



Feature

Women in Law

This article talks about the decades women have been in the profession of Law. The first woman attended law school in 1869 in the United States and we will take a look at the progression of the practice in relationship to women. What place do women hold in the law profession today?

The movement of women in law began early in American History but it was a very slow evolvement as women faced many of the same challenges that they do today. There was the balance between home, children and professional duties. It is recorded that a woman named Georgia Bullock was appointed to a judge position in 1916. It was later discovered she was actually an assistant to the male judge who wanted to experiment with "woman's court." Nonetheless, it was all in Bullocks favor as she was later appointed judge in 1925 to a police court vacancy. That same police court was changed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court one year after her appointment.

What did women face throughout the years since 1925 in the world to become lawyers? First, there were many law schools that did not welcome women into their halls, however, there were a few schools known for their acceptance and attracted women. The challenge for women to be paid the same salary was an issue then as it is now. There were certainly barriers to break through since the profession was dominated by men.

It was not until the 1960's that women started to make their mark in law school and the legal profession. That's just about 40 years of incubation and slowly rising to meet their male counterparts. Females began taking positions in law schools as faculty, in law firms and on benches. The 1990's saw women take their place in law and they became scholars in their fields with the resources to reshape the legal profession into one that serves the women as well as the men.

Today women hold approximately 50% of associate professorships at colleges and assistant professor positions are also at approximately 50%. Female lawyers hold just under 50% of all jobs in the larger law firms and just under 20% of the partner positions in the bigger firms. While it's true the first woman judge was seen in court in the early 1900's, women have not progressed as quickly in government positions. Women comprise about 11% in the U.S. Supreme Court and just around 16% and 17% of U.S. District Court judges and U.S. Circuit Court judges.

Women still steam ahead despite the challenges over the decades. There are now organizations that promote women in law. Womeninlaw.com is a popular site for women working in the legal profession. The site comes out of London, England where women in law moved along the growth scale comparatively to women in the United States. There are present issues in law for women with the topics addressing balance in women's lives all the way to yoga classes for women in law.

The National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) appeared in 1899 before women even became lawyers and admitted to the bar. It has been the most prominent association for women lawyers and their rights. It is not only in the US, but also world wide and the dues are about \$45 annually.

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