

Janet Reno Invited to Speak at First 150 Celebration May 25



By Wendy S. Loquasto

Florida Bar President Edith Osman has invited United States Attorney General Janet Reno to honor us with her comments and to allow us to honor her as one of the great women lawyers of this century at the First 150 Women Lawyers Celebration. The celebration, which will honor the first 150 women admitted to practice law by the Florida Supreme Court, will be held on Thursday evening, May 25, 2000, in the Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton Bal Harbour Resort, 9701 Collins Avenue, Bal Harbour, on Miami Beach.

The First 150 Project is a joint effort between The Florida Bar and the Florida Association for Women Lawyers. The pairing of the two bar associations was an obvious match considering Florida Bar President Edith Osman is a past president of FAWL, as well as of the Dade County FAWL Chapter. FAWL chose this project as its contribution to the 50th anniversary celebration of The Florida Bar. With women now comprising almost 50 percent of law school admissions and 27.5 percent of The Florida Bar, the tribute to these women pioneers in Florida's legal community is one whose time has come.

Janet Reno is a particularly appropriate choice for the Florida program. She is a native Floridian and a pioneer among women in the legal profession. She is the first woman Attorney General of the United States.

Janet Reno was born in 1938 in Miami, and from the age of eight she lived with her family in a house built by her mother on twenty acres located on the edge of the Florida Everglades. She attended public schools in Dade County and was a debating champion at Coral Gables High School. In 1956, she enrolled at Cornell University in upstate New York, where she majored in chemistry.

In 1960, Ms. Reno enrolled at Harvard Law School as one of only sixteen women in a class of more than 500 students. Three years later she received her LL.B. degree. Despite her Harvard law degree, Reno had difficulty obtaining work as a lawyer. One of Miami's biggest law firms denied her a position because she was a woman, yet fourteen years later, that same firm made her a partner.

Prior to her appointment as Attorney General, Janet Reno served the State of Florida in a variety of capacities. In 1971, she was named staff director of the Judiciary Committee of the Florida House of Representatives, where she helped revise the Florida court system. In 1973, she was named counsel for the state senate's committee that was responsible for revising the Florida Criminal Code. Later in 1973, she accepted a position with the Dade County State Attorney's Office, and she quickly succeeded in organizing a juvenile division in that office. From 1976 to 1978, Reno was a partner in a private Miami law firm, but

she returned to public service when she was appointed by Governor Reubin Askew to finish the term of her former boss at the State Attorney's office. That appointment made Janet Reno the first female Dade County State Attorney. In November 1978, Reno was elected State Attorney, and she was returned to that office four more times by the voters of Dade County.

On February 11, 1993, President Bill Clinton nominated Janet Reno to be the first woman Attorney General of the United States, and she was sworn in as the 78th Attorney General on March 12, 1993. Her key priorities as Attorney General have been reducing crime and violence by incarcerating serious, repeat offenders; focusing on prevention and early intervention efforts to keep children away from gangs, drugs and violence; enforcing civil rights laws to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans; using the law to ensure that the waters, land and skies of America are protected from pollution; and "[b]uilding a Department of Justice that reflects a diverse government of people, by the people and for the people, making integrity, excellence and professionalism the hallmarks of the Department."

In 1993, Janet Reno was nominated by the Florida Commission on the Status of Women and inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame by Governor Lawton Chiles.

Florida's first 150 women lawyers were admitted beginning with Louise Rebecca Pinnell in 1898 and ending in 1938. Janet Reno's 1963 admission to The Florida Bar therefore places her well beyond the first 150; nevertheless, it establishes her as a visible minority in a male-dominated profession. It was not until the 1970's that women began to enter the legal profession in numbers approaching ten percent of the law school student body. Thus, Janet Reno is a trailblazer among Florida's women lawyers, as well as among those in the nation. Her position brings real meaning to the First 150 Women Lawyers Celebration.

Join The Florida Bar and the Florida Association for Women Lawyers in commemorating the 50th anniversary of The Florida Bar and honoring Florida's First 150 Women Lawyers. Mark your calendars for Thursday, May 25, 2000, and make plans now to be in Miami for this fabulous event. It will be a BIG, BIG AFFAIR that you won't want to miss! ■

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