

2005 MARGARET BRENT AWARDS



Mary Cranston

Mary Cranston began working at Pillsbury Winthrop in San Francisco directly after graduating from Stanford Law School. She was one of the first women in the firm's litigation department, and the first woman litigator to become partner. When she was head of litigation, a new methodology was adopted for selecting firm leaders. The new system allowed senior partners and departmental officers to pick someone they thought would have a change agenda and consensus building skills. Ms. Cranston got the job and became the first woman to lead an AM LAW 100 law firm.

As head of Pillsbury Winthrop, Ms. Cranston sets the strategic agenda and is closely involved in efforts to increase diversity in the firm. She says that her job is "to ensure that Pillsbury Winthrop is a great place to work for everyone." Under her leadership, not only did the firm thrive, but her efforts to create an environment friendly to women resulted in the firm having a much larger percentage of women lawyers than other law firms, large and small, and throughout the nation. The *National Law Journal* named Cranston one of the 100 most influential lawyers in the United States.

Prior to taking the lead in her firm, Ms. Cranston led initiatives in San Francisco law firms in the late 1970s and early 1980s to promote gender friendly policies such as maternity leave and part-time schedules. She was on the front line in the fight against discriminatory clubs in San Francisco in the mid-1980s. In 1989, she co-chaired a task force set up by the California Commission on Women to survey the policies and practices of California law firms and the impact of those policies and practices on women. The report of the task force was instrumental in accelerating the adoption of family friendly and gender-neutral programs in California law firms. In 2001-2002, she chaired the "No Glass Ceiling Task Force" of the San Francisco Bar Association, a blue ribbon task force that produced six best practices for the promotion of women to leadership in law firms. The initiative received nationwide press coverage, and other bar associations followed suit.

Outside of her work in the legal arena, Ms. Cranston has for many years volunteered for high school and university mentoring programs for young women seeking guidance about their careers and their lives. She takes under her wing about three or four young people every year. She believes that a person's self-picture about where she is headed is the single biggest determinant of where she will end up in life.

Ms. Cranston is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. She is one of five trial lawyers in San Francisco highly recommended by Global Counsel 3000. She was a council member and officer of the ABA Antitrust Section, and a member of the American Law Institute. She has been named one of "The 50 Most Influential Business Women in the Bay Area" by the *San Francisco Business Times* List 1999-2005; one of the Best Law Firm Leaders in the United States by *Of Counsel's* Best of Law firm Leaders List in October 2002; and was the recipient of the 2004 Athena Award for professional accomplishments and community service, specially noted for mentoring others and providing a role model to encourage women to achieve their full leadership potential.

Ms. Cranston has been single-mindedly devoted to the advancement of women from the outset of her career. Her track record in promoting women behind her as she progressed in leadership in her firm speaks for itself.