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The Honorable Sylvia H. Rambo

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The Honorable Sylvia H. Rambo

MARCH 14, 2019 BY [PAMELA G SMITH](#)

185
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The Honorable Sylvia H. Rambo attended Carlisle High School, where she graduated first in her class. She then earned her B.A. degree, *cum laude*, from Dickinson College. In 1959, Judge Rambo entered The

Dickinson School of Law as the only woman in her class. She graduated from the Law School in 1962.



Judge Rambo briefly worked as an attorney in the Trust Department of the Bank of Delaware before returning to Carlisle to enter private practice. In 1973, she was appointed Assistant Public Defender for Cumberland County. In 1976, she was appointed Chief Public Defender. She was the first woman appointed to that position. In 1976, Judge Rambo became the first female judge in Cumberland County when she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas. She ran for reelection in 1978 when her appointed term was scheduled to expire, but she lost the election and returned to private practice.

In 1979, Judge Rambo was appointed to fill a newly-created seat on the bench for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. She was the first woman to serve in that capacity. From 1992 to 1999, Judge Rambo accomplished yet another first, when she served as the first female Chief Judge for that Court. Judge Rambo attained senior status on the Court in 2001. This year marks Judge Rambo's 40th year on the bench.

In 1993, the [Women's Law Caucus](#) of The Dickinson School of Law established [The Honorable Sylvia H. Rambo Award](#). The Award was established to honor, annually, a woman in the legal profession that "has had a distinguished career and who, by example, has made the professional success of other women more likely." Judge Rambo was the first recipient of the Award, and it was named in her honor because of her substantial and positive impact on the community. The 2019 recipient of the Award is [The Honorable Mary Hannah Leavitt](#), Class of 1978, President Judge of the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania. A list of prior recipients is available [here](#).

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