



Delaware House of Representatives House Majority Caucus

*****EMBARGOED until Midnight, March 2***
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REP. KEELEY SERVING AS ELECTION MONITOR FOR IRAQI ELECTIONS

Wilmington legislator one of 10 U.S. state lawmakers participating in March 7 elections

WILMINGTON – Rep. Helene M. Keeley, D-Wilmington, will be part of a special delegation of elected women from across the United States traveling to Iraq this week to monitor the country’s March 7 elections. The women were selected by the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State.

Rep. Keeley, who is Delaware’s state director for NFWL, is one of 10 women in state government selected for this role, and the only legislator from the northeast quadrant of the country.

“I was lucky enough to be asked to go and jumped at the chance to be able to participate,” Rep. Keeley said. “This is very much an honor to represent the United States and have the opportunity to go over there and help an emerging democracy hold free and fair elections.”

NFWL is one of only two groups of Americans that have been invited to oversee Iraq’s election. The other group includes former members of Congress. NFWL has been asked to participate in the Iraqi elections due to the unique status of women in Iraq. There are more than 1 million widows in Iraq, many very highly educated, and there is a requirement that 25 percent of the candidates on the ballot be women. NFWL is charged with bringing a calm and credible presence to the elections.

Rep. Keeley said that the role of women in government cannot be overstated and was impressed by Iraq’s national law that one-quarter of the candidates be female. She noted that in the 41-member Delaware House of Representatives, the number of women has fallen from 12 to eight from the previous General Assembly session.

“Rep. Keeley has shown herself to be a strong leader through NFWL, and I know her presence in Iraq during this historic time will ensure the Iraqi people have a real chance at democracy,” stated Robin Read, NFWL’s President and CEO.

Upon arrival, the women will receive specific training for the elections. They will be paired up and have escorts to take them to various polling places in both the Green and Red Zones. Rep. Keeley said the women will serve as election monitors, not entirely dissimilar from poll workers in this country.

“I know this is not a vacation. This is very serious,” Rep. Keeley said. “We are there for a reason: to make sure these elections run smoothly. I’m looking forward to helping the Iraqi people take advantage of a right that so many of us in this country take for granted, the right to elect their leaders.”

NFWL has been invited by the U.S. Department of State and foreign nations to bring delegations of elected women together to monitor elections, mentor women leaders across the globe, and participate in important dialogues concerning free trade and other vital issues on several occasions starting in 1993.

The National Foundation for Women Legislators is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that aims to empower women legislators with strategic resources and information. It has been fulfilling its mission with leadership training and development since 1983.

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