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SC Women in Leadership Recognizes President & CEO of SC Ports Barbara Melvin
Annual Leading Women Dinner Honors Women Who Have Blazed Trails in Civic Leadership

July 18, 2023 (Columbia, South Carolina) – SC Women in Leadership (SC WIL) will honor SC Ports President and CEO, Barbara Melvin, as their 2023 Leading Woman at the annual Leading Women Dinner on September 26, 2023 at 701 Whaley Street in Columbia. SC WIL is a statewide multi-partisan organization working to inform, inspire, and involve qualified women in elected and appointed leadership.

The Leading Women Dinner recognizes and celebrates the South Carolina women who have stepped forward to seek elective (win or lose) and appointive office, honors women who have blazed trails in civic leadership so that others may follow, and builds a support network to encourage women to vie for civic leadership roles. The Leading Woman, Leadership Legacy, and Up-and-Coming awards honor women in local, statewide, and appointive offices that have devoted themselves to community service, demonstrated a commitment to working across party lines, and whose civic work has improved the quality of life for all South Carolinians.

Melvin is the first woman to lead a top 10 U.S. operating container port. As CEO, Melvin leads a team of more than 1,000 people who keep freight moving at the Port of Charleston and rail-served Inland Ports Greer and Dillon, supporting more than 225,000 jobs throughout South Carolina. Melvin previously served as SC Ports' Chief Operating Officer since 2018. During her more than 20-year tenure, Melvin has held several senior leadership positions with SC Ports. Her leadership style exemplifies the principles of cooperation and collaboration that SC WIL promotes to bring economic prosperity to South Carolina for generations to come. In addition to overseeing numerous infrastructure projects, Melvin led the Charleston Harbor Deepening Project, resulting in the deepest harbor on the East Coast at 52 feet.

"Barbara Melvin is navigating uncharted waters as the first woman to lead an operating port of this size," said Barbara Rackes, CEO and president of the SC WIL board of directors. Rackes continued, "She has proved herself a capable captain, working collaboratively with state elected leaders, members of Congress, state and federal agencies, project partners, business and maritime community leaders, and SC Ports officials through the historic and monumental harbor deepening project of the eighth largest U.S. container port. We celebrate her achievements as a model our future women leaders can emulate."

"The collaboration and partnership I have seen in the maritime and logistics industry illustrate that we can achieve great things when working together," says SC Ports President and CEO, Barbara Melvin. "I am honored to be recognized by SC Women in Leadership as a leader whose civic work has

strengthened the supply chain to bring economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all South Carolinians,” Melvin said. “It is hard to be what you cannot see, and seeing women break barriers enables future generations of girls to envision themselves as leaders.”

Due to institutional, socio-economic, and cultural barriers that persist in South Carolina, running for elected office is daunting for female candidates. Although 51% of South Carolina’s population is female, only 14.7% of seats in the state legislature are held by women and women are similarly underrepresented in local elected office and on public appointed boards and commissions. South Carolina voters have never sent a woman to represent them in the U.S. Senate. Additionally, since 1993, there had been no women at all representing South Carolina in the U.S. Congress until Nancy Mace (R-Charleston) was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2020. No woman of color from South Carolina has ever served in the U.S. Congress.

To address this inequality, SC WIL has undertaken [More in 2024](#), an ambitious year-long push to recruit women from across the state to run for elected office in the 2024 election cycle and apply to serve on public boards and commissions. SC WIL’s More in 2024 recruitment effort calls for citizens across the state to ask women they know to consider seeking elected and appointed office and [refer](#) them to SC WIL for training, resources, and information to help them overcome barriers to leadership. SC WIL’s goal is to triple the number of women filing to run and seeking appointment at all levels of government. The recruitment effort aims to infuse more than 800 more women into the pipeline to public leadership in South Carolina. This follows a decline in the total number of women in the S.C. Legislature after the 2022 election, reversing a decade-long trend of increases.

The Leading Women Dinner, previously hosted by the Southeastern Institute for Women in Politics, includes a reception presented by South Carolina Ports, open beer and wine bar, seated dinner, and awards. [Corporate sponsorships, tables, and individual tickets](#) are available. Proceeds from the event support SC WIL’s mission of recruiting and training women to run for elective and appointive office in South Carolina.

[Download](#) a high resolution photo of Barbara Melvin.

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About SC Women in Leadership

SC Women in Leadership (SC WIL) is a statewide multi-partisan group of women working together across differences to move South Carolina forward by informing, inspiring, and involving women in leadership. SC WIL’s work sharing information about, making connections to, and encouraging women’s engagement in local and state civic leadership is moving South Carolina forward socially, economically, educationally, and environmentally. SC WIL believes that as talented women with diverse and inclusive backgrounds step up to lead and to govern, gender and racial equality, as well as community equity can at last become a reality. SC WIL’s vision is for women to be represented at every level of leadership including elected officials, appointed government boards and commissions, and as active volunteers and advocates in the community. Visit scwomenlead.net to learn more about how SC WIL is working to fill the pipeline with women, increase fair voting, and reduce polarization.

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