

About Our Honoree

Judith P. Vladeck



The following tribute to our honoree was written by her colleagues at Vladeck, Waldman, Elias and Engelhard, P.C., when Judith Vladeck became the first recipient of the National Network of Women Union Lawyers' Outstanding Achievement Award:

In a long and distinguished career, Judy Vladeck has been a strong voice for labor in general, and women in particular. What is more, her voice has often been among the first raised on a large number of issues of critical importance to women and labor.

Many of us have worked long and hard on the same issues. Few of us, however, have worked as long, as hard, or as effectively as she has. Moreover, unlike her, we have often been able to follow a course she charted for us.

It takes special qualities of vision, energy and courage to be first at anything, and Judy Vladeck has these qualities in abundance. Her energy and work ethic are legendary. Her sense of the law's possibilities is visionary, and she has had the courage to move from areas of the law familiar to her, into new areas of the law, some of which she practically invented.

After she and her husband, Stephen C. Vladeck, himself a giant of the labor bar, both literally and figuratively, had established themselves as preeminent labor lawyers, and long chafing at the special effort it had taken her, as a woman, to achieve that stature, she entered a new area of law, one which she and a few others invented as they went along.

In cases like Kyriazi v. Western Electric, 527 F.Supp.18 (D.N.J.1981), Melani v. Board of Higher Education, 561 F.Supp 769 (S.D.N.Y. 1983), Plummer v. Chemical Bank, 668 F.2d 654 (2d Cir. 1982), Whittlesey v. Union Carbide Corp., 742 F.2d 724 (2d Cir. 1984), she successfully advanced the interests of women, as well as those of African Americans and older workers.

Having invented and then mastered those areas of the law, she moved equally successfully into still other areas of the law important to all working people. In Weider v. Skala, 80 N.Y. 2d 628 (1992), a case involving a law firm associate, she created a chink in New York's antiquated employment at-will doctrine. In Suffolk County v. Long Island Lighting Co., 907 F.2d 1295 (2d Cir. 1990), she brought the skill acquired handling large and complex gender and race class action lawsuits to a new arena, representing the two million rate payers of Long Island Lighting Company in a successful class action lawsuit that ultimately led to a substantial recovery of over-billed electric charges.

Even today, she is in the process of pushing the law in areas as diverse as prisoner rights and the rights of shareholder employees.

Throughout, Judy Vladeck has been motivated by a great passion for justice. This passion, combined with exceptional intelligence, clear vision, and great respect for the law as a process and as a tool for change, has led to her status as one of our most important lawyers.

Crowning Judy's remarkable career is the fact that, as difficult as it was for her then, and for women today, she did all these things while raising three very talented children, Bruce, David, and Anne Vladeck, who today are themselves leaders in their respective fields of healthcare and public administration, public interest law, and labor and employment law. This she did as a working mother, while running a growing law firm, mentoring many lawyers, within and outside the firm, serving on numerous boards and advising a long list of leaders and organizations active in so many causes of importance to women and working families.