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## **PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT**

*The Advocacy Institute Is Pleased to Present*

### **Perseverance and Progress: Women Trailblazers at the New Jersey Division of Law**

**March 20, 2024  
1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.**

**Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex  
Advocacy Institute Conference Center  
Fourth Floor, West Wing  
25 Market Street, Trenton, New Jersey**

#### ***Program Summary***

A panel consisting of former Division of Law Directors will discuss their experiences leading what is often referred to as “The State’s Largest Law Firm.” These remarkable women will discuss the obstacles they faced as women leaders in a traditionally male-dominated field and how they were able to balance the demands of steering an organization that is often comprised of over 600 attorneys and 1000 total employees with competing personal priorities and expectations. They will share their perspectives about the Division of Law’s unique mission, the rewards of a public service career and how all attorneys can help sustain and broaden the path that prior generations of DOL attorneys helped forge. The panel will be moderated by current DOL AAsG.

#### ***Eligibility***

Attendance at this program is limited to employees in Division of Law.

## *Faculty*

**Deborah Poritz** was the first woman Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court and served in that historic role from 1996 to 2006. She also has the distinction of being the first woman Attorney General of the State, serving in that capacity from 1994 to 1996. She started her legal career with the DOL in 1977 as a Deputy Attorney General and then the Assistant Section Chief of the Environmental Protection Section. Soon after she was appointed Deputy Attorney General-in-Charge of Appeals and the Section Chief of what was then known as the Banking, Insurance and Public Securities Section. She went on to become an Assistant Attorney General and the Director of the Division of Law from 1986 to 1989. She was also Chief Counsel to Governor Thomas Kean in the last year of his administration. She graduated magna cum laude from Brooklyn College and holds a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Jayne LaVecchia** was an Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, where she served for twenty-one years, authoring opinions on a wide range of civil and criminal issues. She is the longest serving female Justice in New Jersey. Justice LaVecchia served as the Director of the Division of Law from 1994 to 1998. She then served as the New Jersey Commissioner of Banking and Insurance. Prior to that, she was the Director and Chief Administrative Law Judge of the Office of Administrative Law. Justice LaVecchia was also an Assistant Counsel and then Deputy Counsel in the Office of Counsel to the Governor. She started her service at DOL as a Deputy Attorney General in what was then the Education, Health & Human Services Section. Justice LaVecchia is currently a partner with McCarter & English. She holds a B.A. from Douglass College of Rutgers University and a J.D. from Rutgers-Newark School of Law.

**Nancy Kaplen** was Acting Director of the Division of Law from 2004 to 2006, and was also Acting Attorney General for a period within that time span. During her expansive career with the Division, she was called upon to serve in many different capacities and wore many hats - often at the same time. Prior to serving as Acting Director, she was the AAG-in-Charge of Appeals, managing the State's civil appellate practice for over a decade. Before that, she was Section Chief of the Education, Health & Human Services Section, Assistant Section Chief in what was known as the Education, Labor & Commerce Section and also served as an Assistant Counsel in the Office of Counsel to the Governor. She commenced her service at DOL as a Deputy Attorney General assigned to civil rights matters. She holds a B.A. from Ramapo University and a J.D. from New York University School of Law.

**Michelle L. Miller** is the Chief Institutional Advisor to the Director of the Division of Law. Prior to that, she was the Director of the Division of Law from 2015 to 2022, its longest-serving female director. She has also served as the DOL's Deputy Director, the AAG in Charge of the Division's Administrative Practice Group, Section Chief of the Education and Higher Education Section and Assistant Section Chief of the Education, Health and Human Services Section. She has handled numerous appellate and Supreme Court matters, as well as administrative and Superior Court matters for a variety of State agencies. She received a Bachelor of Arts in 1991 from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a Juris Doctor in 1994 from Seton Hall Law School. Prior to joining the Division of Law, she clerked for the Hon. Erminie Lane Conley, J.A.D.

**AAG Melissa Dutton Schaffer** is Deputy Director for the Administrative Practice Group of the Division of Law. She has worked as an AAG within the practice group since 2018, and before that, served as an AAG in the Division's Appeals Practice Group, which is responsible for the overall management, supervision and policy direction for State and federal court appeals throughout the Division. AAG Schaffer briefly served as Associate General Counsel for The College of New Jersey, following eight years within the Division's Education/Higher Education Section, where she ultimately served as the Section Chief and Assistant Chief. In that capacity, she oversaw the representation and counseling of the Department of Education, the Secretary of Higher Education, and all of the State Colleges. She represented these clients in a variety of complex education matters in administrative, State and federal courts at both the trial and appellate levels. She received a B.A. from Rutgers University, Camden and a J.D. from Widener University School of Law.

**AAG Sookie Bae** is an AAG in the Division of Law's Appellate Practice Group. She was previously with Central Appellate Research in the Appellate Division, working first as a staff attorney and then as a Court Executive. In those roles, she provided counsel to the court on plenary appeals and summary disposition matters and managed the Complex Appeals Program. Before she joined the Judiciary, AAG Bae was a DAG in the Education and Higher Education Section in the Division of Law. She received a B.A. from New York University and a J.D. from the Rutgers University School of Law where she was a Managing Notes and Comments Editor of the Rutgers Computer and Technology Law Journal.

### ***CLE Credit***

**NJ CLE Credit:** This program has been approved by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 1.5 hours of total CLE credit. Of these, 1.5 qualify as hours of credit for ethics/professionalism in the Diversity, Inclusion and Elimination of Bias category.

**PA CLE Credit:** 1.0 ethics credits (\$1.50 mandatory registration fee required).

### ***Registration***

DOL employees who are eligible to attend this program will receive registration instructions from the AGAI.