Trailblazing Women in the Law

This information was assembled by the PBA Commission on Women in the Profession for its 25th Annual Conference in 2018.

The Commission thanks all of the women in the law who have marked a path for others to follow or continue to blaze trails so that women can fully participate in the profession, its responsibilities and rewards.

Caroline Burnham Kilgore
First woman admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania (1885)

Sara M. Soffel
First woman appointed as judge in Pennsylvania (1930)

Caroline Burnham Kilgore
First woman admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania (1885)

Sara M. Soffel
First woman appointed as judge in Pennsylvania (1930)

Anne X. Alpern
First woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (1961); First woman to serve as Attorney General of Pennsylvania (1959)

Juanita Kidd Stout
First African American woman to serve as judge in Pennsylvania (1959) and to serve on the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (appointed in 1988)

Sandra Day O’Connor
First woman appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States (1981)

Sonia Sotomayor
First Latina woman appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States (2009)
Sandra Schultz Newman
First woman elected to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (1996)

Jeanette Reibman, Esq.
First woman to serve as a Pennsylvania state senator (1966)

Dolores Sloviter
First woman appointed to the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals (1979) and to serve as chief judge (1991)

Petrese Tucker
First African American woman to be judge (2000) and first woman to be chief judge (2013), U.S.D.C. Eastern District of Pennsylvania

Norma Shapiro
First woman to be judge, U.S.D.C. Eastern District of Pennsylvania (1978)

Nitza I. Quiñones Alejandro

Sylvia Rambo
First woman to be judge (1979) and chief judge (1992), U.S.D.C. Middle District of Pennsylvania
Genevieve Blatt
First woman elected to serve on the Commonwealth Court (1972); First woman elected to statewide office – Secretary of Internal Affairs (1954)

Doris Smith-Ribner
First African American elected to serve on the Commonwealth Court (1988)

Carol Los Mansmann
First woman to serve as judge, U.S.D.C Western District of Pennsylvania (1982)

Cathy Bissoon
First Hispanic woman to serve as judge, U.S. D.C. Western District of Pennsylvania (2011)

Donetta Ambrose
First woman to serve as chief judge, U.S.D.C. Western District of Pennsylvania (2002)

Kate Ford Elliott
First woman to be president judge of Superior Court (2006)

Bonnie Brigance Leadbetter
First woman to be president judge of Commonwealth Court (2007)

Genevieve Blatt
First woman elected to serve on the Commonwealth Court (1972); First woman elected to statewide office – Secretary of Internal Affairs (1954)

Phyllis W. Beck
First woman to serve on the Superior Court (1981)

Cheryl Allen
First African American woman to serve on the Superior Court (2008)

Doris Smith-Ribner
First African American elected to serve on the Commonwealth Court (1988)
Leslie Anne Miller
First woman to serve as president, Pennsylvania Bar Association (1998);
First chair, Commission on Women in the Profession (1993)

Sharon R. López
First Latina woman to serve as president, Pennsylvania Bar Association (2017)

Isabel Darlington
First woman to be president of a bar association in Pennsylvania (1941)

First Women To Serve As President Judges by County

Allegheny ......................... Donna Jo McDaniel (2008)
Blair ................................. Jolene Grubb Kopriva (2006)
Bradford .......................... Maureen T. Beirne (2013)
Bucks ............................... Susan Devlin Scott (2009)
Centre .............................. Pamela A. Ruest (2017)
Chester ............................. Paula Francisco Ott (2005)
Erie .................................. Elizabeth K. Kelly (2005)
Franklin-Fulton ................. Carol L. Van Horn (2015)
Lehigh ............................... Carol K. McGinley (2011)
Lycoming ........................... Nancy L. Butts (2010)
Mifflin ............................... Helen A. White (1992)
Monroe ............................. Margherita Patti-Worthington (2012)
Northampton ...................... F.P. Kimberly McFadden (2008)
Philadelphia ...................... Frederica Massiah-Jackson (2001)
Warren-Forest ..................... Maureen A. Skerda (2010)
Westmoreland ..................... Rita Donovan Hathaway (2018)
First Women to Serve As Judges in Pennsylvania by County

- **Adams** ........................................... Christina M. Simpson (2016)
- **Allegheny** .......................... Sara M. Soffel (1930) (dec’d)
- **Beaver** ................................. Deborah A. Kunselman (2006)
- **Berks** .......................................... Elizabeth G. Ehrlich (1984) (dec’d)
- **Blair** ........................................... Jolene Grubb Kopriva (1988)
- **Bradford** .............................. Maureen T. Beirne (2008)
- **Bucks** .......................................... Harriett M. Mims (1976) (dec’d)
- **Butler** ......................................... Marilyn J. Horan (1996)
- **Cambria** ..................................... Linda Rovder Fleming (2010)
- **Centre** ........................................ Pamela A. Ruest (2008)
- **Chester** ....................................... Paula Francisco Ott (1992)
- **Cumberland** ................... Sylvia H. Rambo (1976)
- **Dauphin** ....................................... Jeannine Turgeon (1992)
- **Delaware** .............................. Kathrynann W. Durham (2001)
- **Erie** ............................................. Stephanie Domitrovich (1990)
- **Fayette** ........................................ Nancy D. Vernon (2010)
- **Forest/Warren** .................. Maureen A. Skerda (2006)
- **Franklin/Fulton** .............. Carol L. Van Horn (2000)
- **Indiana** ......................................... Carol Hanna (2004)
- **Juniata/Perry** ..................... Kathy A. Morrow (2004)
- **Lackawanna** ....................... Patricia Corbett (1998)
- **Lancaster** .............................. Louise Herr (1986) (dec’d)
- **Lehigh** .......................................... Carol K. McGinley (1986)
- **Luzerne** ........................................ Ann H. Lokuta (1992)
- **Lycoming** ...................................... Nancy L. Butts (1996)
- **Monroe** ......................................... Linda Wallach Miller (1992)
- **Montgomery** ......................... Anita Brody (1981)
- **Northampton** ...................... F.P. Kimberly McFadden (1988)
- **Northumberland** .................. Paige Rosini (2016)
- **Philadelphia** ...................... Hazel Hemphill Brown (1952) (dec’d)
- **Schuylkill** .............................. Jacqueline L. Russell (1998)
- **Snyder/Union** ....................... Louise O. Knight (1998)
- **Washington** ......................... Debbie O’Dell Seneca (1992)
- **Westmoreland** ..................... Donetta W. Ambrose (1982)
- **York** ............................................. Sheryl Ann Dorney (1988) (dec’d)
First Women to Serve As Law School Deans

- University of Pittsburgh School of Law: Mary Crossley (2005)
- Duquesne University School of Law: Maureen Lally-Green (2017)
- Widener University School of Law: Linda Ammons (2006); also the first African American to serve in this role
- Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law: Joanne Epps (2008); also the first African American to serve in this role
- Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law: Acting Dean Jennifer Rosato (2006)

Chairs of the Commission on Women in the Profession

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Co-chair 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Renee Mattei Myers</td>
<td>Melissa Leininger</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Andrea Tuominen</td>
<td>Renee Mattei Myers</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>Jessie L. Smith</td>
<td>Andrea B. Tuominen</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Mary Kate Coleman</td>
<td>Jessie L. Smith</td>
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<td>Mary Kate Coleman</td>
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<td>Brenda K. McBride</td>
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<td>Elizabeth C. Detwiler</td>
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*Chair, ABA Women in the Profession Commission 2008-2011 and 2013-2014; the only Pennsylvanian to have served as chair