

Carolyn Berger

Following a distinguished career as a state prosecutor and corporate litigator, the Honorable Carolyn Berger became the first woman Vice Chancellor of the Delaware Court of Chancery in 1984. Ten years later, Governor Tom Carper appointed her to the Delaware Supreme Court, making her the first woman justice to sit on the state's highest court. Justice Berger faced the obstacles of gender discrimination like many others of her generation. She was denied job opportunities with the all-too-familiar reasoning that she "might get pregnant and quit," or that she would "take a position away from a man who needed a career." Undeterred, Justice Berger went on to blaze a 20-year trail for women and men alike on the Delaware Supreme Court.

After graduating from the University of Rochester in 1969 and earning a Master's degree in elementary education from Boston University in 1971, Carolyn Berger began her career teaching fourth grade in the Boston public school system. Moving to Alaska in 1972, she expected to continue teaching, but a one-year state residency requirement forced a career change and she took a job as a legal secretary. By the time a year was up, she had become so intrigued by her employer's work as a trial lawyer that she applied to law school, earning her Juris Doctorate from Boston University School of Law in 1976. If Alaska hadn't kept her from the classroom, Delaware might never have benefited from her legal acumen.

While raising her family, Justice Berger served as a Deputy Attorney General with the Delaware Department of Justice and an associate member on the Board of Bar Examiners. She was President and Vice President of the Milton & Hattie Kutz Home; a member of the Junior League of Wilmington Community Advisory Council; and served on the boards of the Jewish Federation and the Delaware Region National Conference of Christians & Jews.

Justice Berger was an associate with the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom prior to her appointment to the Court of Chancery in 1984, becoming the first woman to sit on the court. In 1994, she was appointed to the Delaware Supreme Court, again serving as the court's first woman justice. She received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Widener University School of Law in 1996.

Justice Berger's legal intelligence is as noteworthy as her ability to work with colleagues in a fair and open-minded manner. The high level of respect for Justice Berger is evidenced by the great regard she has earned from her fellow justices. After only three years of service on the Supreme Court, Justice Randy J. Holland nominated her for the prestigious Trailblazer Award in 1997. Among her many other accomplishments; Justice Berger was appointed in 2015 by the Chief Justice of Singapore as one of 11 international jurists to serve on the Singapore International Commercial Court.

Former Governor Jack Markell may have said it best in June 2014, two months before her retirement: "For more than three decades, Justice Carolyn Berger has served the state of Delaware with distinction as a member of the finest judiciary in the nation. Justice Berger is a trailblazing jurist whose commitment to justice is second to none. I salute her for her service to the state of Delaware."

Debra Heffernan

State Representative Debra Heffernan is an advocate dedicated to fighting for the rights of everyone. Since her 2010 election to the House of Representatives from Delaware's 6th District, she has sponsored key legislation on public safety, the environment, education, women's rights, and citizens with disabilities. Her work has strengthened laws that protect children and young adults from predators and improved rules to prevent childhood concussions.

With a Bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Delaware and a Master's degree in environmental toxicology from Duke University, Debra Heffernan worked as an environmental toxicologist for more than 25 years prior to her career in public office. Before she ran for the House of Representatives, she served for five years on the Brandywine School Board, two years as its president. During her tenure, the district reduced administrative costs, increased its graduation rate, and included more students with special needs into regular classrooms. Rep. Heffernan also co-founded the Brandywine Special Needs PTA.

Rep. Heffernan's career in the Delaware General Assembly has furthered her commitment to education and people with disabilities. She was the prime sponsor of Delaware's Employment First Act, which promoted employment opportunities for people with disabilities requiring state agencies to consider employment as their first option and established the Employment First Oversight Commission to monitor goals and objectives. She championed legislation that requires the use of People First Language, changing official state terms to emphasize that an individual is not defined by his or her disability. She was prime sponsor of a bill that protects the right to privacy for employees' health and reproductive care decisions, and she introduced a bipartisan resolution mandating the Department of Justice oversee an audit of all untested and non-submitted sexual assault kits. Rep. Heffernan sponsored a law that enables school districts to extend job offers earlier in the year, making Delaware more competitive with surrounding states. She also improved the SEED program, which provides tuition-free two-year college degrees, and sponsored legislation that gives first-time juvenile offenders a second chance by providing law enforcement with alternatives to arrest.

Rep. Heffernan chairs the House Natural Resource Committee and the House Health and Human Development Committee. She is a member of the Joint Finance Committee and the House committees on education, appropriations, energy, and veterans' affairs. She also serves on the state's Hazardous Substance Advisory committee, which oversees environmental cleanup projects and protects residents from pollutants while keeping the state sustainable and economically viable.

Her awards include the ServiSource 2016 Founder's Award for advocating on behalf of employment opportunities for people with disabilities; the DE Disabilities Council 2012 Legislator of the Year Award; and Outstanding Mom Advocate for Education by Parenting Magazine. She represented Delaware at the inaugural Mom Congress in Washington D.C. and was recognized by the American Heart Association with the Heart Hero Award.

Rep. Heffernan's awards and accolades are testament to her dedication and passion for helping others and to the tremendous impact she has had on issues that affect all Delawareans.

Janice E. Nevin

Janice E. Nevin, MD, MPH is a visionary and collaborative health care leader committed to delivering high quality, affordable care to everyone. As President and CEO of the largest health system in Delaware, Christiana Care, she is pioneering value-based care in a population health model. She is transforming how health care is delivered to ensure proactive optimal health and the inclusion of all Delawareans in their own health decisions.

Dr. Nevin has advanced Christiana Care's commitment to serve its community with expert, respectful care as Chief Medical Officer, Chief Patient Safety Officer and Chair of Family and Community Medicine. She led the transformative and strategic shift in care processes, improving quality, safety and patient experience by directly involving patients and families as partners in their own care. She is known as an innovator and as a true partner, working closely with leadership, patients, all staff and community members. Christiana Care Board Chair Gary Pfeiffer says "Janice is a visionary – the right leader at the right time. Her every effort is in service to the health of our community."

Dr. Nevin embodies commitment to the community, pioneering programs such as Care Link, a novel approach to care coordination that addresses not only a patient's medical needs, but the social and behavioral determinants of health that can be barriers to care and wellness, and Project Engage, a nationally recognized peer addiction recovery program started at Christiana Care.

As senior vice president and executive director of Christiana Care's Wilmington campus from 2008 to 2011, Dr. Nevin listened to patients. At a time when urban hospitals were leaving their communities and health care costs were soaring, Dr. Nevin ensured that Wilmington Hospital would serve its neighbors as respectful, expert partners in care they can afford and would value. The Wilmington Hospital transformation project has been a \$210 million investment towards building a healthy community.

Under her leadership, Christiana Care is one of only 15 major teaching hospitals in the U.S., and the only major teaching hospital to earn the Truven's Everest Award consecutively in 2015 and 2016. The American Hospital Association named Christiana Care one of 2016's "Most Wired" hospitals. In 2015, Christiana Care earned re-designation as a magnet organization for nursing excellence from the American Nurses Credentialing Center and was named among the nation's best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report.

Dr. Nevin was named among "Top Physician Leaders to Know" in 2015 and 2016 by Becker's Hospital Review. She serves on the board of directors of the United Way of Delaware and the Delaware Community Foundation, and is a member of the Delaware Public Policy Institute, Delaware Business Roundtable Executive Committee, and Delaware Chamber of Commerce Board of Governors. She is a founding member of the Wilmington Leaders Alliance and was named the 2016 Woman of Distinction by the Girls Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay.

In a time of great uncertainty in health care, Dr. Nevin rises to the occasion with grace, resilience and a positive outlook, renewing her commitment to advance the health system's mission and meeting the health care needs of Delaware and the region.

Kendall M. Wilson

Kendall Wilson was a social activist, leader, teacher, newspaper reporter, wife, mother, and grandmother. She served as the first executive director of the Delaware chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union from 1970 to 1982. Serving without salary, Ms. Wilson was responsible for developing the all-volunteer agency into a champion in the fight for the protection of the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution. She championed the causes of the poor, the incarcerated, and those who could not afford legal representation. She also fought to improve conditions of children under the care of the state.

Kendall Wilson challenged administrators, prison officials, law enforcement, and the courts to recognize the constitutional rights of the accused, or to make them accountable for abuse or injustices. She often appeared as a witness for the accused in legal proceedings regarding sentences and sentence modifications, and while she did not advocate exonerating persons guilty of crimes, she worked to insure that their constitutional rights were protected. With Mitchell Littleton, Executive Director of the NAACP, she convinced the Department of Corrections to allow them into prison to speak with inmates about living conditions, and individual legal issues. The warden eventually banned Mrs. Wilson from the prison for her advocacy.

In 1970, Mrs. Wilson intervened with her husband, Ernest S. Wilson Jr., Esq., to release 300 anti-war protestors who were arrested under Delaware's hitch-hiking law, and then successfully advocated to have the law changed. Mrs. Wilson regularly recruited and facilitated free legal representation for ACLU clients. In 1975, she stepped in when Wilmington police attempted to take a 17 year old girl into custody for extradition to Alabama to serve as a witness in a murder trial. The girl was eventually extradited, but not before Mrs. Wilson successfully persuaded officials to have matrons, not male guards, escort and supervise her.

Sonia Sloan, past ACLU board member, said "Kendall Wilson's contribution to the development of the Delaware chapter of the Americans Civil Liberties Union was invaluable. We would not have developed as an agency but for Kendall's efforts. She was smart, articulate and courageous. She took on cases that challenged institutions, regulations, laws and courts. Her sustained commitment to the agency, and her volunteerism inspired others to serve. Kendall fought long and hard for civil liberties, civil rights, child welfare and human justice for all."

Drewry N. Fennell, Esq., past executive director of the ACLU of Delaware, said "Kendall Wilson was a key leader in establishing the tone and culture of the ACLU. Although I never met her, I felt the benefit of her hard work, especially on behalf of those in prison. In addition, she set an early example of holding the government accountable while still remaining in conversation with them. She was allowed to speak with inmates on a regular schedule so that their concerns could be addressed by the NAACP and ACLU. On prison conditions issues she was ahead of her time. Without her, the ACLU would not have had the same healthy foundation on which to grow, and I have great admiration and appreciation for the work she did."

In 1992 News Journal reporter and columnist William Frank wrote of her, "Mrs. Wilson can chalk up dozens of victories on behalf of men, women and youngsters whose basic rights have been ignored by prosecutors, officials in the criminal justice department, and other public officials."

From 1965 to 1970 Mrs. Wilson also chaired the state Higher Education Aid Advisory Committee, which allocated all federal aid to higher education in Delaware. Under her leadership the commission authorized the first-ever study of higher education in the state. When the Academy for Education Development released their 145-page report, she objected to the recommendation to consolidate all higher education under the University of Delaware and led a successful campaign against the adoption of that recommendation.

Recognizing her many accomplishments, in 1979 Mrs. Wilson received the Delaware State Bar Association's first Liberty Bell Award, presented to a non-lawyer for promoting increased understanding of individual rights and respect for the law. Then-U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden noted "You have made the ACLU a real resource in the lives of a lot of people in need, and you deserve more credit than any of us can give you."