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## Foreword

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## FOREWORD

*Hon. Judith S. Kaye\**

For nearly two years we watched and waited as the Task Force on Women in the Courts went about its work of conducting a statewide study of our court system to determine whether statutes, rules, practices or conduct worked unfairness or undue hardship on women. All during that time there were constant evidences of the Task Force's conscientiousness—meetings, public hearings, interviews, letters, questionnaires. But a blaze of activity was ignited on April 22, 1986, when its 274-page Report became public. In the six months since that day, courts, bar associations and others have been engaged in evaluating and implementing the Task Force findings and recommendations.

With so much serious analysis of the actual substance of the Report in progress, I would like in this preface only to tender two thoughts of a more general nature—one retrospective, one prospective.

First, the Report has given credibility and dimension to the problem of gender bias in the courts. Individual complaints of lawyers, litigants and employees may in the past have been brushed aside by some as isolated instances of bad humor or insensitivity. But this thoroughly documented composite picture of discrimination, drawn by a panel of distinguished citizens of different backgrounds, cannot be lightly dismissed by anyone. With the views of more than two thousand persons having been considered, many quoted and summarized in the Report, an overwhelming evidentiary showing has been made. No problem can be addressed until it is acknowledged, and this Report has powerfully accomplished that first vital step.

My second observation looks to the future. The only ultimate good that comes of having identified a problem is of course resolving it. The Report suggests two overall approaches. The first is by heightened public understanding; awareness of the existence of bias is, for many, itself somewhat curative. The second approach is typified in the Report by dozens of recommendations for legislation, education and new programs and services, and obviously will require more time, study and expense. In order to assure that all necessary reforms are put in place, the interest that was kindled on April 22, 1986 must be kept alive as the serious work of routing out gender

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bias proceeds. This forum furthers *both* approaches to resolution of the problem, and I am therefore pleased to be part of it.