

# NEW YORK *Women of Change*

**N**ew York has long been a leader in advancing women's equality, but it didn't come quickly or easily. From the women's suffrage movement 100 years ago to present day, women have been on the front lines fighting for justice.

Some blazed the trail in full public view, while others, often unnoticed, made their indelible mark outside the limelight. Yet all were significant in the contributions that their work made to the State of New York. Not just for women, but for all.

In the halls of the State Capitol, women have served and continue to serve at various levels of government. Whether becoming first-time elected officials, being appointed to the highest government positions, or having roles behind the scenes, these women have made meaningful changes making the lives of New Yorkers better. While some became well known figures, others were simply forgotten over time.

These are just a few of the women who have played vital roles in advising and executing visions of the future for various administrations, introducing important legislation, ensuring the government is functioning efficiently, or chronicling the state's history. It wasn't until the late 1960s that women were allowed into the Legislative Correspondents Association, a group of journalists who report on government.

In honor of Women's History Month, this exhibit features women, past and present, who have stood up for the rights of their fellow citizens and helped define New York as the land of opportunity.

# Women of Change

## LEGISLATIVE CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION

### First Female Reporters of the LCA



#### ISABELLE DOLORES WEDEMEYER

Isabelle Dolores Wedemeyer, was one of the first women to be admitted to the Legislative Correspondents Association when the organization began admitting women in 1967. She was a reporter for The Albany Knickerbocker News.



#### MARY T. BATES

Marie T. Bates, was a veteran Capitol reporter. She was also admitted to the Legislative Correspondents Association in 1967. She was a reporter for United Press International.

**LEGISLATIVE CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION**  
 An Organization of News Reporters Assigned to Cover the Legislature, the Governor and Activities of the State Government

The Legislative Correspondents' Association is an organization of news reporters assigned by newspapers and news agencies to cover the proceedings of the Legislature and other activities of the State Government at Albany. In its present form it has been in existence for 64 years. Predecessor organizations, differing somewhat in form and eligibility requirements, date back almost to the start of the State government itself.

**Membership of Association**

Present by-laws of the Legislative Correspondents' Association make membership available to any male reporter regularly assigned to cover the Legislature or State Capitol by any bona-fide newspaper or news agency provided that reporting is his principal occupation. Employees of the State or any of its agencies and employees of non-newspaper organizations interested in promoting or influencing legislation or administrative rulings or decisions are barred.

Women are not eligible for membership in the Association but are entitled to and receive all the privileges accorded to members of the Association by the Legislature or other agencies of the State. They have the use of the press room and all other rights enjoyed by their male confreres.

**William M. Ringle**  
 President  
 Gannett News Service

*Women were not allowed membership in the LCA until 1967*

### Veteran Female LCA Reporters



#### ELSIE WOOD

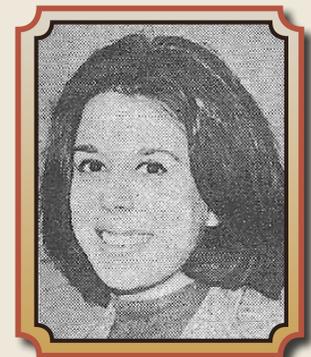
Elsie Wood, also served as a longtime member of the LCA and was recognized by Governor Mario Cuomo at the time of her passing. She covered politics at the New York State Capitol for over 50 years. Between 1928 and 1956 Wood transmitted news as a telegrapher for the Postal Telegraph and Western Union and then became a member of the LCA in 1969. Governor Mario Cuomo stated, "Wood was an inspiration to all of us who work at the Capitol. She had a rare combination of strength, kindness and wisdom, and an unwavering devotion and commitment to the news business as evidenced in her work for Cuyler News service until her death at the age of 91."



#### ELIZABETH FLOOD MORROW

Elizabeth Flood Morrow, also served as the longest-tenured correspondent in the LCA. In 1957, she began working in the Capitol, several years before women were permitted to become members of the LCA, primarily writing for financial and trade publications.

Flood spent decades covering the New York State Legislature becoming a fixture in the Capitol covering the administrations of nine successive governors, including both Governor Mario Cuomo and his son Governor Andrew Cuomo. Flood died at the age of 83 in 2016.



### First Female President of the LCA

Elizabeth A. Buechner of Gannett News Service, was named the first female Legislative Correspondents Association President in 1978.

# MARGUERITE “MISSY” LEHAND

*Secretary and Aide to President and Governor  
Franklin D. Roosevelt*



**M**issy LeHand began to work with Franklin D. Roosevelt as a secretary in 1920 on his vice-presidential campaign, then remained working for him in the private sector and continued to serve as a valued aide during his tenure as Governor and President.

Upon arrival in the New York State Capitol, she became known as the Governor's

“Right Hand Woman” and was said to have told an interviewer that “Albany was the hardest work I ever did.” (The Gatekeeper, a biography by Kathryn Smith).

While her official title at the White House was Secretary to the President, she functioned more as what we would consider today as the Chief of Staff, providing counsel, controlling access to the President, and managing staff.

Upon her untimely death in 1944, President Roosevelt issued a public statement that said in part, “Memories of more than a score of years of devoted service enhance the sense of personal loss which Miss LeHand’s passing brings. Faithful and painstaking, with charm of manner inspired by tact and kindness of heart, she was utterly selfless in her devotion to duty. Hers was a quiet efficiency, which made her a real genius in getting things done.”

# SHONTELL SMITH

*Majority Conference Chief of Staff and Majority Counsel*



Shontell Smith is an attorney at the NYS Senate who has worked in public service for over a decade. She is currently the Chief of Staff and Majority Counsel to the Senate Democratic Majority Conference. She is responsible for managing the legal, finance, press and public policy departments for the conference. Previously, she was the Director of

Counsel and Finance for the NYS Senate Democratic Conference.

She received her undergraduate degree in Political Science from Siena College and a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law in 2007. She then worked as a law clerk for the Honorable Michael E. Loney for the Anne Arundel Circuit Court in Maryland. Upon completion of her clerkship, she returned to Albany NY, went to work for the NYS Senate as the Floor Counsel for the Democratic Conference, and was later promoted to the Floor and Policy Development Counsel.

Smith is a first generation American born and raised in Albany, New York. Her mother was born in Guyana, South America and her father was born in Jamaica, West Indie.

# LOUANN CICCONE

*First woman to serve as Secretary for Program and Policy for Assembly Speaker*



LouAnn Ciccone is secretary for Program and Policy for Speaker Carl E. Heastie, and is the first woman to serve in this role for the New York State Assembly. She is a top advisor to the Speaker and plays a critical role in matters pertaining to the adoption of the annual state budget and the Assembly's legislative priorities. She manages a staff of more than 100 employees who are responsible for advancing the Assembly Majority's policy agenda.

A 27-year veteran of the Assembly, LouAnn's tenure has spanned the administrations of three speakers and five governors. She began her career with the Assembly as an intern in 1992. Since then, she served in various capacities for the Assembly's Program and Policy group.

LouAnn has been instrumental in advancing progressive initiatives to help improve the lives of all New Yorkers. Throughout her career she has played an integral role in passage of legislation to make paid family leave, minimum wage increases, equal pay for equal work, safe workplaces, and rights and protections for domestic violence survivors a reality in New York State. She has been a driving force on women's health, shepherding through legislation requiring mammography screenings, bone density tests and cervical cancer screenings as well as the Women's Health and Wellness Act and a myriad of issues related to accessible, affordable healthcare. LouAnn Ciccone was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y. She earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science from SUNY New Paltz.

# BELLE MOSKOWITZ

*Campaign Manager and Advisor to Governor Alfred E. Smith*



*Belle Moskowitz exercised a level of power in the political realm unprecedented for women in her time. When Al Smith ran for President in 1928, she was by far the most powerful woman in the national Democratic Party. (The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.)*

**B**elle Moskowitz was an important political figure and social justice reformer during New York's Progressive Period. She began her public career as a social worker, a relatively new field at the time. Moskowitz focused her efforts on social and educational reforms for young women. Once the garment strikes began, she shifted her focus to labor issues, specifically

workplace safety and wages. After the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, she worked with Assemblymember Al Smith to investigate the tragedy and understand why so many workers died. After the investigation, she helped Smith craft the reform legislation that resulted from the tragedy. Moskowitz's association with him would continue for the rest of her life. She managed all of Smith's gubernatorial campaigns and was his close advisor during his time in office. When Smith decided to run for President, Moskowitz was his Campaign Manager and oversaw his campaign in 1928. Her premature death came after accidentally falling down the stairs outside her home.

# HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

*First Female U.S. Senator from NYS, Secretary of State,  
and Democratic nominee for President*



**T**he public service career of Hillary Rodham Clinton spans decades. She served as Secretary of State, Senator from New York, First Lady of the United States, first lady of Arkansas, a practicing lawyer and law professor, activist, and volunteer.

As the First Lady of the United States from 1993 to 2001 she championed health care and women's rights. In 2000, she was elected as the first female U.S. Senator from New York and served in that role through 2008, focusing on key issues including funding for New York City following the attacks of 9-11 and assistance for rural communities. In 2009, she became the 67th United States Secretary of State, serving until 2013.

Clinton became the Democratic Party's nominee for President of the United States in the 2016 election, the first woman nominated by a major party.

# MARY ANNE KRUPSAK

*First Female Lieutenant Governor of New York*



*"(W)e take an oath of office to defend the country and defend the Constitution, and that means you have to work with everyone else that was elected."- Mary Anne Krupsak*

In 1974, New York State Senator Mary Anne Krupsak was elected Lieutenant Governor of New York with Governor Hugh Carey, making her the first woman elected to statewide office.

Born in Schenectady to Polish-American parents, Krupsak earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester in 1953 and a master's degree in communications from Boston University in 1955.

Initially working in public relations, Krupsak decided to earn a law degree after working in Washington, D.C., for New York Congressman Samuel Stratton. She earned a law degree from the University of Chicago in 1962.

In 1968, Krupsak was elected to the State Assembly. She would serve in the Assembly and Senate for almost a decade, working to promote women's rights, including sponsoring legislation to modify evidentiary requirements for rape trials.

In 1974, Krupsak served one term as Lieutenant Governor. In 1978, she challenged her former running mate and lost in the primary.

# MELISSA DEROSA

*First woman to serve as Secretary to the Governor*



**M**elissa DeRosa, an Albany native, was exposed to politics early through her father, whom she shadowed, at age eight, when he was working for the Public Employees Federation, a public sector union. While at Albany Academy for Girls, in eighth grade, DeRosa and a fellow classmate, Elise Stefanik, now a New York Congresswoman, lobbied administrators to install a snack machine to bring in revenue. At 16, she interned for the political director of the New York State AFL-CIO, and at 19 for then U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton's political action committee.

Before joining the Governor's Office, DeRosa worked in the Attorney General's Office as Deputy Chief of Staff and as Acting Chief

of Staff. Ms. DeRosa led the office's effort to negotiate and pass the country's most aggressive prescription drug reform package, I-STOP (Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing Act). Prior to working for the Attorney General, DeRosa served as New York State Director of Organizing for America (OFA), President Obama's national political action organization, and worked on a number of political and policy campaigns.

Since April 2013, DeRosa has served as Communications Director, Strategic Advisor, and most recently Chief of Staff to the Governor. During her tenure, DeRosa has managed overall communications and press for the Executive Chamber and more than 50 State agencies, political affairs, labor relations, and the administration's strategic approach to enacting policy.

She spearheaded the Governor's campaigns to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, enact the nation's strongest paid family leave program, and most recently to establish the Excelsior Scholarship, making New York the first state in the country to provide free public college tuition for middle- and low-income families.

In addition, DeRosa has used her position to fight to advance women's rights, serving as Chair of the New York State Council on Women and Girls, established by the Governor to recognize and advance women's rights in New York State.

She holds a bachelor's degree in industrial and labor relations and a master's degree in public administration, both from Cornell University. She has served on the executive board of the Women's Leadership Forum Network of the Democratic National Committee.

DeRosa is the first woman to ever serve in the role of Secretary to the Governor

# GRACE MENG

*First Asian woman elected to State Legislature*



*"I take the definition of my job- Representative- seriously. That's what I will be above and beyond everything else."*

*- Representative Grace Meng*

**W**ith her 2012 election, State Assembly-member Grace Meng became New York's first Asian-American U.S. Congresswoman, representing parts of Queens.

Meng was born and raised in Queens to immigrants from Taiwan. After graduating from the University of Michigan, she earned a law degree from

the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University.

Meng's political career began in 2006 when she was elected to fill the Assembly seat once held by her father, Jimmy Meng. Meng won re-election in 2008 and 2010 as an Independence Party nominee.

In 2013, Meng took office in the U.S. House of Representatives, where she has worked to strike the word "Oriental" from federal law, protect public housing residents, and assist military members. In 2017, Meng became the Vice Chair of the Democratic National Committee.

# GERALDINE FERRARO

*First woman to chair her party's 1984 platform committee  
and first female vice-presidential nominee*



In 1956, when Geraldine Ferraro applied to Fordham University School of Law, an admissions officer warned her that she would be taking a man's place. She applied anyway. Ferraro worked full-time as a public school teacher, while attending Fordham at night - one of two women in a class of 179 students.

After passing the bar in 1961, Ferraro delayed practicing law full-time until after her children were older, though did pro bono work on behalf of women and got

involved in local politics. In 1970, she was elected President of the Queens County Women's Bar Association. In 1973, she went to work for the Queens District Attorney's Office; there, she helped create a Special Victims Bureau to prosecute sex crimes and crimes against the elderly and children.

In 1978, Ferraro ran for Congress, winning by a 10% margin. She was re-elected twice with larger margins. During her time in the House, Ferraro led efforts to past the ultimately unsuccessful Equal Rights Amendment and also sponsored the Women's Economic Equality Act in 1984. Also that year, she was appointed chairwoman of the Democratic Platform Committee.

Responding to pressure to have a woman on the ticket, Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale selected Ferraro as his vice presidential running mate. They lost the election by a landslide.

Ferraro later served as ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission and as co-host of the CNN program "Crossfire." Ferraro lived to see women achieve more major milestones in national politics.

# RHODA FOX GRAVES

*First woman elected to the NYS Senate*



A New York Assemblymember and suffragist, in 1934 Rhoda Fox Graves became the first woman elected to the New York Senate. Later tapped to head the powerful Agriculture Committee, Graves, who had grown up on a farm, fought hard for North Country

agriculture and dairy farmers, sponsoring legislation to help farmers attain better prices for their milk.

Graves spent 14 years in the Senate as its first and only woman Senator and became the first woman to preside over the Senate. Graves sponsored legislation so that women could serve on juries and founded and led the "Owls," or Organized Women Legislators of New York.

During her time in the Assembly, Graves made headlines when she surprised a lobbyist passing out cigars to Assembly members by accepting one herself: "Mrs. Graves Takes Cigar - Woman Legislator Accepts Offer at Capitol Out of Curiosity," reported The New York Times.

# OLGA A. MÉNDEZ

*First Puerto Rican woman elected to State Legislature*



**W**ith her 1978 election to the New York State Senate, Olga A. Méndez became the first Puerto Rican woman elected to a state legislature in the continental United States. Méndez would represent East Harlem and parts of the Bronx in the State Senate for 26 years.

Born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, Méndez taught high

school chemistry on the island before moving to New York City in the 1950s. There, she earned a master's degree in psychology in 1960 from Columbia University and, in 1975, a Ph.D. in educational psychology from Yeshiva University.

An active volunteer, Méndez first entered politics in 1972 as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, the first of four she would attend. In 1978, Méndez, as a former Deputy Commissioner of the New York City's Agency for Child Development, won a special election to fill a vacated Senate seat. In 1984, she was elected leader of the Minority Conference in the Senate.

Méndez, who promoted legislation to fight discrimination and improve labor, housing, and education rights, was known for reaching across party lines. After switching parties to become a Republican, Méndez was defeated in her 2004 re-election bid.

# MURRAY HALL

*A female Tammany Hall political figure, who people believed was a male*



**M**urray Hall was a Tammany Hall political figure, member of the Iroquois Club, and city bail bondsman who had an active behind-the-scenes role in 19th century New York politics. Hall played a formidable role in primary and general elections as a registered and active voter whose opinion could sway political influence within the Tammany Hall

inner circle. Senator Bernard F. Martin noted that Hall was “at the polls every election day, voted once anyway, as they say, and helped get out the vote.” Known as a “man about town,” it was not uncommon to find Hall socially engaging and card-playing with prominent politicians, often securing political appointments for close friends.

Realization that Hall was born biologically as a woman, named Mary Anderson, did not come until Hall’s death in 1901 from untreated breast cancer. Mary Anderson was born in Scotland and began dressing as a male at the age of 16 and took the name John Anderson. As a young adult, Anderson fled Scotland for America and took the name of Murray Hall. According to the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, Hall was an early instance of gender nonconforming in New York and has since attracted worldwide attention.

# ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS

*First woman and black woman to lead a legislative house in New York's Capitol*



Andrea Stewart-Cousins was born and raised in New York to parents that encouraged a life grounded in faith, education and service. Since the beginning of her career in government, Senator Stewart-Cousins has espoused the values of empathy, empowerment and civic engagement. These values, along with her strong belief in advocating for the underserved and championing the needs of working families, have distinguished her as a trailblazer in local and State government.

Senator Stewart-Cousins was first elected to the State Senate in 2006 and currently represents Greenburgh, part of White Plains, part of New Rochelle, part of Yonkers and Scarsdale. In December of 2012, she was elected by her colleagues to serve as Leader of the Senate Democratic Conference, becoming the first female leader of a legislative conference in New York State history. In January 2019, she made history again when she was elected Majority Leader.

Senator Stewart-Cousins is a strong advocate for human rights; quality education; accessible and affordable health care; and making government more efficient, transparent and accountable to all citizens. Her belief that creating change locally affects changes on the State level has driven her legislative and policy agenda at home and in Albany.

Senator Stewart-Cousins earned her Bachelor of Science Degree from Pace University and her teaching credentials in Business Education from Lehman College while raising her children as an adult. In 2008, she earned her Masters of Public Administration from Pace University, and is a proud member of Pi Alpha Alpha - a Public Administration Honor Society. Prior to entering public service, she spent twenty years in the private sector, working in customer service, sales and marketing for New York Telephone/AT&T for thirteen years and later worked as a reporter and teacher.

Senator Stewart-Cousins resides in Yonkers, was married to the late Thomas Cousins and has three children and four grandchildren.

# LETITIA JAMES

*First woman of color to hold statewide office in New York  
and the first woman to be elected Attorney General*



Letitia James is the 67th Attorney General for the State of New York. With decades of work, she is an experienced attorney and public servant with a long record of accomplishments. She is the first woman of color to hold statewide office in New York and the first woman to be elected Attorney General.

In 2013, Ms. James was elected Public Advocate for the City of New York and became the first woman of color to hold citywide office. As Public Advocate, Ms. James served as a watchdog over New York City government agencies and as an advocate for the City's most

vulnerable communities. She transformed the Public Advocate's office to be a formidable engine for change.

Prior to serving as Public Advocate, Letitia James represented the 35th Council District in Brooklyn in the New York City Council for ten years. As a Council Member, she passed the Safe Housing Act, legislation that forced landlords to improve living conditions for tenants in New York City's worst buildings. She helped uncover the corruption behind the Office of Payroll Administration's CityTime contract, a scheme that cost New York City over \$600 million. She also pushed through a revolutionary recycling package that included expanding plastic recycling, a new clothing and textile recycling program, and increased access to recycling in public spaces.

Before her election to the City Council, Letitia James served as head of the Brooklyn Regional Office of the New York State Attorney General's Office. She resolved hundreds of consumer complaints and investigated predatory lenders who preyed on first-time homebuyers. She assisted the Civil Rights Bureau in its investigation of the NYPD's stop-and-frisk policy and cracked down on firms engaged in deceptive business practices including violations of human rights, environmental laws, and scams targeting immigrants.

Letitia James began her career as a public defender at the Legal Aid Society. A proud Brooklynite, she is a graduate of Lehman College and Howard University School of Law.

# SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

*First African-American woman elected to the  
U.S. House of Representatives*



**I**n 1968, Chisholm became the first black woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Chisholm was born in Brooklyn to immigrant parents and graduated from Brooklyn College. She taught nursery school and directed

two daycare centers, and earned a master's degree in elementary education from Columbia University in 1952. In 1964, she was elected to the New York State Assembly. Four years later, Chisholm was elected by a two-to-one margin to Congress, and eventually served seven terms. She was instrumental in creating the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for woman, infants, and children and was a founding member of both the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Women's Caucus. In 1972, Chisholm became the first black major-party candidate to run for president and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party Nomination. In 2015, she was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

# JUDITH KAYE

*First woman to serve as Chief Judge  
in New York State*



Judith Ann Kaye was a lawyer and the first woman to serve as Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals (March 23, 1993 - December 31, 2008). Born in Monticello, New York, Kaye was admitted to the NYS Bar in 1963. In 1969, she was hired as a litigation associate and became the firm's first female partner in 1975.

Kaye was one of seven candidates nominated for the New York State Court of Appeals under then Governor, Mario Cuomo. After her successful appointment to become the first woman to serve the court, Kaye pushed forward with judicial reform and modernization efforts. Under Kaye's tenure, New York State became a national leader in establishing problem-solving courts and making jury service more efficient and convenient.

Kaye emphasized civil liberties and interpreted the Constitution of New York as providing broader protections in some areas than those provided for by the federal Constitution. According to Judge Jonathan Lippman, her successor as Chief Judge, "Judith Kaye essentially started a revolution, that has redefined the traditional role of the judiciary in addressing the difficult social problems reflected in our record-breaking court dockets: drug abuse, family violence and dysfunction, mental illness, and so many more."

Kaye passed away on January 7, 2016 at her home in Manhattan from lung cancer at the age of 77.

# BARBARA UNDERWOOD

*First female New York State  
Attorney General*



Barbara Underwood is a former Attorney General for New York State and the first woman to hold that position. She was first appointed Attorney General by the State Legislature on May 22, 2018, following the resignation of former officeholder, Eric Schneiderman. In January 2007, she was first appointed to be Solicitor General by then New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo and then reappointed in 2011 by Schneiderman. She is currently serving as Solicitor General after being appointed by the Attorney General for New York State Letitia James.

Prior to joining the Attorney General's Office, she became the first female U.S. Solicitor General during the George W. Bush administration. She has argued nearly two dozen cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, clerked for Justice Thurgood Marshall, and taught at Yale Law School.

The Georgetown University Law School graduate also worked in the Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn District Attorneys' offices.

# DEBORAH J. GLICK

*First openly lesbian member of  
the State Legislature*



**D**eborah J. Glick is the first openly lesbian or gay member of the New York State Legislature. As an elected official, she has focused on civil rights, reproductive freedom, health care, lesbian and gay rights, the environment, animal welfare concerns, housing, higher education, social justice, and funding for the arts.

Her legislative victories include serving as the lead sponsor of the Reproductive Health Act (RHA) which codified Roe vs. Wade into New York State law. The RHA is a component of the Women's Equality Act (WEA), and as a result Assemblymember Glick has been a leader in passing the full 10-point bill.

Other notable legislation sponsored by Assemblymember Glick includes the recent Ban on Conversion Therapy, the 2004 Hospital Visitation Bill that provides domestic partners the same rights that spouses and next of kin have when caring for a loved one in a hospital or nursing facility; the Women's Health and Wellness Act, a 2003 bill that promotes early detection and prevention of certain medical conditions affecting women, including breast cancer and osteoporosis and provides coverage for contraceptives; and the passage of the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA), which was signed into law in 2002.

# CRYSTAL D. PEOPLES-STOKES

*First African-American woman as Majority  
Leader of the New York State Assembly*



**C**rystal D. Peoples-Stokes has faithfully served New York State's 141st Assembly district since 2003. In January 2019, she was elevated to become the Majority Leader of the New York State Assembly.

An advocate with clear and principled service, she has always put people and policy before politics. She was appointed as Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Governmental Operations in 2015. This committee maintains oversight on ethics reform and FOIL requests, state police, homeland security, disaster and emergency preparedness, MWBE, crime victims, human rights, and military and naval affairs. In June 2017, she was voted by her colleagues to be Chair of the New York State Legislative Women's Caucus which is a bipartisan and bi-cameral group.

Peoples-Stokes continues to fearlessly fight for diversity in our state. She has been an integral part of ensuring that Minority and Women Owned Businesses have a fair chance in obtaining state contracts. Her Diversity in Medicine initiative has promoted entry into the medical field with academic and financial supports for promising students of color. Through a pilot program in Buffalo, a similar Diversity in Education initiative is currently working with teachers' aides to help bridge the gap between their existing credentials and those required to teach in NYS. She was also a staunch advocate for the implementation and funding for community schools.

As a graduate of both Buffalo Public Schools and Buffalo State College, she earned a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Student Personnel Administration. She was presented with an Honorary Doctorate Degree by Medaille College in May 2017. Assemblymember Peoples-Stokes attributes her achievements and abilities to her strong faith and family. She is a member of True Bethel Baptist Church and St. Luke's AME Zion Church and currently resides in Buffalo, New York with her husband.

# CONSTANCE BAKER-MOTLEY

*First African American state senator  
and federal judge*



**A**ctivist, lawyer, and judge, Constance Baker-Motley was a key legal strategist fighting racial discrimination in the 20th Century, successfully arguing a series of Supreme Court cases before becoming the nation's first federal African-American woman judge.

Motley was born in 1921, in New Haven, Conn., the ninth of 12 children of Caribbean immigrants. Motley got involved in civil rights in high school. After graduating she worked as a maid, lacking funds for college. When she gave a speech at a community center, a white philanthropist offered to fund her studies.

Motley graduated from New York University in 1943. While attending law school at Columbia University, she began working as a law clerk at the NAACP.

After her 1946 marriage and graduation, Motley was hired onto the NAACP's legal defense team, where she became the first African-American woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court. She wrote the original complaint for the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark desegregation case and argued 10 Supreme Court cases, winning nine, including efforts to admit the first black student to the University of Mississippi in 1962 and cases ending segregation in restaurants.

In 1964, Motley became the first African-American woman State Senator and, in 1965, the first woman Manhattan Borough President. In 1966, President Johnson appointed her to the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, as the nation's first African-American woman federal judge. She served, including a term as Chief Judge, until her death in 2005.

In 2001, President Bill Clinton awarded her the Presidential Citizens Medal. The NAACP awarded her the Spingarn Medal in 2003.

# BESSIE A. BUCHANAN

*First African American woman  
elected to the NYS Assembly*



**B**essie A. Buchanan, a singer, dancer, and silent film actress, was elected to the New York State Legislature in 1954, making her the first African-American woman elected to the Assembly.

Buchanan enjoyed a 15-year theatrical career, starring in the musical "Shuffle Along" and dancing in the Cotton Club's chorus line, before educator Mary McLeod Bethune asked her to work on the 1949 U.S. Senate campaign of Governor Herbert H. Lehman. The experience spurred her political activism.

In the Assembly, Buchanan introduced more than 150 bills, many focusing on civil rights and improving public education and neighborhoods. Later, Buchanan served as the State's Human Rights Commissioner under Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

# MARY ANN CROTTY

*First woman Director of State Operations*



**M**ary Ann Crotty was the first woman to serve as Director of State Operations. She served under New York Governor Mario Cuomo. This position involved managing operations of all State agencies, developing policies, and establishing priorities for the annual State of the State message.

She also served as Deputy Secretary for Transportation under Mario Cuomo, handling the State's transportation policy in the 1980s and 90s. In addition, she served on Governor Andrew Cuomo's transportation transition teams.

Throughout the years, she has held a series of leadership positions in both the public and private sector. She worked in London and New York for Parsons Brinckerhoff, a global infrastructure firm, and also owns her own private transportation consulting firm. She is considered a leading expert in State transportation issues.

Crotty is a graduate of the State University of New York at Albany with a Masters in Public Administration in public finance.

# ZENIA MUCHA

*Director of Communications and Senior Policy advisor to Governor George Pataki*



**Z**enia Mucha was born in Poland to Ukrainian parents and immigrated to New York City at 9 years old. In 1982, she joined United States Senator Alfonse D'Amato's press office and managed his re-election campaigns in 1986 and 1992.

Mucha served as Director of Communications and senior policy advisor to New York State Governor George Pataki in 1994. During her time in the New York State government, she earned a national reputation as an expert in counseling communications and political advising. According to The New York Times, Governor Pataki praised her time in New York: "When we sit down to make important decisions - policy decisions, personnel decisions, budget decisions - I want her there, not just so she can help tell the story but so she can help make the decisions."

In 2012, Mucha was awarded the Matrix Award from New York Women in Communications, Inc., and was inducted in the PRWeek Hall of Fame in 2017. She is currently the Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Communications Officer at The Walt Disney Company.