

Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice

2011 Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong Award for Outstanding Advocacy on Behalf of Social Justice for Women

The Journal created the Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong Award for Outstanding Advocacy on Behalf of Social Justice for Women in 1985 when the Journal was founded. Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong was the only woman in the Boalt Hall Class of 1915. She became the Morrison Professor of Municipal Law, Emeritus, and was the first tenured woman law professor in the United States. She was instrumental in drafting state and federal social security acts and also published a monumental text on family law and community property. The Armstrong Award is a national award open to all people—including scholars, community workers, legal practitioners, and activists—who demonstrate outstanding advocacy on behalf of social justice for women and underrepresented genders. The recipient is chosen by the membership of the Journal.

The recipient of this year’s Armstrong Award is The Honorable Victoria Kolakowski. In November 2010, Judge Kolakowski was elected to the Superior Court of Alameda County and is the nation’s first openly transgender trial court judge. In addition to practicing law for over twenty years and serving as an Administrative Law Judge for five years, Judge Kolakowski brings personal experience with discrimination to the bench. After earning her J.D. at Louisiana State University, Judge Kolakowski was denied the opportunity to sit for the bar, because the state bar association viewed her transgender status as evidence of “unsound mind.” Judge Kolakowski appealed to the Louisiana Supreme Court, eventually winning the opportunity to sit for the bar examination. Since moving to the Bay Area, Judge Kolakowski has been an asset to the LGBTQ community. In 1991, she helped draft Berkeley’s Domestic Partner Registry Ordinance, one of the first of its kind in the nation. More recently, she has co-chaired the Board of Directors of the Transgender Law Center and volunteered her services as an advocate on behalf of transgender clients in court.

The Journal is honored to present Judge Kolakowski with the Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong Award for her fight for recognition and to end discrimination against transgender individuals.