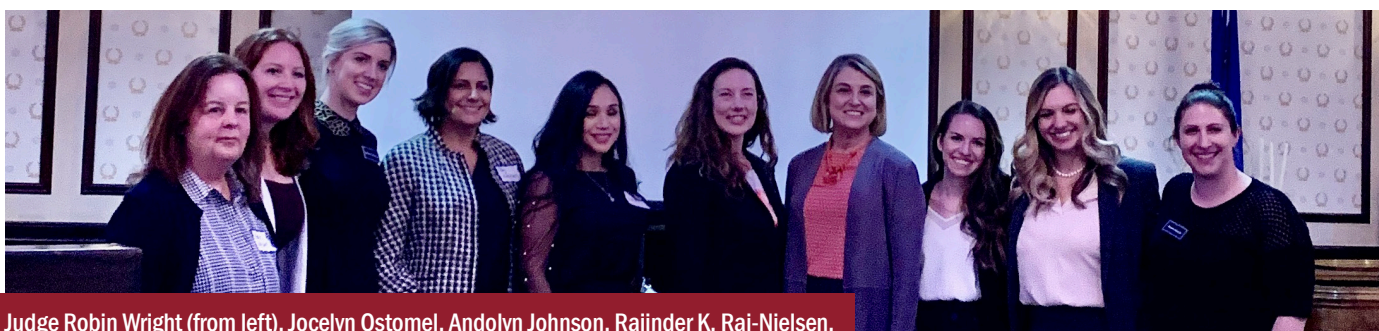


# NNWLA and SNAWA: Supporting and Celebrating Women in the Legal Profession

BY KATIE HOFFMAN, ESQ., AND HARDEEP SULL, ESQ.



Judge Robin Wright (from left), Jocelyn Ostomel, Andolyn Johnson, Rajinder K. Rai-Nielsen, Karen Monreal, Kendra Bertschy, Lt. Gov. Kate Marshall, Bailey Bartolin, Samantha Reviglio and Jenna Garcia attend the Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association March Women's History Month Event: "Valiant Women of the Vote."

Nevada's legal profession has experienced many changes during the past 40 years. Thousands of women attorneys have joined the State Bar of Nevada, four of the seven justices on the Nevada Supreme Court are women, both of Nevada's U.S. senators are women, two women have served as Nevada's Attorney General, and women held the majority of seats in the 2019 State Legislature. Throughout these decades of progress, the Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association (NNWLA) and the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys (SNAWA) have worked to support and celebrate the advancement of women in the legal profession.



## The Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association

During the 1970s, only one in 10 new Nevada attorneys were women. By 1978, only 23 women were practicing law in Northern Nevada. Looking to support and inspire women in the legal profession, a group of pioneering women attorneys formed NNWLA in 1978. NNWLA's mission is to advance women in the legal profession, maintain the honor and integrity of the profession, promote and improve the administration of justice, and encourage a spirit of friendship and trust among its members.

In the 42 years since its founding, NNWLA has not only fulfilled this mission, it has influenced generations of Nevada attorneys. NNWLA has filed amicus curiae briefs with the

Nevada Supreme Court on issues of importance to women and children, and has collaborated with the Nevada Press Women's Association and the Nevada Women's Lobby on law-related projects of interest to women. The organization welcomes all members of the legal profession, men and women, attorneys and non-attorneys. With a focus on providing opportunities for education, networking, community service and mentorship, NNWLA offers members a variety of ways to connect with and support one another.

NNWLA's monthly legal education events offer attendees the opportunity to build their skills and stay on top of timely legal topics. These CLEs have included "The Art of the Settlement Conference," with Judge Kathleen Drakulich, Senior Judge Deborah Schumacher and Professor Jean Sternlight; a trial practice seminar with Judge Connie Steinheimer; and a look at sexual harassment and the Times Up movement with U.S. Magistrate Judge Valerie P. Cooke, Professor Ann McGinley, University of Nevada General Counsel Mary Dugan, and Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority General Counsel Ann Morgan.

Beyond CLE events, NNWLA provides members with opportunities to network, socialize and "celebrate the successes of the women that came before us and promote those who will come after us." The Nevada Supreme Court has graciously hosted NNWLA and its members for several of these events. In 2019, NNWLA marked the occasion of Nevada's first women-majority Supreme Court with a lively panel discussion featuring the justices of the Nevada Supreme Court and the judges of

the Nevada Court of Appeals, hosted by former Chief Justice Miriam Shearing. NNWLA also honors the achievements of exceptional women attorneys with its Outstanding Woman Lawyer Award. Past honorees have included Charlotte Arley and Frankie Sue Del Papa.

Recognizing the importance of a healthy and balanced lifestyle, NNWLA also coordinates fun outings for members and their families. In the past few years, NNWLA has hosted group hikes, a spin class, a self-defense class, a movie night, an evening at a Reno Aces baseball game, and a painting and wine event. Outside of NNWLA's monthly events, members also stay connected through mentoring circles. These mentoring circles bring together women from different backgrounds, practice areas and career stages to "give advice, get advice, share experiences, and referrals in a friendly environment."

NNWLA is also dedicated to helping its members give back to the community. Each year, NNWLA partners with the Washoe County Law Library to staff a "lawyer in the library" evening, where NNWLA attorneys provide pro bono advice and answer questions from community members. The 2020 NNWLA Board expanded the organization's philanthropic efforts by partnering with the Children's Cabinet, a non-profit organization that promotes happy, healthy families by providing services and resources to our community members in need. NNWLA featured the Children's Cabinet at its March event celebrating the centennial anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment and collected donations for the organization.

In addition, NNWLA has established a monthly volunteer opportunity with the Children's Cabinet where members can present on various legal topics and answer questions. Perhaps the highlight of NNWLA's calendar is its annual holiday shopping

event for students at Veterans Memorial Elementary School. With money raised from the local legal community, NNWLA members pair up with elementary students to help them shop for warm clothes and holiday gifts, brightening the holidays for dozens of deserving students.



The Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys honored the four female Nevada Supreme Court Justices - Chief Justice Kristina Pickering, Justice Elissa Cadish, Justice Abbi Silver and Justice Lidia Stiglich - during the 2019 Justice Miriam Shearing Gala Award event. They are pictured above alongside SNAWA scholarship recipients.

## Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys

The Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys (SNAWA) is not your run-of-the-mill bar organization. Since its inception, this organization has been the stepping stone advancing women attorneys' position in the legal field. Throughout the past decades, trailblazing women have tried to walk with their sisters with the goal of achieving an equal playing field and maintaining their independence. As Ruth

Bader Ginsburg stated, "My mother told me to be a lady. And for her, that meant be your own person, be independent."

SNAWA has been fortunate over the years to have stellar examples of women attorneys who have shaped politics and the legal field. Women such as Barbara Buckley, Justice Miriam Shearing, Sally Loehrer, Shelley Berkley and countless other women have really tried to create an intellectual, equitable and inspiring profession for all of us. Each year, SNAWA hosts the Justice Miriam Shearing Award Gala, which honors the trailblazing spirit that led Justice Miriam Shearing to be the first female district judge, first justice on the Supreme Court and then the first female chief justice of the Nevada Supreme Court (1993-2005). Last year, SNAWA was delighted to honor the first female majority members of the Nevada Supreme Court – Chief Justice Kristine Pickering, Justice Lidia Stiglich, Justice Elissa Cadish and Justice Abbi Silver – a true milestone in the history of Nevada.

SNAWA has hosted numerous events such as CLEs, networking events, luncheons and social events to raise scholarships for UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law students. While hosting these events, SNAWA encourages and supports the success and influence of women in the legal community.

Despite the pandemic, SNAWA continues to educate and influence the legal community. For instance, amid COVID-19, attorneys will have to become more savvy with digital marketing, and as such SNAWA will host a session on how to modernize marketing during and after COVID-19. Previously, SNAWA had hosted a Zoom webinar on e-discovery. SNAWA has never stepped away from its mission of encouraging and supporting the success and influence of women in the legal community.

Women attorneys know that there are no shortcuts to success, and thus strive and challenge themselves to keep a work-life balance. In recognizing these challenges amid a pandemic, female attorneys ensured that their clients, families and colleagues were taken care of and did the best they could even when it may have been difficult to see the light. In the words of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, "do the best you can in every task, no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time, no one learns more about a problem than the person at the bottom."

During this pandemic as in the past, SNAWA continues to ensure that members foster the success of women attorneys and one another, and support the success and influence of women in the legal community with the growing challenges of the pandemic, such as childcare, isolation, substance abuse and career opportunities.

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