

# Honorable Mary Murphy Schroeder



With a career highlighted by “firsts,” Mary Schroeder is a pioneer whose contributions to the law and the legal profession are countless. After graduating from the University of Chicago Law School, Schroeder began her distinguished legal career as a trial attorney with the United States Department of Justice. Upon completion of a clerkship on the Arizona Supreme Court, Schroeder moved into private practice.

In 1971, she became the first—and then only—woman lawyer associate with a major law firm in Arizona. Barely in her thirties, as a partner at Lewis and Roca, LLP, Schroeder authored the first Arizona law barring

employment discrimination on the basis of sex. She also played a pivotal role in the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) by communicating with state and federal judges on the importance of recognizing violence against women.

As the first woman to serve on the Arizona Court of Appeals, Judge Schroeder was known for her collegiality, concise opinions and hard work. Continuing in her tradition of “firsts,” she became the first woman from Arizona to be appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. During this appointment, she authored opinions that have served to remedy profound problems of racial and gender injustice. On the Arizona Court of Appeals, Schroeder helped to enlighten her male colleagues by proving that it was possible for a woman to be a good lawyer, judge, and mother.

Always the pioneer, Schroeder managed to successfully juggle a career and family. She returned to work after giving birth to a daughter during her second year in the State Court of Appeals and sparked controversy by continuing to nurse her infant in Chambers. Schroeder’s innovative approach to balancing work and family has helped to ease the burdens of women in the legal profession and working mothers around the country.

Leading by example, she has served as a mentor and a pillar of support for a number of women clerks and young lawyers that have worked with her. In recognition of her longstanding commitment to advancing women in the legal profession, the Arizona State Law School has established an award in her honor — the Mary M. Schroeder Award.

Her current position as Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit underscores her commitment to public service. While she has often been a “first,” Schroeder has been a woman committed to ensuring that other women follow — so that she is not the “only.”

Despite her demanding schedule, Judge Schroeder is devoted to her family. She is married to Milton R. Schroeder, Professor of Law at Arizona State University Law School and is a mother to Caroline and Katherine.

*“Mary has made Arizona a better, richer environment for women in the law. She has pushed us to do more than we thought we could, cheered when we reached a goal, provided a shoulder to cry on and wise advice, and by example given us a goal to strive for.”*

— *Honorable Ruth V. McGregor, Arizona Supreme Court*

