

TIMELINE OF CONNECTICUT WOMEN IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

This timeline is an effort to trace the history of women in the legal profession in Connecticut. It turned out to be a much more challenging project than we initially imagined due to the substantial increase in the numbers of women entering law school and the profession since the 1990's. It would have been a Herculean task to include all the women who have distinguished themselves as lawyers since 1882. As for the women who are included in this timeline, it has only been possible to furnish an abbreviated version of their remarkable achievements. We hope that we have done them honor with the ones we listed. For these reasons, please consider this timeline as the first installment of what has the potential to be a much larger and fuller document. The hope is that it will become the basis for a living history that will grow over time with the input of current and future members of our profession.

NOTE: When a year precedes an attorney's name and description, it is the year of her bar admission, unless otherwise stated.

1882 - 1889

1882 - Mary Hall was the first woman admitted to the Connecticut Bar. See *In re Hall*, 50 Conn. 131 (1882). The Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors became the first court in the country to hold that a woman was eligible to practice law. She was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, posthumously, in 1994.

1885 - Alice Rufie Blake Jordan was the first woman to attend Yale Law School. She was accidentally admitted in 1885, after applying using only her initials and assumed to be a man. She was the first woman awarded a Yale Law School degree a year later. Thereafter, women were not officially admitted to Yale Law School until 1919.

1890 - 1899

The information about women admitted to the state bar in Connecticut during this period is sparse. Florence Clohessey was admitted in New Haven and is listed in the *State Register and Manual* as a lawyer in Waterbury in 1891. Susannah C. O'Neill was

admitted in New Haven and is listed in the *State Register and Manual* as a lawyer in Waterbury in 1905.

1910 - 1919

1912 - Mary Selina Foote was admitted to the bar in Hartford in 1912 and became the librarian at the New Haven County Bar Library.

1917 - Frances L. Roth graduated from New York University School of Law and was admitted to the Connecticut bar. She was appointed as the first woman prosecutor in Connecticut in 1925. On May 2, 1927, the minutes of the annual meeting of the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) reported that Frances was admitted to membership, thus becoming the first woman member of the CBA.

1920 - 1929

1923 - Matilda Fenberg was a Polish immigrant who came to the U.S. as a child, and, in 1919, was the first woman to be "officially" admitted to Yale Law School. Although she completed her studies in 1922, she was not awarded her degree until 41 years later because her grade point was slightly below the required average. Despite the lack of a degree, she passed the Ohio bar exam in 1923 and became a prominent lawyer. She assisted Clarence Darrow in the Leopold-Loeb murder trial, was a prominent activist for the right of women to serve on juries, divorce law reform, equal pay for women, and, in her later years, was head of the ERA Committee in Illinois.

1924 - Mary E. Manchester was admitted to the state bar in New Haven. Early in her law practice, she assisted in writing Volume 2 of *Probate Law and Practice in Connecticut* as a supplement to Volume 1, which was published in 1915. In 1932, Attorney Manchester became one of the earliest women to become a member of the CBA.

1925 - J. Agnes Burns was a member of the first graduating class of Hartford College of Law, which became the University of Connecticut School of Law. She was the first woman to appear before the Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors, appearing on a brief, but did not present argument. She was 38 years old in 1925, the year she passed the bar exam. Active in democratic politics, Agnes served three terms in the state House of Representatives.

1925 - Leila E. Thompson became a member of the Connecticut bar in 1925. There is no further accessible record of her life as a lawyer. This was common as to many other early women members of the bar. She is mentioned here because she was honored by the CBA for fifty years of service at the bar in 1974.

1926 - Michalina J. Keeler was the librarian of the Hartford County Bar Library from 1926 to 1964.

1926 - Ethel F. Donaghue was the first female graduate of Hartford Public High School to earn a law degree. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1920. She practiced estates and trusts and was an advocate in the 1920's for the ERA. In 1926, the Hartford City Directory listed three women as practicing law in Hartford: Ethel Donaghue, J. Agnes Burns, and Mary Hall. Attorney Donaghue retired from the bar in 1933 to care for her mother. In her time, she was one of Connecticut's wealthiest women having amassed a fortune from inheritance and her own earnings. In 1977, she established the Donaghue Foundation to fund medical research and, upon her death, at age 93, left her fortune to fund cancer, heart disease research, and to maintain Hartford's Elizabeth Park.

1930-1939

1931 - Fannie Himmelstein graduated from Hartford College of Law in 1931. She took the bar exam and passed it in 1934, the only woman to do so that year. Her fifty years of practice included negotiating the merger of several synagogues, serving as first woman director of the Hartford Free Legal Aid Office, an assistant corporation counsel for the town of West Hartford, and president of her law school alumni association.

1932 - J. Agnes Burns, Ethel F. Donaghue, and Mary C. Manchester became members of the CBA.

1932 - In 1952, Sadie Glanz published an important article on the jurisdiction of the family court in Connecticut. She served on the Zoning Board of Appeals of Hartford for ten years. Along with Catherine Roraback and Mary Manchester, she served as a member of The Task Force on Legal Rights of the Governor's Committee on the Status of Women in 1967.

1933 - Lillian Malley joined the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin after her admission to the Connecticut bar in 1933 and remained there until 1953. To prove her value to the firm, she worked for six months without compensation. She distinguished herself as a tax attorney, and, in 1942, became the first woman partner.

1938 - Margaret Driscoll graduated from Yale Law School in 1938, one of only five women in her class. In 1960, she became the first woman judge of a major state court when she was appointed to Juvenile Court. In 1978, upon the merger of the lower courts, she became a Superior Court Judge. In 1976 and 1977, she served as president of the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges.

1940-1949

1943 - Helen Krause Maykut graduated from New York University School of Law and became one of a very few women practicing in Bridgeport, beginning her legal career with Pullman & Comley.

1944 - Amalia M. Toro's first job after passing the state bar was as an associate at Wiggin and Dana. In 1946, she was appointed director of the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of the State and became the State's first elections attorney. She was also the first woman to hold the office of President of the Connecticut Association of Municipal Attorneys. On May 2, 1975, she was appointed as Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, one of the first women appointed as a Connecticut trial judge, but resigned after only three months, on August 15, 1975.

1946 - Constance Baker Motley graduated from Columbia Law School. For the following twenty years, she was an attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund where she worked side by side with Thurgood Marshall and wrote the first legal brief in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). She was a pre-eminent civil rights attorney in her own right and legal counsel in major civil rights cases in the 1950s and 1960s. She appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court ten times and won each case. She was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York by President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1966. Until her death in 2005, Judge Motley spent weekends, summers and holidays in a historical home in Chester, Connecticut and was a founding member of the Chester Historical Society. She was inducted into the National and Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 1993.

1947 - Ellen Bree Burns graduated from Yale Law School, one of only three women in her class. After her admission to the bar, she attended her first New Haven County Bar Association meeting and was the first and only woman to attend these meetings. She was appointed as a judge of the Connecticut Circuit Court in 1974. Later the same year, she was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas. In 1976, she was the first woman appointed directly to the Connecticut Superior Court. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter appointed her as the first woman U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Connecticut. She was named Chief Judge in 1988 and became the longest serving federal judge in the District of Connecticut.

1948 - When Catherine Roraback graduated from Yale Law School in 1948, she was the only woman in her class. The same year, she helped found the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union. In the early decades of her 50-year career, she was one of the few women practicing in Connecticut courts and litigating issues of women's rights. She litigated several landmark cases including *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965), a successful challenge to Connecticut's restrictive birth control law. In 1971, she spearheaded the defense of Ericka Huggins, a defendant, at the infamous Black Panther

Trial in New Haven. In 1973, she successfully established the innocence of Peter Reilly who was notoriously wrongfully convicted of killing his mother. Attorney Roraback is remembered as an influential role model to Connecticut's most notable trial lawyers. She was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 2001.

1950 - 1959

1950 - Frederica Brenneman was accepted to Harvard Law School in the first class to admit women in 1950 and graduated in 1953. There were 1,557 men at Harvard Law School in the fall of 1950 and 13 women. In 1967, she was appointed to Connecticut's Juvenile Court, becoming the second woman judge in the state's history. In 1978, when the Juvenile Court was merged into the Superior Court, she became a Superior Court Judge. In all her years as a judge, her great strength was presiding over Juvenile Matters, where she mentored many who followed in her footsteps.

1951 - Patricia M. Wald graduated from Yale Law School, one of only eleven women in her class. She became a law clerk to Judge Jerome Frank at the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. She worked at Arnold, Fortas & Porter in Washington, D.C., then took 10 years off to raise her five children. Thereafter, she became a trial lawyer for the Legal Services Corporation and was an assistant attorney general for legislative affairs under President Carter who later nominated her to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. From 1986-1991, she served as Chief Judge, only the second woman to preside over any federal appeals court. In 2011, she was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. In 2013, President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor as a tribute to her remarkable career in the law.

1951 - Antoinette L. Dupont was accepted to Harvard Law School in the second class to admit women in 1951 and graduated in 1954. She practiced law in New London, and, in 1977 was appointed by Governor Ella T. Grasso to the Court of Common Pleas. In 1978, when the courts merged, she became a Superior Court Judge. In 1983, she was appointed by Governor William A. O'Neill to become the first woman, and one of the original judges, appointed to the Connecticut Appellate Court. In 1992, she was appointed by Chief Justice Ellen Ash Peters as the first woman Chief Judge of the Appellate Court.

1954 - Ellen Ash Peters was born in Berlin, Germany in 1930. Her family fled to the Netherlands when she was 8 and immigrated to New York City in 1939. In 1954, she received her law degree from Yale Law School. She became the first woman faculty member at Yale Law School in 1956 where she taught commercial law and contracts. She was the first woman to gain a full professorship at Yale in 1964. In 1978, she became the first woman appointed as an Associate Justice of the Connecticut Supreme

Court by Governor Grasso. In so doing, Governor Grasso, the first woman in the U.S. to be elected Governor in her own right, broke the male stranglehold on the Connecticut Supreme Court, which had previously been reserved for the most senior sitting Superior Court judge at the time of the opening. In 1984, Governor O'Neill appointed Justice Peters as the Chief Justice, a position she held until 1996, when she took senior status. She was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 1994.

1956 - Shirley Raissi Bysiewicz joined the faculty of University of Connecticut School of Law (UCONN School of Law), in 1956, as its first full-time woman member. In 1972, she was awarded tenure and remained the only woman on the faculty until 1977. She was also the law school librarian and taught legal research and writing, elder law and sex-based discrimination. She was a founder and vice president of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), and the first woman to hold an elected position at the CBA, where she served as treasurer. In 1975, she conducted a survey of women lawyers, the results of which were published in the Centennial Edition (Volume 49) of the *Connecticut Bar Journal*.

1957 - Ruth Mantak was one of two women in her law school class at UCONN School of Law in 1957. In 1979, she co-founded Hartford's first all-woman law firm with Jane Christensen and Barbara Ruhe.

1959 - Marcia A. Hincks graduated from Yale Law School in 1959. For her entire legal career, she was an in-house legal counsel insurance executive at Aetna Life & Casualty. Her career spanned from 1961 to 1993. Notably, she served as counsel, vice president, insurance counsel, and senior counsel litigation.

1959 - JoAnne Kiely Kulawiz became the first woman appointed to a Connecticut trial court when she was named as a Circuit Court Judge in 1972 by Governor Thomas Meskill. She was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas in 1974 and became a Superior Court Judge in 1978, when the state courts were merged. In 1998, she was appointed to the Connecticut Appellate Court by Governor John G. Rowland. She was the only woman lawyer to serve as a member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1965.

1960 - 1969

1962 - Elaine Amendola graduated from Yale Law School in 1962, became a member of the bar, and a member of the CBA that same year. In 1971, she co-founded the Bridgeport law firm of Zeldes, Needle & Cooper, where she specialized in civil and criminal litigation. In 1997, she and her daughter Bonnie Amendola founded the law firm of Amendola & Amendola, LLC, specializing in matrimonial law and children's rights. Throughout her career, she remained a committed advocate for women's rights and equality for women in sports under Title IX.

1965 - Eunice Groark graduated from the UCONN School of Law in 1965 and became a member of the bar. After many years of private practice, she served as Executive Director of the Connecticut Bar Foundation, 1977-1981. She became active in Republican Party politics and served on the Hartford City Council, 1981-1985, and as corporation counsel for the City of Hartford, 1987-1990. In 1990, she ran for Lieutenant Governor, alongside Lowell P. Weicker, Jr., the gubernatorial candidate, on the "A Connecticut Party" ticket. She was the first woman elected as lieutenant governor in Connecticut and served with Governor Weicker from 1991-1995. In 1994, when Governor Weicker decided not to run for re-election, she ran for Governor. Despite Governor Weicker's endorsement, she lost the election to John Rowland in a four-way race.

1970-1979

1970 - Marilyn Seichter graduated from UCONN School of Law in 1970 and thereafter established her legal career as a solo practitioner. She became the first woman president of the CBA and the first woman to head the Connecticut State Ethics Commission. She was part of a team of lawyers who brought an abortion case against the state, and, on behalf of the National Organization for Women (NOW), sued newspapers that ran separate help wanted ads for men and women.

1970 - Kathryn Emmett, a graduate of Yale Law School, led advocates of women's rights in a successful battle to revoke the liquor license of the legendary "private" New Haven restaurant-club, Mory's, "a former stronghold of male exclusiveness," whose membership was limited to the Yale community. As reported in the *New York Times*, after a three-year battle, in a negotiated settlement reached in 1974, the challengers agreed to "call off renewed legal action in return for a promise by . . . [Mory's] to admit women to full fledged membership." Attorney Emmett is a Charter Fellow of the Connecticut Bar Foundation. She also served as Board President of the Center for Children's Advocacy. Upon her graduation from law school, she joined the law faculty. She was appointed to the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and became its Chair in 1981. In 1982, she was appointed as a Superior Court Judge. She resigned in 1988 and returned to private practice.

1971 - Wendy W. Susco graduated from UCONN School of Law where she was the first woman editor-in-chief of the *Connecticut Law Review*. Upon her graduation, she joined the UCONN law faculty. She was appointed to the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and became Chair in 1981. In 1982, she was appointed as a Superior Court Judge.

1971 - The Yale Law School Women's Advocate Group, headed by Elga Wasserman, was formed.

1972 - The CBA Committee on the Status of Women in the Law was formed.

1972 - The UCONN Law Women's Association was formed.

1972 - Anne Dranginis entered UCONN School of Law in 1969. There were seventeen women in her class, constituting 10% of the entire class. Among Attorney Dranginis' many achievements during her distinguished career, she was the first woman to serve as an Assistant State's Attorney in Connecticut in 1977. In 1985, she was appointed as a Superior Court Judge, and, in 2000, she was appointed to the Appellate Court, where she served until her retirement from the bench in 2016, when she returned to private practice. Among her other accomplishments, Judge Dranginis has been a long-term member and chair of the Connecticut Bar Examining Committee.

1972 - Constance Belton Green was the first Black woman graduate of UCONN School of Law. She was a pioneer in the civil rights movement. In 2019, she wrote a sixty-five page book, *Still We Rise: African Americans at the University of Connecticut School of Law*. After graduation, she earned a doctorate in education from Columbia University and served as a consultant to the State Department of Education and as chief diversity officer of Eastern Connecticut State University.

1972 - Ellen Lubell graduated from UCONN School of Law and was admitted to the bar in 1972. She went to work as a staff attorney and program coordinator in the Public Defender's Office in the New Haven Superior Court. In 1975, a panel of judges appointed her as the state's first woman Public Defender.

1973 – The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), was founded as the first central and coordinated organization for public education and litigation concerning issues of sex discrimination in Connecticut. It is now known by the name, "She Leads Justice."

1973 - Bessye Warren Bennett graduated from UCONN School of Law. She was the first Black woman admitted to practice law in Connecticut. She turned down a place at Harvard Law School to move to Connecticut with her husband for his job. She became the first Black woman hired in a corporate setting as in-house counsel at Society for Savings in Hartford, where she rose to the position of assistant vice president. In 1985, she opened her own private solo practice. She accepted pro bono cases throughout her career.

1973 - Anne Hamilton graduated from UCONN School of Law and practiced law for fifteen years before becoming a reporter and joining the staff of *The Hartford Courant*. As a reporter, she wrote a longstanding series of remarkable obituaries, called "An Extraordinary Life," which often featured lawyers. Among her numerous achievements

as a journalist, she is the author of a short book, *A Century's Journey: Women at the University of Connecticut School of Law*.

1974 - In this year, Ethel Donaghue, Lelia E. Thompson, and Mary Manchester were the first women honored by the CBA for 50 years' service at the bar.

1974 - Mary M. Galvin served as State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Ansonia-Milford from 1988 through 2006. She was the first woman State's Attorney in Connecticut. Prior to that, she was Chief Assistant State's Attorney in New Haven, 1985-1987, Assistant State's Attorney from 1977 through 1985, and an Assistant Prosecutor from 1975 through 1977. She was appointed to the Criminal Justice Commission in 2011 by Governor Dannel P. Malloy.

1974 - Clarine Nardi Riddle graduated from Indiana University Law School. From 1983 to 1985, she served as Counsel to Attorney General Joseph I. Lieberman. In 1986, she was appointed Deputy Attorney General for the State of Connecticut. Governor O'Neill selected her to become Acting Attorney General in 1988, to fill the unexpired term of Attorney General Lieberman, who was elected to the U.S. Senate. Attorney Riddle was sworn in as Connecticut's 22nd Attorney General in October 1989. She was the first and only woman, as of 2025, to serve the State of Connecticut in that role.

1974 - Martha Stone graduated from Georgetown University Law Center. She was the founder and longtime Executive Director of the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), in Hartford. She started the CCA on a \$2,000 budget in loaned office space over the boiler room at UCONN Law School. In the twenty-eight years since, CCA has grown to an organization with twenty-five staff and a nearly \$3 million operating budget and is now the largest children's legal rights organization in New England. Attorney Stone was lead counsel in Sheff v. O'Neill, the landmark school desegregation case seeking equal public education for children in the City of Hartford public schools. The lawsuit was filed in 1989 and settled in 2022.

1976 - Carmen E. Espinosa earned her law degree from the George Washington University School of Law. Prior to becoming a judge, she worked as a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. In 1992, she became the first Hispanic and Hispanic woman appointed as a judge of the Superior Court. In 2011, she became the first Hispanic appointed to the Appellate Court. In 2013, she became the first Hispanic appointed to the Connecticut Supreme Court.

1976 - Linda Kelly graduated from UCONN School of Law Evening Division and became a member of the state bar in 1977. After working in banking in the early part of her career, she later served as a General Counsel of what was then Shawmut National Bank in Hartford. In 1979, Attorney Kelly was appointed as Deputy Banking Commissioner by Governor Grasso. She also was a commissioner for the Connecticut Department of

Public Utility Control. From 2005 to 2017, she served as the first woman president of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

1977 – Carol Weisbrod became the second woman faculty member at UCONN School of Law in 1977. She was Ellen Ash Peters Professor from 1992 until she retired in 2012. She wrote five books during her thirty-five-year tenure, including a family law casebook and many articles on legal history, family law, and political theory. She taught classes in U.S. Law and Legal Institutions and Family Law.

1977 - Joette Katz graduated from UCONN School of Law in 1977. She rose through the ranks to become the first woman to serve as Chief of Legal Services for the Office of the Chief Public Defender, 1983-1989. In 1989, Governor O'Neill nominated her as a Superior Court Judge. At age 39, in 1992, Governor Weicker elevated her to the Connecticut Supreme Court as an Associate Justice, where she heard over 2,500 cases and authored more than 500 opinions. In 2010, after more than eighteen years on the Supreme Court, Governor Malloy appointed her to become Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, where she served for eight years. Thereafter, she left public service and joined the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin.

1977 - Janet Bond Arterton graduated from Northeastern University School of Law. In 1995, she was nominated by President Bill Clinton and sworn in as a U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Connecticut. She was previously in private practice, 1978-1995, with the New Haven law firm, formerly known as, Garrison & Arterton, P.C., where she focused on employment and labor law. Among her many notable accomplishments as a judge was to establish the New Haven District Court Support Court program in 2010 to provide structured support to federal defendants with drug or alcohol addictions. In 2025, a group of Connecticut lawyers established the Arterton Intellectual Property Inn of Court in her honor.

1977 - Barbara M. Quinn graduated from Emory University School of Law and became a member of the Connecticut bar in 1977. After nineteen years in private practice in New London, in December 1996, she was appointed by Governor Rowland as a Superior Court Judge. In 2007, Judge Quinn was appointed as the first woman Deputy Chief Court Administrator for the Connecticut Judicial Branch. After serving six-months in that role, she was appointed by former Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers, as the first woman Chief Court Administrator. She served in that role from 2007-2013, when she reached the constitutionally mandated retirement age for judges. She has thereafter been appointed annually as a Judge Trial Referee.

1977 - Kate Stith is Lafayette S. Foster Professor of Law at Yale Law School, where she teaches constitutional law, criminal law, criminal procedure, and related subjects. She graduated from Harvard Law School in 1977 in a joint four-year program at the Harvard Kennedy School where she earned the degree of Master in Public Policy. She was first in

her class as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College. She served as Law Clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White, 1979-1980. Her numerous professional accomplishments and affiliations include: the Connecticut Supreme Court Historical Society Board of Directors, 2017-present; the Connecticut Bar Foundation Board of Directors, 1987-2011, President, 1999-2002; Dartmouth College Board of Trustees, 1989-2000; Commissioner, Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, 1987-1996; American Law Institute (Life Member), Council on Foreign Relations (Member) and American Bar Foundation (Life Member). Much gratitude is owed to Professor Stith for her enthusiastic support of the women lawyers' oral history project, (now known as HOWLP), in 1999 and 2000, while she was President of the Connecticut Bar Foundation.

1978 - Mary Moers Wenig joined the faculty of Quinnipiac University School of Law as a nationally known expert in taxation, marital property and trusts and estates. She was one of the authors of the Uniform Marital Property Act approved in 1983 and was a founding member of CWEALF.

1978 - E. Curtissa Cofield graduated from UCONN School of Law. She also received a master's degree in theology from the Yale Divinity School. For many years, she was the Supervising Assistant States Attorney in GA 14 in Hartford. In 1991, Governor Weicker appointed her as the first Black woman to be a Superior Court Judge. She served until 1991.

1978 - Joan G. Margolis graduated from UCONN School of Law. Upon her graduation, she served as the first law clerk to Judge Ellen Bree Burns who was the first woman appointed as a U.S. District Court Judge in 1978. In 1985, Judge Margolis became the first woman appointed as a U.S. Magistrate Judge for the District of Connecticut.

1978 – Vanessa Bryant graduated from UCONN School of Law and became a member of the Connecticut bar in 1978. In 2007, she was nominated by President George W. Bush as the first Black woman to be a U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Connecticut. She previously served as a Connecticut Superior Court Judge, 1998-2007, Chapter 13 Bankruptcy Trustee for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Connecticut, 1996-1998, a partner at Hawkins, Delafield & Woods, 1992-1998, and a member of the Connecticut Board of Pardons, 1991-1998.

1980 - 1989

1982 - An article appeared in the *Connecticut Bar Journal* titled: "The Changing Status of Women Attorneys in the Legal Profession," 56 Conn. Bar J. 344 (1982), by Attorneys Elga R. Wasserman of the New Haven Bar and Barbara S. Miller of the Bridgeport Bar. The article was based on surveys that were conducted by the CBA Committee on the Status of Women in 1979 and 1981. Attorneys Wasserman and Miller wrote that in the

previous ten years, the number of women graduating from law school rose to one-third of all law school graduates as opposed to 10% in 1970. They reported that of the 610 attorneys admitted to the Connecticut bar in 1981, 194 were women. In conclusion, the authors stated: "A recent survey reports that, of 4,271 partners in the country's largest law firms, only 121 are female. Although the number of women hired as associates has increased rapidly in recent years, it remains to be seen whether the women who are now associates will move up and become partners."

1985 - The CBA Section on Women in the Law was formed.

1986 - Susan Bysiewicz graduated from Duke University School of Law and became a member of the Connecticut bar in 1986. In 2018, she was elected as the 109th Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut, alongside Ned Lamont, her running mate, in the 2018 gubernatorial election. On January 4, 2023, she was sworn in to serve her second four-year term as Lieutenant Governor. Previously, she served three terms as the 72nd Secretary of the State of Connecticut, 1999-2011, and as a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives, 1993-1999. She is the daughter of Professor Shirley Raissi Bysiewicz, the first full-time woman faculty member and law librarian at UCONN School of Law, 1956-1977.

1986 - Nora Dannehy graduated from Harvard Law School in 1986. Between 1991 and 2011, she served the U.S. Department of Justice investigating and prosecuting complex white collar and public corruption matters as an Assistant and Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney and Special Attorney in the District of Columbia. In 2008, she was named Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut, the first woman to serve in that position. She was appointed to the Connecticut Supreme Court as an Associate Justice by Governor Lamont in 2023. Prior to her appointment she served as General Counsel in the Office of Governor Lamont.

1986 - Kathleen Nastri graduated from UCONN School of Law in 1986. As a trial lawyer specializing in medical malpractice, personal injury and other complex cases, she has obtained numerous precedent-setting and multi-million-dollar verdicts and settlements. She was elected president of the American Association of Justice and continues to serve on its Board. She was the first woman president of the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, 2003-2004. Among other professional affiliations, she is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, and a Fellow of the Inner Circle of Advocates.

1988 - Chief Justice Ellen Ash Peters created the Connecticut Task Force on Gender, Justice and the Courts. The Task Force found that "gender bias is present not only among judges, attorneys and court staff, but in the structure of the culture in which we labor." The Task Force concluded that "women are treated differently from men in the justice system and, because of it, many suffer from unfairness, embarrassment,

emotional pain, professional deprivation, and economic hardship.” The findings were published in a Report to the Chief Justice in September 1991.

1988 - Elizabeth A. Bozzuto graduated from Western New England School of Law and was admitted to the Connecticut Bar in 1988. In 2000, she was appointed as a Superior Court Judge by Governor Rowland. Prior to her appointment to the Superior Court, she was a partner in the law firm of Secor, Cassidy and McPartland, P.C. As a Superior Court Judge, among other noteworthy assignments, she served as Chief Administrative Judge for the Family Division. In 2018, she was appointed as the Deputy Chief Court Administrator. She served in that role until December 2022, when she was selected by Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson as Chief Court Administrator. With the appointment of Judge Bozzuto as Chief, Judge Anna M. Ficeto was named as Deputy Chief Court Administrator, marking the first time in Connecticut history that two women served as the top administrators of the Judicial Branch.

1990 - 1999

1990 - Nina F. Elgo graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 1990. After serving as an assistant attorney general for several years, she became the first Asian Pacific American woman appointed to the Superior Court in 2004 and to the Connecticut Appellate Court in 2017.

1990 - Anna M. Ficeto graduated from UCONN School of Law and became a member of the Connecticut bar in 1990. She was appointed as a Superior Court Judge in 2012 by Governor M. Jodi Rell. Prior to her appointment as a judge, she served as legal counsel for Governor Rell. She also previously served as a commissioner of the Department of Public Utility Control and as deputy commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services.

1992 - The Quinnipiac University School of Law was established and accredited in 1992. It had its origins as the University of Bridgeport School of Law. Founded in 1977, the University of Bridgeport School of Law began operations in 1979 as a fully accredited law school. In 1992, the law school faculty and students voted to become part of Quinnipiac University. The ABA approved the transfer without interruption in its accreditation.

1992 - The Women’s Law Society at Quinnipiac University School of Law was formed.

1993-1995 - During this timeframe, a survey was performed by the CBA on Gender Issues in the Legal Profession. The Survey Report made what it termed as “four disturbing observations” based on the survey results: “One, the persistence of sexual harassment; two, the disparity in both private practice and corporate settings between women’s and men’s compensation for the same work; three, the absence of women

from decision-making positions and policy-making responsibilities; and four, the exploitation of female attorneys who are working ‘part-time’ in order to meet family responsibilities.” Both the survey and an extensive report were published in the *Connecticut Bar Journal* in 1995. See “Gender Issues in the Legal Profession,” 69 Conn. Bar J. 161 (1995); “Appendix I, The Questionnaire,” 69 Conn. Bar J. 228 (1995).

2000-2025

2000 - Nell Jessup Newton became the first woman named to serve as dean of UCONN School of Law in 2000. She served until 2006, when she left to become chancellor, dean, and William B. Lockhart Professor of Law at the University of California Hastings College of Law, which has since been renamed as the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco. In 2006, she received the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Connecticut Law School Alumni Association. During her time in Connecticut, she became a Life Fellow of the Connecticut Bar Foundation. In her career, Dean Newton served as dean or interim dean at six law schools.

2008 - Ruth Pulda passed away at age 53. Her obituary describes her as a leader, educator, mentor, and advocate to a generation of Connecticut lawyers and on behalf of women’s rights, civil rights, and social justice. Her law career spanned twenty-five years as a partner in the law firm of Livingston, Adler, Pulda, Meiklejohn & Kelly, in Hartford. Attorney Pulda served as legal counsel to CWEALF, as chair of the state’s Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and she co-founded and taught at the Women’s Rights Clinic at UCONN School of Law.

2012 - Alice A. Bruno became the first woman to serve as Executive Director of the Connecticut Bar Association in 2012.

2013 - Jennifer Gerarda Brown was named as the first woman dean of the Quinnipiac University School of Law. She served as dean for ten years before returning to the classroom as a full professor. She teaches civil procedure, professional responsibility and various courses related to ADR. During her career, she has taught at several law schools including Yale, Harvard, Georgetown, Emory, and the University of Illinois. She graduated from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1985. At a ceremony held in 2024, marking the conclusion of her tenure as dean, among other expressions and tokens of appreciation, it was announced that the School of Law student lounge was to be dedicated and named in her honor.

2014 - Deirdre M. Daly was appointed by President Obama as the first woman to be named to a full term as U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut. She served from 2013-2017. She is now in private practice as a partner in the law firm Finn Dixon & Herling in Stamford, Connecticut, practicing in the areas of white-collar defense and internal investigations. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 1984.

2017 - Kathleen Eldergill graduated first in her class at UCONN School of Law in 1981. She specialized in employment matters, civil rights claims, civil litigation and environmental law. She was certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy for twenty years. She was selected as a Super Lawyer in her field of practice beginning in 2006. She passed away in 2017, at age 64.

2017 - Heather K. Gerken is the 17th dean and the first woman to become dean in the 200-year history of Yale Law School. After serving eight years, she will step down in November 2025 and become the 11th president of the Ford Foundation. In announcing her appointment, the Ford Foundation notes that Dean Gerken is a nationally recognized expert on constitutional law and democracy.

2020 - Eboni S. Nelson was the first Black woman (in a non-acting capacity) named as dean of the UCONN School of Law. She graduated from Harvard Law School in 2001. While at Harvard, she served as a Contracts teaching assistant to then-Professor Elizabeth Warren. She came to UCONN from the University of South Carolina School of Law where she taught for thirteen years. She has taught in the fields of Contracts; Commercial Law; Consumer Law; and Race, Class and Education. Effective August 1, 2025, she has been reappointed as dean for a second five-year term.

2022 - Vanessa Roberts Avery was the first Black woman named to the position of U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut. She served from 2022-2025. She also served in the Office of the Attorney General as an associate attorney general and chief of the Division of Enforcement and Public Protection. In 2025, she returned to private practice as a partner focusing on litigation in the Hartford Office of McCarter & English. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 1999.

2025 - The gender breakdown at Quinnipiac University School of Law of first year law students for the 2024-2025 academic year which totaled 146 students is 94 women (64%) and 52 men (36%).

2025 - The gender breakdown at the UCONN School of Law of first year law students for the 2024-2025 academic year which totaled 148 students is 81 women (55%) and 67 men (45%).

2025 - The gender breakdown at Yale Law School of first year law students for the 2024-2025 academic year which totaled 205 students is 116 women (56.6%) and 89 men (43.4%).

In its 150-year history, the CBA has had twelve (12) women presidents as follows:

Marilyn Seichter (1989-1990)

Carolyn Kelly (1990-1991)

Susan Wolfson (1991-1992)

Rosemary Guiliano (1994-1995)
Deborah Tedford (2002-2003)
Livia DeFilippis Barndollar (2008-2009)
Kimberly A. Knox (2013-2014)
Karen DeMeola (2017-2018)
Ndidi N. Moses (2019-2020)
Amy Lin Meyerson (2020-2021)
Maggie Castinado (2023-2024)
Emily Gianquinto (2025-2026)

At present, there are sixteen (16) U.S. District Court Judges for the District of Connecticut. Six (6) of them are women as follows:

Janet B. Arterton (1995)
Janet C. Hall (1997)
Vanessa L. Bryant (2007)*
Kari A. Dooley (2017)**
Sarala V. Nagala (2021)
Sarah F. Russell (2024)

As previously noted, in 1978, the Honorable Ellen Bree Burns (1923-2019), was the first woman appointed to the federal bench in Connecticut.

*Judge Bryant previously served as a State of Connecticut Superior Court Judge (1998-2007).

**Judge Dooley served as a State of Connecticut Superior Court Judge (2004-2017).

At present, there are nine (9) U.S. Magistrate Judges. Four (4) of them are women as follows:

Joan G. Margolis (1978)
Holly B. Fitzsimmons (1993)
Donna F. Martinez (1994)
Maria E. Garcia (2022)

At present, there are seven (7) U.S. Court of Appeals Judges for the Second Circuit. Three (3) are women as follows:

Susan L. Carney (2011)*
Sarah A. L. Merriam (2022)*

Maria Araujo Kahn (2023)***

*Before her appointment, Judge Carney served as Deputy General Counsel of Yale University for over a decade and also served as Acting General Counsel.

**Judge Merriam served as a U.S. Magistrate Judge (2015-2021), and as a U.S. District Judge (2021-2022).

***Judge Kahn previously served as a State of Connecticut Superior Court Judge (2006-2017), as a State of Connecticut Appellate Court Judge (2017), and as an Associate Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court (2017-2023).

From 1784-1807, forty-seven (47) men served on the State of Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors. From 1807 to the present, there have been 123 men and nine (9) women who have served on the Connecticut Supreme Court, including two (2) women who have served as Chief Justice, as follows:

Ellen Ash Peters, Chief Justice (1984-1996); Associate Justice (1978-1984)

Joette Katz (1993-2011)

Christine S. Vertefeuille (2000-2010)

Chase T. Rogers, Chief Justice (2007-2018)

Carmen E. Espinosa (2013-2017)

Maria Araujo Kahn (2017-2023)

Christine Keller (2020-2022)

Joan K. Alexander (2022 to present)

Nora Dannehy (2023 to present)

Other than Justice Dannehy, all the listed justices previously served as Superior Court Judges. Justices Vertefeuille (1989-1999), Espinosa (1992-2011), Keller (1993-2013), Rogers (1998-2006), Kahn (2006-2017), and Alexander (2000-2020), also served on the Connecticut Appellate Court.

Since the Appellate Court was established in 1983, the following women served on that court:

Bethany Alvord (2009 to present); Superior Court Judge (2002-2009)

Christine S. Vertefeuille (1999-2000), Superior Court Judge (1989-1999)

Alexandra D. DiPentima, Chief Judge (2010-2020); Appellate Judge (2003-2010);

Superior Court (1993-2003)

Chase T. Rogers (2006-2007)

Carmen E. Espinosa (2011-2013)

Christine Keller (2013-2020)
Maria Araujo Kahn (2017)
Nina F. Elgo (2017 to present), Superior Court Judge (2004-2017)
Ingrid L. Moll (2018 to present), Superior Court Judge (2014-2018)
Joan K. Alexander (2020-2022)
Melanie L. Cradle, Chief Judge (2025 to present); Appellate Judge (2020-2025)
Hope C. Seeley (2022 to present), Superior Court Judge (2013-2022)
Dawne G. Westbrook (2023 to present), Superior Court Judge (2009-2023)
Robin L. Wilson (2025 to present), Superior Court Judge (2003-2025)

2025 - As of March 2025, there are seven (7) Connecticut Supreme Court Justices, two (2) of them are women. There are nine (9) Appellate Court Judges, seven (7) of them are women. There are 174 Superior Court Judges, eighty-six (86) of whom are women.

The CBA Ladder Award honors a Connecticut woman attorney who has “left the ladder down” for women to follow in her footsteps, and values the importance of leadership development, mentoring, and supporting junior lawyers in their journeys to success. The award is presented by the Young Lawyers Section Women in the Law Committee at the annual Pathways to Leadership for Women Lawyers event.

Past Ladder Award Recipients

2007 Hon. Anne C. Dranginis (Ret.)
2008 Rosemary E. Giuliano
2009 Kathleen L. Brandt
2010 Margaret A. Deluca
2012 Hon. Elizabeth J. Stewart
2013 Maureen Dannehy Cox
2014 Hon. Nada K. Sizemore
2015 Diane W. Whitney
2016 Tanya A. Bovée
2017 Hon. Maria Araujo Kahn
2018 Deirdre M. Daly
2019 Hon. Lynda B. Munro (Ret.)
2020 Elaine S. Amendola
2022 Elizabeth A. Alquist
2023 Tanyee Cheung
2024 Hon. Evelyn M. Daly
2025 Kimberly Jacobsen

HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION (HOWLP) Project

In the 1999-2000 timeframe, with the support of the James W. Cooper Fellows of the Connecticut Bar Foundation, a handful of lawyers recruited by Superior Court Judge A. Susan Peck (1996-2022), thought the time was right to create an oral history project, now known as the CBF History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession (HOWLP) Project. The original purpose of the Project was to record the journeys of trailblazing women lawyers while they were active and still available to tell their own stories. Included in this timeline is a list of the 63 women whose stories have been preserved as part of the HOWLP project, along with the dates of their interviews.

For those of us who had the privilege of initiating and working on the HOWLP Project since its inception, it has been an exhilarating experience. As is the case with the so many members of the legal profession, women have demonstrated skill, commitment to the highest standards of the profession and extraordinary professional and community service. Despite all that the men and women who have worked on this project over the years have accomplished, there is a strong element of unfinished business and regret we could not have accomplished more. The influx of highly accomplished women into the profession, as well as time and expense, made this goal impractical. Thus, we leave it to the next generations of women lawyers to continue to build on the archive of materials we have created.

Following is a list of the woman who have been interviewed as part of the HOWLP (oral history) Project as of the date of this timeline.

Catherine G. Roraback	7/29/1999
Bessye W. Bennett	10/4/1999 (Audio)
Judge Margaret Driscoll	10/30/1999
Judge Ellen Bree Burns	11/24/1999
Marcia L. Hincks	7/19/2000 (Audio)
Chief Justice Ellen Ash Peters	7/19/2000
Amalia M. Toro	9/1/2000 (Blank)
Judge Frederica S. Brenneman	9/26/2000
Judge Antoinette L. Dupont	10/25/2000
Judge Ellen Bree Burns	11/15/2000
Ethel S. Sorokin	1/8/2001
Eunice S. Groark	1/22/2001

Mary M. Galvin	3/7/2001
Judge Wendy W. Susco	3/28/2001
Lee S. McKeithen	4/4/2001
Claudine F. Siegel	4/25/2001
Rhoda Loeb	2/25/2004
Mag. Katherine Y. Hutchinson	7/13/2004
Judge E. Curtissa R. Cofield	7/14/2004
Ellen B. Lubell	8/11/2004
Catherine G. Roraback	9/14/2004
Susan W. Wolfson	12/17/2004
Judge Anne C. Dranginis	1/26/2005
Carolyn P. Kelly	2/8/2005
Judge Sheila M. Hennessey	4/13/2005
Judge Barbara A. Coppeto	4/18/2005
Joanne S. Faulkner	8/2/2005
Marcia Hincks	11/15/2005
Nell Jessup Newton	5/23/2006
Chief Justice Ellen Ash Peters	6/20/2007
Sandra P. Gersten	9/5/2007
Eve W. Paul	9/12/2007
Marcia Smith	10/3/2007
Jeanette T. Carrozzella	10/10/2007
Susan R. Meredith	10/24/2007
Elaine S. Amendola	9/30/2010
Martha Stone	4/12/2012
Tricia Froehlich	10/26/201
Connie Belton Green	10/26/2016
Lainie Wade	10/26/2016
Diane Whitney	10/26/2016
Brenda A. Eckert	11/3/2016
Kathy Emmett	11/3/2016
Judge Barbara M. Quinn	11/3/2016
Judge Alexandra DiPentima	11/9/2016
Judge Carmen Espinosa	11/9/2016
Linda Kelly	11/9/2016
Judge Holly Fitzsimmons	11/29/2016
Sunny Goldstein	11/29/2016
Rosemary Guiliano	11/29/2016
Chief Justice Chase Rogers	11/29/2016
Judge Janet Hall	12/12/2016

Joette Katz	12/14/2016
Judge Joan G. Margolis	12/14/2016
Dorothy Robinson	12/14/2016
Judge Janet Arterton	1/4/2017
Pat Kaplan	1/4/2017
Judge A. Susan Peck	1/4/2017
Kate Stith	1/4/2017
Judge Elaine Gordon	12/8/2017
Elizabeth “Betty” Leete	12/8/2017
Ruth Mantak	12/8/2017
Jennifer Gerarda Brown	02/12/2023
Deirdre Daly	02/12/2023
Nina F. Elgo	02/12/2023
Trudie Hamilton	02/12/2023
Judge Constance Epstein	05/04/2023

For those interested in doing further research on the history of women in the legal profession, the last thirty oral history interviews, those dated from 11/3/2016 – 5/4/2023, are available on the Connecticut Bar Foundation YouTube channel, which may be accessed by using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com@ctbarfoundation7969/videos>. In addition, videos of the earlier interviews (1999 – 2012), have all been digitized and will soon become available on the CBF website: <https://ctbarfdn.org>. Also, there are two videos of interview highlights which are currently available on the CBF website: The first was produced by West Hartford Community Television in 2001 and is fourteen (14) minutes long; the second video was produced by acclaimed documentarian, Karyl Evans, in 2018, and is twenty (20) minutes long. Written transcripts have been made of most interviews and may be accessed by email request to ctbf@ctbarfdn.org.

Finally, we will be creating an interactive document, e.g., a Google doc, which will allow those individuals who wish to add to the Timeline to do so on an ongoing basis. Although the specifics of the format have not yet been worked out, such an interactive document will soon become available on the CBF website.

Judge A. Susan Peck (Ret.)
Liz Drummond

August 6, 2025