

Stockton Research: N.J. Legislature Is Not That Representative

Older, Less Diverse and Better Educated than General Population

For Immediate Release

Thursday, September 10, 2015

Contact: Maryjane Briant
News and Media Relations Director
Galloway Township, NJ 08205
Maryjane.Briant@Stockton.edu
(609) 652-4593

Galloway, NJ -The New Jersey state Legislature does not look a lot like the statewide constituency it represents, according to research published today by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

The New Jersey Legislature is older, has less racial and ethnic diversity, is dominated by males, is much better educated and is more white collar than the overall New Jersey population, according to the report, [New Jersey State Legislature: A Demographic Profile](#), by Stockton University researcher John Froomjian and graduate assistant Daniel Rockefeller.

The researchers compiled a database of demographic characteristics of all 120 members of the state Senate and General Assembly, and compared those characteristics with the general population.

"Ideally, a legislative body should reflect the makeup of the population it represents," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the Hughes Center.

He noted that voters elect senators and Assembly members in 40 separate legislative districts, each with local issues and personalities, and individual voters do not cast ballots for the entire Legislature.

One of the starkest differences between the public and lawmakers is in the level of education, with the Legislature much better educated than the public. Statewide, only 36 percent of adults aged 25 years and older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, while 85 percent of legislators have. Only 14 percent in the population have attained a graduate degree at any level, compared with 63 percent of the Legislature. Among state lawmakers, 24 percent have attained a master's degree, and 39 percent have a doctorate.

Consistent with their education levels, legislators are more than twice as likely to work in a white-collar occupation, defined here as including professional, scientific, management,

-more-

-continued from page 1-

administrative, finance and real estate. Fifty-six percent of legislators work in those fields, compared with 21 percent of the general population. One factor in the high number of legislative graduate degrees is the fact that 25 percent of legislators have a law degree.

While most legislators have college degrees, only a minority (43 percent) went to New Jersey colleges or universities, and a similar minority (41 percent) attended public institutions.

Other findings of the analysis include the following.

- The median age for the New Jersey population is 39, but it is 53 in the Legislature, where 73 percent of its members are 50 years old or older.
- Men are significantly over-represented in the Legislature. The breakdown by sex is fairly even in the general population, with men at 49 percent and women at 51 percent. However, 70 percent of all legislators are men, and 30 percent are women.
- The general population is more racially and ethnically diverse than the Legislature. Whites make up 69 percent of the population, but 83 percent of the Legislature. Asians and Hispanics are under-represented. Asians make up 9 percent of the population, but only 2 percent of the Legislature. Hispanics make up 19 percent of the population, but only 9 percent of the Legislature. However, African Americans make up 14 percent of the New Jersey population, and are 15 percent of the Legislature.
- New Jersey is considered a melting pot of diverse ethnicities, and is a destination of immigrants. More than one in five (21 percent) New Jersey residents was born in a foreign country. Only 2 percent of state legislators are foreign born.

Local government appears to be a major training ground in which state legislators gain governmental experience. Eighty-two percent had local government experience at the municipal or county level.

In addition, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of state senators had previously served in the Assembly. In light of that fact, senators tend to have served in the Legislature longer than members of the Assembly. Still, there is much greater turnover in the lower house. Seventy-four percent of Assembly members have been legislators for 10 years or less. Only 23 percent of the senators have been in the Legislature for 10 years or less.

Legislators are heavy users of social media, although the Senate is more so. In the Assembly, 79 percent have their own Facebook page, while 93 percent in the Senate are on Facebook. Fifty-three percent in the Assembly use a twitter account, while 75 percent in the Senate do.

Methodology

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University created a database of demographic and biographical variables for all 120 members of the 215th state Legislature. The database includes newly members as of May 18, 2015. The data were researched from the state Legislature's website (www.njleg.state.nj.us/), from individual legislators' Web pages, from Fitzgerald's Legislative Manual (Skinder-Strauss Associates, Newark, N.J.) and from interviews with legislative staff.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The Center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found at www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter and can be followed on

Twitter@hughescenter.

#