

17th Annual Margaret Brent Luncheon Honors Five Who Have Improved Status of Women Lawyers

This year's Margaret Brent Award recipients have several things in common -- they have influenced other women to pursue legal careers, opened doors for women lawyers in a variety of job settings that historically were closed to them, and advanced opportunities for women within the profession. But it's a series of "firsts" that make them particularly worthy.

[Roxana C. Bacon](#), the first woman partner at what was then the largest law firm in Arizona, was also the first woman elected to be president of the State Bar of Arizona. As one of the premier immigration lawyers in the country, Bacon credited a stint in the Peace Corps for teaching her invaluable lessons. "I know how precious life in the United States is," she said. "To the rest of the world, our country is a beacon of opportunity."

Bacon encouraged other women to follow her lead and "set up their own shops" where they would have more control over their own lives. "Trust that your own wings will help you reach new heights when you fly the coop."

[Judge Marsha Berzon](#) of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit served as U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan's first woman law clerk and was one of the earliest female clerks on the Court. She was the first woman to appear on behalf of the national labor movement in the U.S. Supreme Court. She told the capacity crowd at the Moscone West Convention Center that times have changed since she was in law school. "In the Boalt Hall class of '73," she noted, "only twenty percent were women."

She structured her private practice so she wouldn't have to sacrifice family and friends. Berzon said, "We had the ability to be flexible. We were never told there were limits."

[Angela Bradstreet](#), who recently became Labor Commissioner of California, spearheaded the unanimous adoption by the San Francisco Superior Court of the first policy of a U.S. trial court banning membership by judges in organizations that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

In a tribute to Bradstreet, California Senator Dianne Feinstein wrote, "Angela has devoted her career to increasing opportunities for women by fighting for genuine equality in the workplace. After acknowledging many who helped her along the way, Bradstreet said, "It's now time for me to try to give back. To the future generations of women lawyers everywhere, I know you will continue to carry our torch."

[Marva Jones Brooks](#) became the first woman and the first African-American to serve as City Attorney in the history of Atlanta, at a time when most governmental bodies in the

South had only men as their chief legal officers. In her role as associate general counsel for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, she became one of the two highest-ranking women involved in the 1996 Games.

Brooks attributed her success to her “audacity to believe I could work in a profession where no one looked like me.”

[Judge Irma Raker](#) was the first woman prosecutor in Montgomery County, Maryland. She worked up through the ranks to the Court of Appeals of Maryland, the state’s highest court. In her acceptance speech, Raker paid tribute to Margaret Brent, the first woman lawyer in America who in 1648, demanded women have a “voyce and vote” in the Maryland Assembly, which was denied by the Governor. Raker said, “She was the first of the modern women lawyers, 360 years ago.”

Raker said she was “honored and humbled to receive the award” given to only to women who devote themselves to the law. “If Margaret Brent were here today, I think she would be smiling because women today have a voice and vote.”

The Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, established by the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession in 1991, recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of women lawyers who have excelled in their field and have paved the way to success for other women lawyers.

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