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## Judicial Gender Diversity Continues to Evolve

*Sacramento, CA – January 11, 2010* - In its annual judicial gender survey, the editors of the 2010 edition of *The American Bench: Judges of the Nation* report an unprecedented increase in the number of women attorneys who became judges over the past two years.

In analyzing judiciary changes between 2009 and 2008, *The American Bench* reported the largest increase occurred in State Supreme Courts where female judges increased by a record 6.7%, followed by Federal Court Judges at 1.2% increase, with half of that increase occurring in the US Courts of Appeals.

Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, Counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU, notes the appointment of Supreme Court Justice O'Connor as one major reason for the change. "Having O'Connor on the Supreme Court sent a huge message to young girls. Having role models at the top of any profession is huge," she said.

The shift in gender within America's legal industry, while it began some time ago, has not come to fruition until fairly recently. Torres-Spelliscy sees trends that point to this decade as a jumping point for unprecedented involvement by women in courtrooms all across the country. "More women are going to law school than ever before. In 2001, incoming females in law schools outnumbered men for the first time and the graduation rate in recent years is nearly at parity at 50/50," Torres-Spelliscy said.

As far as the future of this trend is concerned, there is no reason to think it will not continue. “I think that having a diverse bench improves judicial decision making. The studies that have been done on the effect of gender on judging show that women and men come to the same conclusions,” Torres-Spelliscy added.

Bob Dylan famously stated, “The times, they are a-changing.” It is unlikely that he was referring to gender diversity in the legal industry in 2009, but if he was, he could not have been more correct.

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