

# President's Letter



Dear Friends:

This marks the ninth year that The Forum of Executive Women has published the results of our research on the status of women in the executive suites and boardrooms of our region's top public companies. The Forum not only monitors and reports such statistics locally, but helped spawn a national benchmarking program in collaboration with 12 similar women's leadership groups located in key cities across the country—under the banner of the InterOrganization Network (ION), which we co-founded five years ago.

As many know, market trends do not move quickly. It can take years to tilt a needle that has been pointed in a direction based on historical, conventional practice toward a visionary one, based on evolving demographics and understanding. This is clearly what we have seen as we continue evaluating the advancement of women on major public company boards.

This is why The Forum does more than simply report the annual numbers. Each year we also highlight creative people, programs and thought-provoking perspectives that are helping to turn the tide. By fostering conversation, we believe we will increase understanding and encourage a greater sense of collaboration across the multiple constituencies that can hasten progress.

As you will read in this year's report, women tend to call upon similar, common characteristics when they lead through challenging times. Women leaders are steadfast – yet resilient – as we stay the course but also strive to identify alternative ways to coalesce multiple groups to channel their energies into mutually beneficial goals.

And this is why The Forum of Executive Women will continue a multi-pronged approach to advancing the impact and influence of women on corporate boards, in executive suites and across the private and public sectors.

We will continue leveraging our collective power to:

- Ensure that the senior-most women from our region's most influential business, economic, academic, cultural, political and service sectors are Forum members, working collaboratively toward our shared vision.
- Deepen our relationships with our region's key companies, organizations and entities, encouraging them to work with us to identify and cultivate women leaders in C-suite and boardroom positions.
- Mentor, educate and inspire emerging women leaders to expand the pipeline of talented women ready to serve.
- Spark broad-reaching and impactful conversations about programs and policies that enhance opportunities for more women in governance.
- Develop strategic alliances with other influential associations and organizations that will help us achieve our mission.

We trust you will find this year's research and commentary of interest. We also hope you will join us in the dialogue by sharing this report and your resulting ideas and opinions with your own spheres of influence. And, please feel free to contact us if you would like to become more involved in supporting The Forum's mission.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the work of The Forum of Executive Women.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Toplin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names clearly legible.

**Ellen Toplin**  
President