25 outstanding Democratic women each year through a competitive application process to participate in a nine-month leadership training program. Applications for the inaugural class will be available in May of 2018 and participants will be announced in August.

“Hoosier Women Forward is not a candidate training program. We want our women to understand that there are other ways to serve the public good than just running for office,” Rose said. “While having more female elected officials is an important goal in itself, our focus is to help women into positions of influence where they can affect positive change both in the public and private arenas. My leadership role in business and involvement in community organizations are the ways in which I am directly impacting our state.”

Although women represent more than 50% of the voting public in Indiana, only two of the state's 11-member Congressional delegation are women. And neither are Democrats. Women make up just 20% of the 150 seats in the Indiana legislature.

"I only have to glance to my right and left in the House chambers to see that this kind of effort is needed," Austin said. "My female colleagues and I have our seat at the table now, but we need other women to join us. Let's create a pipeline of Democratic women who are ready to run for office at the local, state and federal levels. Let's work together so the majority of Hoosiers in this state are actually represented when crucial policy decisions are made."

"Every level of government needs more women at the top," Freeman-Wilson said. "From party leaders and campaign managers to school board members and county commissioners, I'm hopeful that this will have an impact on local elections for many years to come."

Women selected for the HWF training program must demonstrate an interest in public policy, political advocacy and advancing Indiana forward with progressive policies and ideas. The nonprofit will strive to ensure that each class has a diverse background of personal and professional life experiences reflecting the economic, geographical, ethnic and cultural diversity in Indiana.

"It's been exciting to work with a group of women from all kinds of backgrounds to develop plans for this fantastic program," Shrock said. "And we're committed to ensuring that diversity is a priority as we move forward. This a great opportunity for young people like me to get engaged and make a real impact on our communities."

In addition to the members noted earlier, the following women are also among the HWF Board of Directors:

State Rep. Cherrish Pryor, Secretary	Cordelia Lewis-Burks
Brittany Solis, Treasurer	Katie Moreau
Former State Rep. Gail Riecken	Annette Craycraft
Former State Rep. Susan Crosby	Amy Levander
Former Lt. Gov. Kathy Davis	Cindy Simon Skjodt
Anne Doran	Former State Sen. Vi Simpson
Catherine Fanello	Ronnetta Spalding
Councillor Sharon Tucker	Former State Rep. Christina Hale

A Section 527 nonprofit political organization, Hoosier Women Forward will raise funds through private donations and fundraising events. To learn more about the nonprofit, you can go to www.hoosierwomenforward.org, or visit the organization on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

To donate to HWF, please go to www.hoosierwomenforward.org.

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