

Hunterdon Review > Opinion

Women get political short shrift

[Print Page](#)

By **LEANNA BROWN**

Published: Feb 25th, 6:18 AM

Around 1850, British poet laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote "Idylls of the King," in which the knights of King Arthur's Roundtable search for the Holy Grail, the chalice from which many believe Christ drank at the Last Supper.

Even the purest of the knights, Sir Galahad, fails in his quest to obtain the Holy Grail, symbolizing life's eternal struggles.

Today Americans seek the illusive goal of a just and equal society. A just society demands that people be tried quickly and equally. Equality means a level playing field for all regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin or disability.

Of the categories mentioned above, the most progress has been made in the area of disability, now renamed physically or mentally challenged. One of President George W. Bush's greatest accomplishments was the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Wheelchair accessibility became the law of the land, from casinos to sidewalks. Since then, technological advancements, like the motor scooter, increase mobility and quality of life.

Still some of the disabled are not seen. Others, like Sarah Palin's son Trig, are the butt of jokes on TV.

Progress has been made combating racism. President Barack Obama represents African-Americans and people of color in the White House. Writing in a column carried by the Star-Ledger, Cynthia Tucker claims "the intransigent problems that cripple the black underclass: educational failure, crime and family dysfunction are not civil rights issues. Happily, there are not as many of them as there used to be."

True as that statement is, according to an article by Kevin Blackistone, Shani Davis, Olympic Gold medallist and the first black Olympian to win a gold medal, "still had to be what others wanted him to be. It was not enough to just be true to himself trying to be the best speed skater he can be."

Women fall the farthest short of obtaining the Holy Grail. First the good news. Gov. Chris Christie's first two appointments were women, Kim Guadagno and Paula Dowd, followed by three other women cabinet members making a total of five out of the 16 cabinet positions - not a record, but not bad.

Christie also appointed talented former state Sen. Marcia Karrow of Flemington to chair the Commission investigating the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH).

On Feb. 15, a "trail blazing judge," Sylvia Pressler, died at age 75. A sharp, brilliant attorney not afraid to call a spade a spade, Judge Pressler was best known for her decision which allowed girls to play in Little League, "an institution as American as apple pie."

A 1959 Rutgers Law Graduate in an era dominated by male attorneys, Judge Pressler issued landmark rulings in the areas of gay rights and capital punishment.

On the downside, a report released on Feb. 17 by the Center for American Women and Politics, part of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University reveals, "54 percent of voters in the 2008 elections were women, but only 24 percent of state legislatures are female. After 30 years of steady increase, the number of women legislators leveled off in the last decade."

At the county level in the Recorder Community Newspapers readership area, Morris has two female state legislators, one of whom is also Hunterdon's sole female legislator, Allison Littell McHose, and Somerset has only one, Bernards Township's Denise Coyle. Essex is the exception, with four out of nine female legislators.

So the search continues for the Holy Grail of a just and equal society.

[x] Close Window