Nancy E. O’Malley is an innovative and passionate public servant whose influence reaches far beyond her jurisdictional border and extends throughout the country. The first woman District Attorney of Alameda County, California, she is a visionary leader whose groundbreaking initiatives have been widely replicated and have improved her community, her state, and the nation.

In 1984, O’Malley joined the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office, which holds a national reputation for excellence dating back to former district attorney and U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren. She rose through the ranks to become chief assistant district attorney 15 years later and in 2009 was appointed district attorney. O’Malley has revolutionized the role of district attorney through her approach in identifying and tackling the root of the social and economic problems leading to crimes, not only the symptoms. She is a nationally-recognized expert in issues involving violence against women, sexual assault, interpersonal abuse, and human exploitation and trafficking.

In the late 1980s, O’Malley was one of the first California prosecutors to embrace DNA technology and improve the quality of justice in the criminal courts. She established the Alameda County Family Justice Center in 2005, a one-stop shop for victims in Alameda County to seek assistance from 30 onsite and 50 offsite agencies. Additionally, she was one of the first people to identify domestic human trafficking as a pervasive problem for the nation that involved foster children, runaways, and other disadvantaged children. In 2009, O’Malley launched H.E.A.T. [Human Exploitation and Trafficking] Watch, a five-pronged blueprint to guide and unite prosecutors, law enforcement, service providers, and communities to combat human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. This program was the first of its kind in California and the country, and it now is a national model widely used throughout the country.

O’Malley also formed one of the first sexual assault response teams to assist victims in navigating available resources while minimizing their trauma and ensuring effective collection of necessary evidence. She has drafted and lobbied on behalf of numerous pieces of legislation, which have improved the fairness of California law governing criminal court. O’Malley created a restitution program that has obtained over $150 million to reimburse victims and the government for losses or expenditures on behalf of crime victims.

She also participated in drafting Proposition 35, which bans human trafficking and sex slavery, increases prison terms and fines for this conduct, and prohibits evidence that a victim previously engaged in sexual conduct from being used against them in court. O’Malley wrote the argument in favor of Proposition 35 that appeared in the California Official Voter Guide; ultimately, the proposition was approved by 81 percent of the voters.

In addition, DA O’Malley identified the national problem of a backlog in processing rape kits. She brought the issue to the attention of the White House, Congress, and the U.S. Department of Justice and played a significant role in obtaining remedial action, particularly funding. She was invited by Vice President Joe Biden to the unveiling of the Sexual Assault Kits Initiative (SAKI), where he announced the availability of $86 million in federal funds for law enforcement agencies to process kits so that prosecutions can be initiated.

O’Malley is well-known for other innovative model responses and continues to seek new solutions by utilizing new technologies, embracing new measures, and championing lateral thinking. As a result, her office has earned a reputation for excellence and innovation, which has enabled the office to use fewer resources to achieve more to help victims and the community.

Throughout her career, O’Malley has opened doors for women lawyers in job settings that historically were closed to them, both as prosecutors and as leaders. Since becoming district attorney, she has expanded opportunities for women and made a concerted effort to hire, mentor, train, and promote women and people, especially women, of color. Currently, 48 percent of the attorneys in her office are women. O’Malley has increased promotional opportunities for female prosecutors by reorganizing the District Attorney’s Office. She served as president of California Women Lawyers in 2009-2010, where she advanced the Bar Association of San Francisco’s No Glass Ceiling [in the profession] Initiative, and chair of the CWL Foundation for the following two years, where she created the Lessons from Our Mothers video series.

O’Malley’s passion for justice and her inspiration to women in the legal profession are the very definition of a recipient of the Margaret Brent Woman Lawyers of Achievement Award.