

Hon. Patricia McGowan Wald

*Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit
Washington, DC*

How does one begin to talk about the Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald's remarkable professional achievements as a lawyer, as Circuit Judge, and Chief Judge, U. S. Court of Appeals for the D. C. Circuit? Posing this question during a tribute to Judge Wald as she stepped down from her position as Chief Judge, Professor Lawrence Marshall of Northwestern University, her former law clerk, defined her life as one of professional excellence, extraordinary leadership, and definitive advocacy in the areas of criminal justice, juvenile justice, mental disability, poverty, administrative, and constitutional law; statutory interpretation; and judicial process and administration.

Patricia Wald's service to women through the law and in the law sets national and international benchmarks. Judge Wald was the first woman on the D. C. Circuit bench, the first woman Chief Judge of a Circuit (except for a six-month term of Florence Allen), and the first woman head of Legislative Affairs of the Department of Justice. In that capacity, she worked to pass legislation prohibiting pregnancy discrimination and sought to extend the ERA ratifying deadline. She was the first woman on the Ford Foundation Board and actively supported funding for women's projects. She was the first woman officer of the American Law Institute, and as member of the Nominating Committee helped to increase the number of women Council members from two to 13. She is a member of the D.C. Circuit Gender, Race, and Ethnicity Task Force, which she established.



Beyond her significant achievement of "firsts," Patricia Wald's many supporters recognize her as trailblazer and negotiator, as inspiring counsellor, and as role model. She has taught us, Professor Marshall said, "the lesson that is most difficult for many of us to learn—that all of this professional achievement can be done in the context of having a rich and fulfilling family life. [Patricia took a hiatus from her law practice from 1953-63 to remain at home with her young family]...that every legal controversy...has real people behind it."

The author of numerous articles and pathbreaking opinions on women's rights, she received the District of Columbia Women's Bar Association 75th Anniversary Award (1992) and Lawyer of the Year Award (1984). She was the 1972 recipient of the Distinguished Alumnae Award of Connecticut College. An active member of the Women's Bar Association and National Association of Women Judges, she keyed the 1994 International Women Judges Conference on Violence against Women in Rome.

Patricia McGowan Wald earned her B.A. from Connecticut College (1948) and her LL.B. from Yale Law School (1951). She and her husband, Robert L. Wald, have five children and five grandchildren.