

Women Legislators Retreat November 1-2, 2007

On November 1, over half (37) of Minnesota's women legislators gathered in Chaska for a bi-partisan overnight retreat sponsored by the Center on Women and Public Policy, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota. Twenty-one House Democrats, 4 House Republicans and 11 Senate Democrats and 1 Senate Republican participated. By all indicators the retreat was a resounding success. Most legislators rated the overall value of the retreat 5 out of 5 (average 4.6) and most said they were highly likely to participate in future retreats.

The Center on Women and Public Policy, with leadership from Speaker Margaret Kelliher and Senator Tarryl Clark, designed the program based on the advice of a bi-partisan planning group. Planning group participants included: Representative Tina Liebling, Representative Kathy Tingstad, Senator Sandy Pappas, Representative Erin Murphy and Representative Carol McFarlane. The goals of the retreat were to build relationships and skills.

On Thursday, November 1, the retreat focused on being an authentic and credible woman leader in a climate that is always competitive and sometimes gender-biased. In a lively, interactive format using lectures, group exercises, and dialogue, dynamic and award winning speaker and educator Delorese Ambrose facilitated a highly rated session (4.8 out of 5, median score 5 out of 5) that allowed participants to deepen their relationships with each other as they strengthened their leadership skills. Together, the group explored participants' experiences as women legislators and the latest thinking on leadership development and personal mastery.



On Friday, November 2, communication coaches helped participants work on getting their message across on camera. This session gave legislators an opportunity to be in front of a camera while practicing pivoting. Pivoting is a communication technique designed to steer the conversation in a new direction. Participants used stories and values to get their key message heard. This approach allowed participants to deepen their knowledge of each others lives and their relationships with each other, while also practicing communication skills on camera. Four experienced coaches from the non-partisan White House Project led the critique/feedback discussions, which were also highly rated (4.7 out of 5, median score 5).

