

# 2005 MARGARET BRENT AWARDS



## Judith L. Lichtman

Judith L. Lichtman arrived in Washington D.C. in 1966, fresh out of the University of Wisconsin Law School where she was one of two women in a graduating class of 150. She joined the Office of the General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare as a civil rights attorney and subsequently made a career out of shattering the glass ceiling.

Beginning with a small, dedicated group of D.C. area volunteers who wanted to work on behalf of women's legal rights, Ms. Lichtman molded them into a powerful, cohesive network of women lawyers from all areas of practice, from all across the country. Thus, was born the Women's Legal Defense Fund, now the National Partnership for Women and Families (NPWF).

As executive director, president, and now, senior advisor of the NPWF, Ms. Lichtman transformed the legal landscape for women by litigating landmark cases and by inspiring, conceptualizing, and lobbying into law historic pieces of legislation such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, which insiders on Capitol Hill refer to as the "Judy Lichtman Act." She was the first woman "Washington Power Broker" on equal par with the men—so much so that Senator Ted Kennedy nicknamed her "the 101st Senator." If a Senator wanted to know what women thought of a particular bill, or when a President wanted to know who to name to a high-profile post in his Administration, they called Ms. Lichtman.

Ms. Lichtman fought to open to women lawyers the influential posts traditionally reserved for men. Through her appointment to both the prestigious D.C. Federal Judicial Nominating Commission and the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission, she worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that the local and federal benches are models of gender, racial and ethnic diversity. She also created institutions to give women a voice and a "place at the table," such as the Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program which provided one-year fellowships for recent law graduates to work on

issues of importance to women; the Women's Appointments Project which advocated for the appointment of women to senior executive branch positions; and was a founding member of EMILY's List, the Democratic women's political action fund that has propelled so many women (particularly women lawyers) to national public office.

Ms. Lichtman has served on dozens of boards and advisory committees, from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Washington Council of Lawyers to the American Jewish Congress. She has been recognized by *Working Woman* magazine for her commitment to diversity, and named as one of 1988's "America's 100 Most Important Women" by *Ladies Home Journal*. *Washingtonian* magazine in 1989 named her one of the "100 Most Powerful Women of Washington," and Sara Lee Corporation awarded her the 1989 "Frontrunner Award in the Area of Humanities." In 2000, she received the Fannie Mae and Working Woman Diversity Award for excellence in the non-profit sector; and, in 2001, the Council for Court Excellence Justice Potter Stewart Award for significant contributions to the administration of justice in the community.

Over the past three decades, Ms. Lichtman has encouraged countless women to go to law school, and has personally mentored them and launched them in the field of women's rights. She has sought, at every turn, to place women lawyers in influential positions in the public and private sectors, and to inspire them with a sense of their responsibility to use their legal skills to work for the good of all women.