

NWPC-CA “Celebration and Conversation” – November 12 in San Jose



More than [60] members of National Women’s Political Caucus from all over California gathered the Saturday after the 2016 General Election in San Jose to attend a “Celebration and Conversation.” Members of the Silicon Valley caucus hosted the event, with members attending from Orange County, Fresno, Monterey, Sacramento, and several local caucuses in Los Angeles County.

Although it seemed that the “celebration” part was not to be, the speakers and members turned what might have been a wake into a wake-up call to turn defeat into future victory. Speakers shared their deep sense of loss over the defeat of Secretary Hillary Clinton for President. But they also sounded calls to carry the work forward and to increase our efforts for women to be full partners in America’s democracy.

The headline speaker was outgoing U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, who reminded us not to act out of anger, but rather to call out and challenge any effort by President-elect Donald Trump or his supporters to roll back the many gains for women of the past several decades. Senator Boxer talked also about her recent memoir, “The Art of Tough” and signed copies of the book for attendees. Always an inspiration to California women, she vowed to create a woman’s Super PAC that will be an essential tool to continuing our progress, even in the face of setbacks.

Former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin—the only woman to hold the top job in California education and a favorite of Caucus members—talked about her decision to run for Governor of California in 2018 and how she believes she can win over several male candidates who

have previously announced their entry into the race. She will focus on education from pre-K to college, describing it as the most fundamental and important issue for a governor to tackle. She promised “the courage, the vision, and the heart” for the race—and was warmly received at the luncheon event.

The final speaker was Kimberly Ellis, long-time Executive Director of Emerge California, which provides intensive training for Democratic women considering running for office. She is leaving Emerge by the end of the year in order to campaign full-time for the job of Chair of the California Democratic Party—a position that will be filled in May 2017. If she is elected, she would be the first woman Chair of the party since the middle 1980s, only the third woman ever, and the first African-American woman to head the party. Kimberly was endorsed by NWPC California in September. She urged the audience to get involved in Democratic Party activities leading up to the convention in May and to consider running as delegates and supporting her bid.

Finally, a panel discussion pursued in depth the nuts and bolts of seeking and obtaining appointments to Boards and Commissions and to hired staff positions at all levels of government. Marguerite Cooper, a retired diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service, spoke of federal appointment opportunities, although she is greatly disappointed that some of the opportunities for women anticipated in a Clinton administration will not materialize. Elmy Bermejo, Regional Representative for the U.S. Secretary of Labor in California, has held both commission and staff positions at the state level and talked about possible appointments through the legislature and statewide executive offices, as well as the Governor’s appointments. And Karriann Farrell Hinds discussed her appointments to the L.A. County Commission on the Status of Women AND to the state Accountancy Board. All agreed that, in addition to being a way to learn policy and offer service to your community, appointment to virtually any board or commission is an excellent addition to qualifications for elected office—and can often smooth the path toward elected office.

Ending with a reception, the event gave members and guests a real boost after a grim Election Day, allowed people to process their grief, and enabled some steps toward a path to the future. It was a hopeful and constructive event, even if it was not quite the “celebration” we had envisioned.