



## **Laurel Brennan**

Laurel Brennan was elected to the position of Secretary-Treasurer of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO in January 1997 and was reelected in 2000. She is the first woman to serve in this office in New Jersey and is one of only seven across the nation.

In her position as Secretary-Treasurer, Laurel is responsible for the organizational budget and other financial obligations of the NJ State AFL-CIO. In partnership with NJ State AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech, she develops and implements statewide policies that impact one million union members and their families. In addition, Laurel is the co-Editor of *Labor Fax*, an award winning bi-weekly newsletter subscribed to by approximately 800 union, government and political leaders throughout New Jersey. She was also instrumental in developing the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Voter Registration Program that is designed to register union members at their place of employment.

In 1976 Laurel began her union career during a one-year internship with the New Jersey State Federation of Teachers under the auspices of the Rutgers Labor Center where she worked with the teachers union on grievances, negotiations and collective bargaining campaigns. Next, she served as an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (now known as UNITE) in Pennsylvania. She moved on to become a business agent for the Philadelphia-South Jersey District Council where she was later elected Assistant Manager.

As Assistant Manager, Laurel served as a vocal advocate for job development and job security on state and local labor-management committees. She also served as a member of Pennsylvania's first industry-wide Transition Team for Dislocated Workers. Under her leadership the Philadelphia-South Jersey District created and financed the Garment Workers Education Center that provided literacy, language and computer skill training to immigrant garment workers and their families.

Still active in the Southern New Jersey labor movement, Laurel served as the first woman elected as Secretary-Treasurer of the Southern New Jersey Central Labor Council and a Trustee of the Camden County Union Organization of Social Services. She is a member of the National Executive Board of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and serves as President of the Southern New Jersey CLUW.

Laurel was appointed by Governor James McGreevey to serve on the State Employment & Training Commission (SETC) Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education, which makes recommendations to department Commissioners on the needs, priorities and policies related to access and equity for labor, education and workforce training. She was also selected to serve on the NJ State Apparel Procurement Board. These two appointments

provide the NJ State AFL-CIO with an aggressive advocate to better form pro-working family policies. Laurel is also a member of the Advisory Committee for the Nontraditional Career Resource Center (NRC) at Rutgers University, which seeks to increase awareness and opportunities for students in nontraditional careers.

She has served as an instructor at Penn State University's Union Leadership Academy and for the AFL-CIO's annual regional Women's Summer School, where she provides instruction on grievance handling and leadership skills. She also serves as Chairperson of the Trade Union Consulting Committee of Rutgers University, as well as a member of the State Advisory Council of Rutgers University. Laurel is a frequent speaker at regional and national forums on women in the labor movement and working family issues, and for the past four years has organized and led, the Women in Leadership Development Conference (WILD) at Rutgers University.

Born in Newark, Laurel was raised in Woodbridge Township, NJ. Her father was a police officer in Newark and her mother was a homemaker who raised eight children. She and her husband Michael reside in Cherry Hill. Laurel is the proud mother of Erin Young, a union representative for UNITE HERE and the grandmother of Jack Young.