

The Legal Services of New Jersey

*2019 Equal Justice
Awards Reception*

**Celebrating Those Who
Advance Justice and Fairness
Under the Law**



**The Grounds for Sculpture
Hamilton Township, New Jersey**

June 3, 2019



The New Jersey Legal Services System

A Network of Six Independent Not-For-Profit Corporations

STATEWIDE PROGRAM

Legal Services of New Jersey

Office in Edison

Coordinating and supporting the statewide network and providing statewide legal representation and advocacy through more than 15 specialized projects

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Offices in Mercer, Middlesex, and Union Counties

Essex-Newark Legal Services

Office in Essex County

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

Offices in Hunterdon, Morris, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren Counties

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services

Offices in Bergen, Hudson, and Passaic Counties

South Jersey Legal Services

Offices in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Monmouth, Ocean, and Salem Counties

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Good Evening!

Thank you so much for joining us tonight. Legal Services of New Jersey hosts this annual evening in order to:

- Recognize and express appreciation to those who have made notable pro bono legal assistance contributions in conjunction with the state’s Legal Services programs over the past year, as detailed later in this program. The efforts of our many volunteer lawyers from all parts of the state are an important supplement to the daily work of Legal Services staff lawyers.

- Honor and celebrate those who have made special contributions to advancing equal justice for disadvantaged people in New Jersey. This recognition will be in two parts: four special awards, honoring major contributions to securing greater fairness, and then four inductions into the Circle of Honor of the New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive (NJEJLA).

- Document and memorialize the arc of progress toward justice in New Jersey. The NJEJLA virtually houses important educational, historical, and commemorative information on the history of the struggle for equal justice in New Jersey. The interviews, archival footage, and other materials relating to this evening’s four inductees will be preserved on the NJEJLA website, www.njejla.org.

Well into its 53rd year, New Jersey’s Legal Services system has provided representation in nearly 2.5 million cases, on behalf of some 9 million people, and assisted millions more with information offered through its websites, publications and community presentations. Our state and nation continue to confront a pervasive denial of equal justice in civil legal matters for those who cannot afford attorneys. For over 90% of the civil legal problems that will face lower-income New Jersey residents this year, no attorney will be available. A fundamental promise of our democracy—equal justice under law—is mere myth for most living in poverty. Even as we celebrate these individuals and their achievements tonight, we all must summon the determination to end, collectively, this continued mass denial of justice.

Melville D. Miller, Jr.
President and General Counsel
Legal Services of New Jersey
June 3, 2019

Order of Proceedings

5:30 to 7:00 p.m. – Reception

The Grounds will be open to Legal Services attendees

7:00 – Awards Ceremony

Welcome

The Honorable James H. Coleman, Jr.

Presentation of Awards

Melville D. Miller, Jr., President, Legal Services of New Jersey

Part One

Presentation of Equal Justice Medals

Major Pro Bono Contributors

All of the major contributors are listed in the program. Each attendee tonight received at registration an embossed attestation of their 2019 Equal Justice Medal as a major contributor. We will ask the contributors in attendance from each program to stand.

Exceptional Contributors

The work of six exceptional contributors, one from each New Jersey Legal Services program, is described below. Each will be called to the stage and presented with an Equal Justice Medal commemorating their remarkable efforts.

Part Two

Presentation of Special Awards

The William J. Brennan, Jr. Citation for Justice
Princeton Internships in Civic Service (PICS)
and **Suzanne M. McSorley**

The Debevoise-Eakeley Award

Christopher J. Stracco

Former Chairperson, The IOLTA Fund of the Bar of New Jersey

The Lipman-Franks Awards

Declan J. O'Scanlon, Jr.

State Senator, New Jersey's 13th Legislative District

Sandra B. Cunningham

State Senator, New Jersey's 31st Legislative District

Part Three

**Presentation of Inductees into the New Jersey
Equal Justice Library and Archive Circle of Honor**

Robert N. Wilentz (Posthumous)

Former Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, 1979-1996

Bonnie Watson Coleman

U.S. Representative, New Jersey's 12th Congressional District

Robert Del Tufo (Posthumous)

Former New Jersey Attorney General
and United States Attorney

Loretta Weinberg

NJ Senate Majority Leader, New Jersey's 37th Legislative District

Closing Thoughts

Melville D. Miller, Jr.



About the New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive

With the creation of the New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive (NJEJLA), Legal Services of New Jersey has embarked on a mission to chronicle New Jersey’s arc of justice. The purposes of NJEJLA are threefold:

History—As its collections increase, the NJEJLA will constitute a trove of material on the state’s continuous journey toward achieving greater justice for all people, with a special focus on those who have been the targets of discrimination, who are disadvantaged, or who are otherwise members of vulnerable populations. Researchers, future advocates, and members of the public will find important data in personal collections, rare materials on major cases, background on key legislation and rule-making, and more.

Education—As detailed chronologies of particular equal justice efforts are compiled, the NJEJLA will also be a resource for organized teaching in high school and college classes, and as adapted versions become available, in middle schools.

Preservation—As an archive, the NJEJLA will maintain hard copy and digital versions of key materials, in accordance with archiving best practices and as dictated by the nature of particular items. Over time, the NJEJLA thus will maintain both digital and physical collections. Web availability of all digitized materials will greatly enhance accessibility for most New Jersey residents. Physical materials initially will be housed at Legal Services of New Jersey’s Edison offices. In time, it is expected a more permanent physical site will be identified.



About the Awards

New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive

Circle of Honor

For over five decades of service, Legal Services in New Jersey has been a central force in the struggle for civil legal justice in this state. With the creation of the NJEJLA, we have embarked on a mission to preserve online key materials relating to the quest for equality in New Jersey, to serve as a resource for educators and all residents, with collections in both digital and physical formats.

A part of the NJEJLA is the Circle of Honor, heralding those who have made extraordinary achievements in advancing equal justice, and whose efforts and lives stand as enduring paradigms for others to emulate. The Circle of Honor furthers the NJEJLA's historical, educational, and preservation goals, as well as a fourth key purpose—inspiration.

Tonight's final four honorees will be Circle of Honor inductees, joining former Governor Thomas H. Kean; former New Jersey Supreme Court Justice James H. Coleman, Jr.; The Honorable Deborah T. Poritz, first female chief justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court; the late Wynona M. Lipman, New Jersey's first black female state senator; and Kenneth C. Frazier, president and CEO of Merck and Co., Inc.

The Equal Justice Named Awards

Several named awards are given in recognition of extraordinary achievements in advancing equal justice. The descriptions of the awards presented this year follow. All prior Equal Justice Award recipients may be found at www.LSNJ.org/eja/awardrecipients.

The Lipman-Franks Award is named for two esteemed state legislators, Wynona Lipman and Robert Franks, who, acting in a bipartisan fashion, played especially central roles in developing early financial support for Legal Services and in securing greater and more equal justice for the disadvantaged.

The William J. Brennan, Jr. Citation for Justice is reserved for those who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to furthering the mission and work of the state's Legal Services programs, and can include prior award recipients who have continued to make significant contributions to the cause of equal justice that compel further recognition.

The Debevoise-Eakeley Award is named for two stalwarts of the early Legal Services years. The late Dickinson Debevoise, distinguished private lawyer and later United States District Court judge, helped found the Newark Legal Services program, one of New Jersey's most important initial projects, and continued to be a key Legal Services supporter throughout his life. Douglas Eakeley was chair of Legal Services of New Jersey from 1981 to 1989, when he entered the Florio administration, and then chaired the national Legal Services Corporation from 1993 until 2002, when he returned to the LSNJ Board. The award recognizes efforts of an attorney in private practice who has committed extraordinary time and effort to expand civil legal assistance and justice for the disadvantaged.

Equal Justice Medals

Equal Justice Medals were first awarded in 1983. They recognize and celebrate the pro bono efforts of individuals and organizations that have made important contributions to securing greater justice for disadvantaged people, especially through legal processes and the judicial system.

Major Pro Bono Contribution Awards

This evening we recognize individuals, law firms, and organizations that have made major contributions to Legal Services' pro bono programs throughout the state from January 2018 through March 2019. The major contribution awards fall into four categories.

1) Smaller Firms (10 or fewer attorneys). Recognizes individuals or law firms that have spent at least 40 hours providing full representation on one or more pro bono cases.

2) Larger Firms (more than 10 attorneys). Recognizes individuals who have spent at least 40 hours providing full representation on one or more pro bono cases, and law firms whose attorneys collectively have spent more than 100 hours providing full representation on one or more pro bono cases.

3) Corporate Counsel Offices. Recognizes individuals who have spent at least 40 hours providing full representation on one or more pro bono cases, and in-house counsel offices whose volunteers collectively have spent more than 100 hours providing full representation on one or more pro bono cases.

4) In-House Volunteers. Recognizes individuals who have spent more than 100 hours providing legal assistance to clients on a pro bono, uncompensated basis in a Legal Services office.

Central Jersey Legal Services

Smaller Law Firms

Eileen Foley
Richard A. Goldberg
Robert Goldstein
Steven Kropf
Victoria E. Paone
Bhavini Tara Shah
Edward Testino
Frank E. Tournour
Law Firm of Nemergut & Duff

Large Law Firms

Eric G. Kahn
Robert E. Lytle
Andrea J. Sullivan

In-House Volunteers

Pepper Hamilton LLP

Essex-Newark Legal Services

Smaller Law Firms

Elise Cece

Large Law Firm

McCarter & English LLP

In-House Volunteers

Lynn Gale
Tikeshia M. James

Legal Services of New Jersey

Smaller Law Firms

Jason Scott Camilo
Victor Druziako
Charles Goeke
Bernice M. Jalloh
Robert H. Johnson
Yongmoon Kim
Dinh Lai
Eric LeBoeuf
Clara S. Licata
Ira J. Metrick
Lisa Quartarolo
John Shamy
Victor G. Sison
Changi Wu
Pauline Young

Changi Wu Law Office
Esposito & LeBoeuf, LLC
Ira J. Metrick, Attorney at Law, LLC
Jalloh & Jalloh, LLC
Kim Law Firm, LLC
Law Office of Clara S. Licata
Law Office of Dinh Lai
Law Office of Victor Druziako, PC
McLaughlin & Nardi, LLC
Robert H. Johnson, LLC
Victor G. Sison Law Offices, PC

Large Law Firms

Carlos Martinez
Suzanne M. McSorley
David Sklar
Christine Stearns
Anuja Thatte
Dontzin, Nagy & Fleissig
Gibbons, PC
Scura, Wigfield, Heyer, Stevens
& Cammarota, LLP

Corporate Counsel

Gloria Fuentes
John Todaro
Merck & Co.

In-House Volunteer

Kenneth Coughlin
Lynne Glass

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

Smaller Law Firm

Natalia Teper

Large Law Firms

Desa Lazar
Devin J. Griffin
Lowenstein Sandler LLP
Mark Wechsler
Reed Smith, LLC

Corporate Counsel

Alan Modlinger
Merck Sharp & Dohme

In-House Volunteers

Scott Guibord
Karen O’Keeffe
Robert McLellan

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services

Smaller Law Firms

Luis Alum
Nadine Amaya
Rosemarie Anderson
Conrado Arroyo
Stefania Arroyo
Brunilda Bonilla
Leviston Brisolla
Mayra Cano
Sun Min Choi
Carolina Curbelo
Lisa Davenport
Virginia Fortunato

Mathew Fredericks
Gary Giannantonio
Ron Groseibl
Krista Haley
Katherine Jensen
Nadia Kahf
Yongmoon Kim
Karl Kazmierczak
William La Tourette
Susan Long
Carlos Martinez
Stephanie Mendelsohn
Wanda Molina

Chioma Nelson
Lycette Nelson
Gary Norgaard
Adalgiza A. Núñez
James Ozello
Risa Rohrberger
Steve Rubenstein
Cheryl Schechter
John J. Scura, III
Sumera Shaikh Syed
Deborah Verdile

Thomas Wall
Noah Zakim

Scura, Wigfield, Heyer, Stevens &
Cammarota, LLP
Norgaard O'Boyle, Attorneys
At Law
Kazmierczak & Kazmierczak, LLC

In-House Volunteers

Joseph Murray
Georgene Sfraga Panza

South Jersey Legal Services

Smaller Law Firms

Barbara Barclay Moore
Robert J. Bowman
Carrie J. Boyle
Rachel Cotrino
Diane Ault Cullen
David C. Epler
David G. Esposito
Catherine E. Finnerty
Donna L. Freidel
John G. Holl
David Huang
Scott E. Kaplan
Anthony Landolfi
Anthony P. Monzo
Steven Neuner
Nona Ostrove
Edward L. Paul
Paul Pflumm
Daniel Reeves
Daniel Reinganum
Kurt E. Reinheimer

Trinna Rodgers
Joseph J. Rogers
Chad M. Sherwood
Joel R. Spivack
Joanna Schiaffo
John R. Tatulli
Jill Tribulas
Joanne Ventura
Rachelle Waitz
Tamika Wyche

Jenkins & Clayman
McDowell Law, PC
Ciardi Ciardi & Astin

Large Law Firms

Pepper Hamilton LLP
Ballard Spahr LLP

In-House Volunteers

David Dugan
David Gladfelter
Connie Pascale



Exceptional Pro Bono Service Awards

This year we initiate a new category of equal justice medals for individuals who have, in one year or over a number of years, made extraordinary pro bono contributions to their affiliate programs, looking to recognize one such awardee from each New Jersey Legal Services program. This year's Equal Justice Medals for Exceptional Pro Bono Service awardees comprise volunteers across a wide spectrum and include an aspiring attorney, an attorney from a small two-person New Jersey firm, and a team of attorneys from a very large global firm (1,500 plus attorneys), and represent thousands of free hours of legal assistance and hundreds of clients helped.

Exceptional Pro Bono Service Awardees

South Jersey Legal Services

Tamika Wyche, is an attorney with the Law Office of David Paul Daniels, located in Camden, New Jersey. Ms. Wyche has volunteered with the South Jersey Legal Services (SJLS) pro bono bankruptcy program since 2015. Ms. Wyche has accepted a total of 34 cases for pro bono representation since her participation with the program in 2015 and through each one, has shown her dedication and commitment to providing high quality legal representation to the low-income population in New Jersey. Prior to receiving direct bankruptcy case referrals from SJLS, Ms. Wyche also participated in the Honorable Judith H. Wizmur Bankruptcy Pro Bono Project for several years. That project accepts referrals of selected bankruptcy cases from SJLS.

Ms. Wyche is a graduate of Temple University Beasley School of Law and has been practicing law for over 13 years. She has a passion for helping low-income people in need of bankruptcy and does so with a very positive attitude and empathy for her clients.

Central Jersey Legal Services

Bhavini Tara Shah is a sole practitioner with an office in Middlesex County. Despite being part of Central Jersey Legal Services' pro bono program for only three years, she has made a significant impact during that time. She is trilingual in English, Hindi, and Gujarati, and focuses her areas of private practice in family law, real estate, commercial transactions, municipal court, and personal injury.

Ms. Shah has generously given her time, skills, and experience in the much needed area of family law including divorce, child support and custody cases. Family law, and particularly divorce cases, can be the most challenging pro bono cases to place. Ms. Shah is honored for assuming full responsibility for the multiple matters she has undertaken. She is currently handling a complex family law matter that involves domestic violence, custody, child support, equitable distribution, and alimony, together requiring Ms. Shah to spend over 110 hours on this case alone, and the matter is not yet completed.

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services

Brunilda Bonilla is licensed to practice in New Jersey and Massachusetts and is among the few Spanish-speaking certified matrimonial law attorneys and mediators in the state of New Jersey. She has been a pro bono partner with NNJLS since 2008 and since that time has handled 46 cases and logged nearly 1,000 hours of pro bono service. Since the beginning of 2018, she successfully represented 10 Northeast New Jersey Legal Services (NNJLS) clients in cases involving family law and domestic violence and contributed approximately 100 free hours of legal service. Family law cases, typically the most challenging of pro bono cases to refer, have been enthusiastically and eagerly accepted by Ms. Bonilla. The most recent cases she has successfully handled represent the greatest areas of need: six divorces, two child support cases, one child custody, and one domestic violence matter. Ms. Bonilla shows no signs of slowing down her acceptance of cases, for which NNJLS, and their clients are truly grateful.

Essex-Newark Legal Services

Tikesha M. James is an in-house volunteer with Essex-Newark Legal Services (ENLS) who serves as a paralegal assisting with expungements. She has been a volunteer at ENLS since 2016 and has logged more than 500 hours per year for each of those years. Ms. James has worked on approximately 190 cases in her time with the Newark office.

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

The law firm of Reed Smith, LLP has partnered with Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNWJ) for the past several years, helping to expand LSNWJ's capacity to provide legal representation to tenants facing eviction in Somerset County. During the period of January 2018 to April 2019, Reed Smith attorneys handled 28 cases, providing 143 hours of pro bono services.

The Reed Smith associate who coordinates the tenancy project for the firm, Devin J. Griffin, collaborated with LSNWJ Pro Bono Director Angela Arabia-Meyer to produce resource binders that include the substantive law, templates, a work plan and practical tips. The binders are distributed to each volunteer attorney in the project. Ms. Griffin coordinated training at Reed Smith that was opened to potential volunteers from Reed Smith, Fox Rothschild and individual practitioners.

Legal Services of New Jersey

Bernice (Tina) Jalloh is a partner in a two-lawyer family firm in Linden. She is being honored for her tenacity and steadfast representation of Legal Services clients, especially in a contested adoption matter recently concluded successfully after a seven-day bench trial. She spent over 300 hours on the matter.

In addition, Ms. Jalloh has represented Legal Services clients in 10 additional matters since 2012 through both Legal Services of New Jersey and Central Jersey Legal Services. Her representation range includes bankruptcy, domestic violence, guardianship, and immigration as well as contested adoptions.

Presentation of Special Awards

Princeton Internships in Civic Service (PICS) and Suzanne McSorley

The William J. Brennan, Jr. Citation for Justice

Princeton Internships in Civic Service (PICS) is a Princeton University alumni-founded and funded nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide experiential learning opportunities for students and develop civic activism and leadership. PICS fulfills its mission by underwriting paid summer internships in civic service to Princeton undergraduates that positively impact the public interest and result in the personal growth of the student interns.

PICS is supported through the generosity of individual alumni, clubs, and associations. Since its start in 1996, PICS has placed close to 1,000 undergraduate interns with hundreds of nonprofit organizations. PICS former interns have gone on to careers in public service, have become leaders on nonprofit boards, have started their own nonprofits, have become alumni partners to the next generation, and have pursued legal careers and public interest work. Over the past nine years, there have been 14 PICS interns placed with Legal Services.

Tonight's Equal Justice Medals are being presented to PICS and to Suzanne M. McSorley, the PICS Internship Development Chair. Over a decade ago, Legal Services' funding suffered a tremendous funding reduction as a result of the Great Recession. Suzanne, who is also an experienced attorney and Princeton alum, reached out to ask, "How can I help?" She answered her own question with funding, giving her personal time, and making available the skills, talents, and time of PICS summer interns.

Starting initially with one student for a paid six- to eight-week program, the PICS summer interns at LSNJ have increased to two students per summer. Through this assistance, PICS students have provided over 2,000 hours of service. These exemplary young people have conducted a range of activities including client intake and factual development, legal and nonlegal research, and writing. Legal Services staff have come to expect and highly anticipate the PICS students' energy, excellence, and commitment to our mission. One former PICS student said it best:

"I am one hundred percent connected with the service mission of [Legal Services]. I realized now I want to go into law and work to help change people's lives

for the better. My work at LSNJ has reaffirmed my commitment to protecting civil and human rights. I never worked with extremely low-income populations until this internship, but now I learned I want to continue this work ... and hopefully return to LSNJ in the future.”

Many of the PICs students have continued their pursuit of a legal degree and many in the public interest. Legal Services appreciates all the assistance PICS has provided and we look forward to a continued partnership with this important program into the future. We are also tremendously grateful for Suzanne McSorley’s unwavering support over the years: one person’s dedication has led to immeasurable benefits to Legal Services, our PICS interns, and ultimately the clients we serve.

Christopher J. Stracco

The Debevoise-Eakeley Award

Christopher J. Stracco, partner with the major firm Day Pitney, LLP, in Parsippany, has been practicing law in New Jersey for over 25 years and has handled cases in every county. He has appeared before New Jersey’s federal and state courts, tax court, and administrative bodies, including OAL, zoning, planning and land use boards.

Mr. Stracco has been designated by the Supreme Court of New Jersey Board on Attorney Certification as a Certified Civil Trial Attorney. He currently serves on the Supreme Court of New Jersey’s Professional Responsibility Rules Committee, and formerly served on the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on the Tax Court for many years. Most pertinent for Legal Services, he was appointed by the Supreme Court of New Jersey to a five-year term on the board of trustees of the IOLTA Fund of the Bar of New Jersey in 2014. He served a one-year term as treasurer and then, in early 2019, completed an unusual and challenging two-year term as chair. He led the IOLTA program through a critical transition, as it successfully identified a worthy successor to its previous executive director of nearly two decades, Ellen Ferrise. During his years as chair, he constantly sought ways to increase the resources of the IOLTA program, and thereby expand free civil legal assistance in New Jersey.

Mr. Stracco’s overlapping and essentially continuous service on Supreme Court and Bar committees through most of his career bespeaks a deep commitment to public service, precisely the kind of dedication epitomized by both Dickinson Debevoise and Douglas Eakeley.

DECLAN J. O'SCANLON, JR.

The Lipman-Franks Awards

Senator Declan O'Scanlon, Jr. was raised in Little Silver and graduated from Monmouth University with degrees in finance and psychology. He first entered the political arena when he was elected to the town council of Little Silver where he served for 14 years. He was then elected to the State Assembly from 2008 until 2017. During that time, he chaired the Republican Budget Office for six years, was the policy co-chair for two years, and assistant Republican whip in 2009. He was elected to the State Senate in 2018 and now represents the 13th legislative district, comprising parts of Monmouth County.

Throughout his legislative career, the senator has been a steadfast supporter of increased funding for Legal Services so that it can meet much more of the need for civil legal assistance in the critical problems faced by those living in poverty. He is known for his efforts to bring reform to New Jersey, including the effort to enact the 2% property tax cap.

Senator O'Scanlon has been outspoken on other reform fronts, from red light cameras and drivers' rights to organ donation and drug policy, seeking sound, fact-based policy. He is known for taking thoughtful, and balanced positions, after patient and careful inquiry, and for treating people with respect and dignity.

Currently, he is a primary sponsor of several property tax relief bills, medical marijuana program expansion, and a permitting measure for ferry boat public contracts.

He now serves on the Senate Joint Committee on Public Schools, Budget and Appropriations, Community and Urban Affairs, and Law and Public Safety.

In addition to his legislative work, Senator O'Scanlon is chief executive officer of FSD Enterprises LLC., a wireless communications infrastructure consulting company. He is also the board president of Love Inc., a national cooperative effort between churches and service agencies that provides help for the disadvantaged. He has said of the organization, "You can give someone a welfare check, or you can teach them the understanding of love, which can inspire, change someone, and encourage them to change their lives."

The senator lives in his hometown of Little Silver with his wife, Heather, and their two children, Elly and Colin.

SANDRA BOLDEN CUNNINGHAM

The Lipman-Franks Awards

Sandra B. Cunningham was elected to the state Senate on November 6, 2007—the first woman to represent the 31st District covering Bayonne and a portion of

Jersey City. She is the widow of the late Glenn D. Cunningham, former mayor of Jersey City and a prior state senator for the 31st District. Sandra and Glenn worked together for their community until his death in 2004.

Today, Senator Sandra Cunningham continues the couple's legacy as a vocal advocate of children and working families. She believes in quality education as a passport to achieving social equity, and that working families have a right to affordable health care, a fair and safe workplace, and property tax relief.

As a champion of ex-offenders, she believes in providing recently released offenders with a second chance by removing obstacles to employment and thereby the economic and social benefits employment brings. She has worked with reentry advocates and the business community to draft and introduce The Opportunity to Compete legislation known as "Ban the Box." This legislation prevents employers from conducting criminal background checks before interviewing prospective employees, which gives ex-offenders the opportunity to tell their stories. "Ban the Box" received national attention when President Barack Obama mentioned it in announcing a similar federal program. In her quest to offer opportunities to released offenders, Senator Cunningham also collaborated with Governor Chris Christie on expungement legislation to help certain offenders ease the process of clearing their criminal records.

Senator Cunningham serves as Senate Deputy Majority Leader, chairs the Senate Higher Education Committee, and is vice chair of the Budget and Appropriations Committee. She also serves on the Senate Education Committee and the New Jersey Legislative Select Oversight Committee. Outside the statehouse, she serves on the Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission, the Ellis Island Commission and the Pretrial Services Review Commission.

In addition to public service, Senator Cunningham was board president of the Sandra and Glenn D. Cunningham Foundation. Before its doors closed on August 4, 2017, the foundation raised more than \$250,000 over 11 years, providing college scholarships for 200-plus at-risk young people from Jersey City and Bayonne. The foundation specifically helped C-level students who lacked the financial resources or the A and B grades to attend college. They were paired with mentors who helped guide them through their college workloads.

Prior to her political career, Senator Cunningham was executive director of the Hudson County Bar Association, a community and public relations coordinator for Essex-Newark Legal Services, and deputy director of the Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry where she initiated programs to expand the church's community role.

Senator Cunningham is a native of Newark, and a graduate of Bloomfield College where she earned a bachelor of arts degree. She currently resides in Jersey City.

New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive

Circle of Honor

Robert N. Wilentz

Robert Nathan Wilentz was the son of David T. Wilentz, former Attorney General of New Jersey and prosecutor of the Lindbergh trials. Born in 1927 in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, Wilentz was valedictorian of his high school class; served in the United States Navy from 1945 to 1946; graduated from Harvard University in 1949; and earned his law degree from Columbia Law School in 1952. He served in the New Jersey General Assembly from 1965 to 1969, but chose not to seek a third term due to “conflict of interest” legislation that he himself had sponsored. The law barred firms that retained state legislators in their employ from appearing before state agencies; since Wilentz was still affiliated with his family’s private law firm, he would have a conflict under this new law. So strong were Wilentz’s convictions that the court must be impartial that he sponsored and supported the bill, knowing that it would be the end of his political career. He continued to work for his father’s law firm until 1979, when he was nominated by Governor Brendan T. Byrne to the position of Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court.

Wilentz brought the same commitment to fairness and justice to his new position and set about immediately making improvements to the system to increase its efficiency and responsiveness to people’s needs—especially people in poverty who, he feared, were not being afforded equal access to the justice system. In the words of Justice James H. Coleman, Jr.,

He could have been part of the silent majority. Knowing that silence is simply another form of injustice, he chose to become a crusader for diversity. He had a deep, heartfelt, warm concern for people who are disadvantaged.

This thread of concern for those less fortunate was woven through every decision Wilentz authored, every speech he gave, and every administrative action he took as administrator of the courts. It also was the source of his longstanding commitment to Legal Services of New Jersey, an organization that was very near to his heart. Wilentz took a firm stand against justices speaking on behalf of

special interest groups, but carved out an exception for Legal Services. He was instrumental in securing funding for Legal Services through the IOLTA program and frequently spoke at Legal Services functions. He shared these words at one such event:

Legal Services of New Jersey is such a special interest group, clearly associated with controversial causes, but for the Judiciary, it is much more than that. Its mission transcends its special interest as advocate for the poor, its mission transcends the sometimes controversial causes it supports. Its mission is access to the courts, access to justice, equal justice, justice for all. Its mission is to see to it that the courthouse doors are just as open for the poor as for the rich.

In 1982, when approached by Marilyn Loftus with a request for a small committee to explore gender bias in the courts, Wilentz responded by creating a permanent Supreme Court Task Force on Women in the Courts. He charged the task force to report back on the extent of bias and made a commitment to eliminate it. When the task force presented its report the following year, he invited the press to the event and made a statement that became the “quotation of the day” in that evening’s *New York Times* (November 22, 1983).

There’s no room for gender bias in our system. There’s no room for the funny joke and the not-so-funny joke, there’s no room for conscious, inadvertent, sophisticated, clumsy, or any other kind of gender bias and certainly no room for gender bias that affects substantive rights.

While not able to appoint Supreme Court justices directly, Wilentz spoke out loudly and often about the need for greater diversity in the court system. The Supreme Court he joined in 1979 was comprised entirely of white men. Due in large part to his persistence, the court he left in 1996 included a female Chief Justice (Deborah T. Poritz), a female Associate Justice (Linda Garibaldi), and an African-American Associate Justice (James H. Coleman, Jr.). The Appellate Division included two African-American judges, one Latino, and seven women. Through the work of the committee to study minority concerns, established by Wilentz and led by Justice Coleman, the number of minority law clerks and administrative personnel also increased.

Chief Justice Wilentz presided over many contentious cases and authored many notable decisions, but two of the most significant for their impact on low-income New Jersey residents were *Southern Burlington County NAACP v. Mt. Laurel*

(1983), and *Abbott v. Burke* (1990). Both involved unequal access to constitutionally guaranteed rights and both, though highly controversial, followed New Jersey precedent. Wilentz authored both opinions:

From the Mt. Laurel decision—

The Mount Laurel case itself threatens to become infamous. After all this time, ten years after the trial court's initial order invalidating its zoning ordinance, Mount Laurel remains afflicted with a blatantly exclusionary ordinance. Papered over with studies, rationalized by hired experts, the ordinance at its core is true to nothing but Mount Laurel's determination to exclude the poor.

From the Abbott decision—

Measured by any accepted standard, New Jersey has been generous in the amount of money spent for education. We currently spend more dollars per student for education than almost any other state. ... The dilemma is that while we spend so much, there is absolutely no question that we are failing to provide the students in the poorer urban districts with the kind of education that anyone could call thorough and efficient. ... After all the analyses are completed, we are still left with these students and their lives. They are not being educated. Our Constitution says they must be.

Wilentz drew strong criticism from some quarters who accused him of steering the court in an activist direction. Controversy abounded when he was up for reappointment during Republican Governor Tom Kean's administration, but Kean stood his ground, stating that it is critical that the court remain impartial and that he would never fail to appoint a justice because of his or her political beliefs. In fact, despite Wilentz's strongly held beliefs, his love for the rule of law always prevailed and he took great pride in leading a court with many opinions different from his own. Fellow Justice Gary Stein recalled a very open and collegial atmosphere on the Wilentz court:

We spent a lot of time in disagreement because the issues that came before us were issues about which people naturally could and would disagree. Nevertheless ... he was very respectful and very interested in the thoughts and beliefs and opinions of every member of the court ... When our opinions were circulated, he would allow for unlimited discussion because he wanted to make sure that every opinion that came out of this court he led was the best it could possibly be.

“The Chief” resigned from his position from a hospital bed in New York City after being diagnosed with cancer. He died three weeks later on July 23, 1996. But his legacy lives on, and his memory can best be summoned through his own words, offered at a Legal Services event in 1995:

The Judiciary’s obligation to provide equal justice to the poor is a constitutional imperative. I regard the Judiciary’s obligation to provide equal access, to that equal justice, as no less important. There is a long road to travel to equal justice for all, to equal access for all, but that is the road we are on, and I hope we won’t get off until we get there, no matter how long it takes.

Bonnie Watson Coleman

Bonnie Watson Coleman was born in 1945 in Camden, NJ, into a family with a long legacy of public service. Her father, John S. Watson, served in World War II, became Mercer County’s first African-American freeholder in 1970, and was a six-term member of the New Jersey General Assembly for the 15th legislative district from 1982 to 1994. “There was always going to be an expectation that one of us should follow him into politics,” says brother Bill Watson. “Bonnie has that innate talent in her.”

Watson Coleman’s career began with the New Jersey State Division on Civil Rights in Newark in the late 1960s, where she was quickly promoted and then recruited by the New Jersey Department of Transportation’s Office of Civil Rights, Contract Compliance and Affirmative Action, where she served as the first director from 1974 to 1980. She then went on to become bureau chief for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (1980) and earned her bachelor of arts degree from Thomas Edison State College (1985) before becoming Assistant Commissioner for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs in 1992. Before deciding to run for elected office, Representative Watson Coleman was already fully immersed in social justice advocacy, and was a role model for other African-American women. It was during this time that Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver met Watson Coleman and recalls being in awe of DCA Commissioner Bush-Baskette and then Assistant Commissioner Watson Coleman.

I thought it was phenomenal to see these two women of color and they commanded this big agency. And when I went to discuss with them the challenges that

nonprofits had in the state, they immediately connected with it, and they supported what we were doing. ... Consequently, if you participated in any, any advocacy organization in the state, you were going to cross paths with her—whether it be women’s political organizations, whether they were faith-based institutions ... just anything you dealt with which was being a voice and advocating for disenfranchised people, you were always going to see Bonnie at the meeting.

Watson Coleman had envisioned herself working in partnership with her father as a legislator, but that partnership did not materialize. He was diagnosed with cancer and she cared for him in her home until his death in 1996. In 1998, when then-Assemblywoman Shirley Turner decided to run for the senate, Watson Coleman saw the possibility of running for the seat her father once held as a way to “keep my dad alive.”

She was elected to the General Assembly in 1998 and continued her father’s trailblazing legacy—the first African-American woman to serve as a state chair of the Democratic party in New Jersey (2002); the first African-American woman to hold the position of majority leader in the Assembly (2006–2010). She was an early supporter of reentry assistance, before it was politically popular to do so, sponsoring legislation to provide funding for programs and services for incarcerated persons and establishing the Prisoner’s Reentry Bill of Rights, and supporting the Opportunity to Compete Act of 2014, which establishes certain employment rights for persons with criminal histories.

In short, says Lt. Governor Oliver, “There’s not one issue of advocacy for an underserved population or an issue that is an injustice to people, no matter where it is or what spectrum it’s in—she’s always been there as a consistent voice.”

New Jersey Senator Loretta Weinberg, who also worked closely with Watson Coleman, states, “Bonnie was always an ally whenever it came to fighting for fair funding for organizations like Legal Services and those that serve the vulnerable populations in our state. She knew it; she knew about it; she lived it. And she got it done. And she’s still getting it done, only on a bigger stage.”

In 2014, Watson Coleman also made a successful bid for Congress and now represents New Jersey’s 12th Congressional District in Washington—setting another precedent as the first African-American woman elected to the House from New Jersey. Since taking this seat, Representative Watson Coleman cofounded, with Representative Yvette Clarke and Representative Robin Kelly, the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls in 2016—the first caucus geared towards Congressional policy debates on the challenges and achievements of Black women—and is also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Progressive

Caucus, Caucus for Women's Issues, LGBT Equality Caucus, and Asian Pacific American Caucus.

She has sponsored legislation in Congress, such as the Healthy Maternity and Obstetric Medicine Act (Healthy MOM Act of 2015), which would allow for flexibility in health coverage for women during pregnancy; the End For-Profit Prisons Act of 2017, which would require the Department of Justice (DOJ) to phase out existing contracts with private prison companies and private community confinement facilities, and the Customer Non-Discrimination Act, which would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in public accommodations.

Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman has devoted her life to helping those around her. Again, in brother Bill's words, "It's never about elevating her, as much as it is about let's make life better for somebody." They were taught early in life, he says, that what's important is what you do with your life. And "she certainly, certainly has done remarkable things with hers."

Robert Del Tufo

Robert Del Tufo was born on November 18, 1933, to Raymond and Mary Del Tufo, both immigrants from Italy. He graduated from the Newark Academy and received a bachelor of arts from Princeton University in 1955, then an LLB degree from Yale Law School in 1958.

Like so many of his generation, he was greatly influenced by the political volatility of the 1960s, and was particularly affected by the abuse of power he observed in local and state government at the time. The result was a heightened sensitivity to injustice, particularly racial injustice, as well as an unwavering intolerance for political corruption of any kind.

Del Tufo's career began as assistant county prosecutor in Morris County (1963–1965) and first assistant prosecutor (1965–1967). He maintained a private practice in Morristown until becoming first assistant attorney general in the Byrne administration in 1974. "Even then," says former New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice James Zazzali, "you could see his moral courage and sometimes his sense of outrage." In that position, Del Tufo resisted pressure to relax bidding requirements related to the New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority because he realized it could open the door to future abuses—an unpopular, but laudable position. He "brought the maximum of integrity and competence and character to

the task. I'm not overstating it," says Zazzali. He was unflinching."

In 1977, Del Tufo was nominated for U.S. Attorney for the district of New Jersey by President Jimmy Carter, a position he held until 1980. He prosecuted several high profile cases in that position and remained characteristically unafraid to go against the grain when his principles required it. When ABSCAM—a sting operation in which politicians were videotaped taking bribes from an Arab company that was actually an FBI front—came before him, he refused to proceed with the case, taking the position that the FBI engaged in entrapment. (On tape, the senator first said, "No, no, no, no," when an agent posing as a sheikh offered him a bribe—a claim Mr. Williams echoed in his unsuccessful appeals.) After convictions were handed down by a New York judge, Del Tufo was quoted as stating that judge had "a warped view of the prosecutor's role in detecting and prosecuting crime."

Del Tufo returned to private practice in Newark (1980–1986), and made an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic nomination for governor of New Jersey in 1985. In 1990, then-Governor James Florio asked him to serve as attorney general, stating, with respect to Del Tufo's integrity in general and ABSCAM in particular, "It takes a person of principle to stand up, and Bob Del Tufo stood up."

During his time as attorney general, Del Tufo was credited with aggressively prosecuting environmental violations and spearheading the Office of Bias and Community Relations, a newly-created statewide agency to combat hate crimes. He was also credited with reducing complaints about racial profiling and improving relations with minority communities in New Jersey by forging relationships with the NAACP, the ACLU, and minority advocacy groups.

When Del Tufo returned to private practice, with the New York City firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, he was appointed chairman of the board of trustees of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey by then-Governor Jon Corzine—a position that was critical to rebuilding trust and confidence in the program. Del Tufo managed that responsibility as he did every other—with commitment, integrity, and professionalism, with no fanfare or expectation of personal reward.

Over three decades, Del Tufo served on the board of trustees for Legal Services of New Jersey, 1986 to 2016, stepping down only during his term as attorney general, to avoid a conflict of interest. He was committed to the cause of equal justice and unwavering in his support of the institution of Legal Services in New Jersey. In the words of U.S. District Judge Anne Thompson, a close personal friend, "Bob was a giant of our justice system and Legal Services will always be richer because he embraced its causes."

Loretta Weinberg

Loretta Weinberg was born in 1935 in New York City. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a B.A. in History; married Irwin Weinberg in 1961, and had two young children by the time she moved to Teaneck, New Jersey, in 1964. “It was a period of time,” she recalls, “when political activity was all around me. The anti-war movement, the women’s rights movement ... I barely unpacked my dishes and went off to the local advocate headquarters!”

A photo housed on the website of Weinberg’s Legacy Fund with the Rutgers Eagleton Institute’s Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) shows the senator with her then six-year-old daughter holding a sign outside a grocery store that read “Don’t eat grapes while grape pickers go hungry!” But it was a local issue—the need for shade trees in the areas of town where women walked with their babies in strollers—that drew her into the local council meeting that started it all. From there, she says, one thing led to another. “There are some dishes I never got around to unpacking,” she says with her characteristic sense of humor.

“Her story is one of a mother and a member of a community who wanted to make a difference and cared about issues—whether it was issues right in her own town ... [or] national issues like workers’ rights for farmworkers,” says Deborah Walsh, Director of CAWP. In addition to setting up a legacy fund, Weinberg volunteers her time there to help train women to campaign for elected office through CAWP’s “Ready to Run” nonpartisan program. “You never wonder where she stands, and that sometimes makes people unhappy, but she doesn’t worry about that. She is about fixing the problem; she is about speaking the truth; standing up for what she believes in.”

Weinberg stepped up her level of political involvement in 1974 by volunteering to work on the campaign of Jerry O’Connor, a freeholder that she has described as her “political mentor.” She became Assistant Administrator of Bergen County (1975-1985) and, in 1990, was elected to Teaneck Council. In 1992, she was chosen by Democratic committee members to fill the Assembly seat for the 37th Legislative District, vacated by D. Bennett Mazur’s resignation. She served in the General Assembly until 2005, holding the positions of Assistant Minority Leader (1994-95), Deputy Minority Leader (1996-2001), and Majority Conference Leader (2002-2005). She was elected to the New Jersey State Senate in November 2005, where she has served as vice-chair of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee and the State Government Committee. She is currently the senate majority leader and serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Senator Weinberg has worked tirelessly on behalf of people in need and become known as someone who is fearless and focused on getting things done—whether that meant speaking truth to power, as in the 2013 Bridgegate scandal, or reaching across the aisle to partner with female Republican legislators on issues of mutual concern. Examples of such bipartisan initiatives include the 48-hour bill—requiring insurers to cover hospital stays for women and their new babies for at least 48 hours after delivery, which was sponsored by Weinberg and Assemblywoman Rose Heck (Republican, District 38) and passed in 1995; and the Diane B. Allen Equal Pay Act, a bill that was co-sponsored by Senator Weinberg and Senator Diane Allen (Republican, 7th District) and signed into law by Governor Phil Murphy in April 2018. The law amends the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination to provide enhanced equal pay protections for New Jersey employees.

Weinberg was a member of the New Jersey Supreme Court Ad Hoc Committee on Domestic Violence from 2015 to 2017. She created the Governor’s Advisory Council on Adolescent Pregnancy; shaped a landmark autism research funding bill that gives \$1 from every New Jersey traffic violation to autism research, and sponsored numerous gun-violence-prevention measures. She has been in the lead on every LGBT advancement in New Jersey throughout her legislative career, including marriage equality, transgender equality, and sweeping anti-discrimination and anti-hate crimes laws. The list goes on, but advocating for women is perhaps the most consistent theme throughout Weinberg’s life and career.

In addition to her many legislative accomplishments on behalf of women, Senator Weinberg publishes an annual “Women’s Power List” to recognize New Jersey women who have achieved power and influence in both the public and private sector. She has started a legacy fund at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers’ Eagleton Institute to encourage young women to get involved in politics, and speaks regularly for the Center’s “Ready to Run” program—a nonpartisan campaign training program for women. She is “somebody who has been about making sure that there are more women following in her footsteps,” says Walsh. “She is about fixing the problem. She is about speaking the truth; standing up for the things she believes in. . . . No matter what the issue—issues that affect women, families, children, civil rights, human rights in the state of New Jersey—she’s always that voice.”

“When it came to funding for Legal Services, Loretta always fought for the program,” says Deborah Poritz, former New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice and LSNJ Board Chair. “It was a piece of hope that we took with us from Loretta.”

Poritz and Weinberg share a special friendship—New York women of the same generation, who pursued careers in male-dominated fields and have bonded over

their shared experience of being proud Jewish grandmothers. “She’s a woman of great energy and she brings that energy to everything that she does,” says Poritz. “I’m in awe of that kind of energy.” Reflecting on Senator Weinberg’s many contributions to equal justice, Poritz shares one of the things about her friend that she finds unique.

“I’ve had conversations with Senator Weinberg about public service and what public life means; how important it is. How important what you do can be to so many people. And she said to me, ‘Getting accolades for whatever it is you do ... that’s wonderful and I’m proud of that. But, really, I think of what I’ve been able to do as a privilege and as an adventure. I have the privilege of being able to do this for people, and I have the adventure of seeing it through and making it work. That’s what’s been important to me.’”

