

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:***

**CONGRESSWOMAN MARY GAY SCANLON AMONG LOCAL WOMEN LEADERS TO BE HONORED AS CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE AT SENIORLAW CENTER’S 2020 GALA**

*The Philadelphia-based non-profit serving seniors throughout Pennsylvania to honor U.S. Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, Hon. Lois E. Murphy, Councilmember Helen Gym, Cherri Gregg, Kathy E. Ochroch, Esq. and Teresa N. Cavenagh, Esq. for pursuing justice for older and vulnerable people*

**PHILADELPHIA (FEBRUARY 21, 2020) -** SeniorLAW Center, an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit legal services agency that pursues justice for older Americans and fights poverty, abuse and homelessness through legal representation, education and advocacy, will host its Roaring 20’s-themed annual galaon Saturday, March 21, at the Hilton Penn’s Landing. The event will celebrate the Center’s work and 100 years of women’s voices and leadership, coinciding with the 100th anniversary year of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted voting rights to women.

Since its founding in 1978, SeniorLAW Center’s staff of attorneys and advocates has served well over 400,000 older people with diverse legal problems and crises. The Center seeks justice for older people by using the power of the law, educating the community and advocating on local, state and national levels. Pennsylvania is home to almost 3 million older people, one of the largest senior populations in the country. At least one in 10 older Americans faces abuse or exploitation; over 80,000 Pennsylvania grandparents are raising their grandchildren. Half of all older Philadelphians live in or near poverty, as do 1 in 5 throughout Pennsylvania.

“The crises that so many older Americans face every day are devastating,” said Karen Buck, Executive Director of the Center. “Losing their home, facing physical violence and abuse, trying to raise grandchildren who have been abandoned or neglected, having their life savings stolen through fraud and exploitation. We have a responsibility to ensure that their rights are protected, and that during what can be the hardest time of their lives, seniors have the advocates and support they need and deserve. That is where SeniorLAW Center comes in. We are proud to fight for justice for older people, those upon whose shoulders we all stand.”

This year, SeniorLAW Center will honor six women for their service and advocacy: U.S. Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, Hon. Lois E. Murphy, Councilmember Helen Gym, journalist Cherri Gregg, pro bono leader Kathy E. Ochroch, Esq. and board leader Teresa N. Cavenagh, Esq.

**U.S. Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA)** has been a partner of SeniorLAW Center in pursuing access to justice for vulnerable populations since long before she was sworn in as a U.S. Representative for Pennsylvania’s 5th Congressional District in November 2018. Congresswoman Scanlon previously served as national pro bono counsel at a major U.S. law firm, where she directed and supervised over 600 lawyers in 15 offices in providing more than 50,000 hours of pro bono legal services annually to low-income clients and non-profit organizations, including SeniorLAW Center. Under her leadership, the pro bono program worked on critical issues, including senior and child advocacy, immigration, housing, public benefits, criminal justice reform, free press, and other constitutional rights. The program earned the 2018 American Bar Association’s annual pro bono award. As Vice Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, the House Rules Committee, and the House Select Committee, Congresswoman Scanlon’s priorities in Congress include voting rights, education, common sense gun safety legislation, and protecting the rights of children, families, veterans and our seniors.

**Judge Lois E. Murphy** is an outstanding leader in elder justice in Pennsylvania and a valued partner to SeniorLAW Center. She was elected a judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Montgomery County in 2009 and leads the Orphans’ Court Division, where she hears cases involving wills, estates, adoptions, and guardianships. Appointed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court’s Elder Law Task Force and now Chair of the Guardianship Committee of the Court’s Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts, she is leading innovative best practices in guardianship and right to counsel, working to improve education and training for guardians, and promoting best practices for courts and judges, including pro bono programs to ensure access to legal representation for vulnerable populations. She speaks statewide and nationally about elder justice, access to justice, alternatives to guardianship and judicial innovation.

**Councilmember Helen Gym** is a fierce Philadelphia leader pursuing a human rights agenda, which measures outcomes based on the health and well-being of the people of the city. Among other extraordinary accomplishments, Councilmember Gym was the leading voice promoting a civil right to counsel for low-income tenants of all ages facing eviction and homelessness, which passed unanimously in November 2019, changing the face of access to justice and establishing housing as a human right. SeniorLAW Center was proud to be a partner and leader on that initiative and others with Councilmember Gym. She also established the city’s first legal defense fund for tenants facing eviction and the city’s first fund to specifically address youth homelessness. As the first Asian American woman to serve in Philadelphia’s City Council, she has deep connections to Philadelphia’s Asian American and immigrant communities. Among other awards, Helen was selected by EMILY’s List, the nation’s largest resource for women in politics, as the winner of the 2017 Gabrielle Giffords Rising Star Award.

**Cherri Gregg, KYW Newsradio,** is an attorney, journalist, and community affairs reporter for KYW Newsradio. She reports on a variety of public affairs and social justice related issues, including groundbreaking coverage of elder abuse, guardianship exploitation and other elder justice issues. Cherri puts her law degree to work, providing analysis and extensive coverage on many highly publicized community legal issues, such as Pennsylvania’s voter ID law, an issue which disenfranchised older people especially, and against which SeniorLAW Center was a leading advocate. As an award-winning journalist, one of Cherri’s missions is to highlight diverse perspectives, positive people and cultural events in the greater Philadelphia area. In 2013, she launched an original Black History Month series for KYW Newsradio, “Philadelphia GameChangers,” which highlights individuals and organizations making a positive impact in the African-American Community. Cherri has emceed the SeniorLAW Center Gala for the past several years and has featured our work on her show. She is an advocate for older people and a voice for human rights across the region.

**Kathy E. Ochroch, Esq.** is a champion of pro bono and access to justice. As a partner and director of pro bono services at Blank Rome, LLP, she supervises and coordinates all aspects of the firm’s award-winning national pro bono program for its over 600 attorneys. Kathy also maintains a substantive pro bono practice herself, handling pro bono guardianship cases, trusts and estates matters, child advocacy, social security disability cases, veterans’ discharge cases, immigration and asylum matters, and death penalty cases. She has partnered with SeniorLAW Center for many years on a number of access to justice projects, including the Center’s signature Life Planning Clinics, providing thousands of critical advance planning tools for vulnerable seniors and involving over 100 attorneys, paralegals and other volunteers in the firm and corporate and other partners. Kathy also helps lead the Center’s annual Life Planning Clinic for Hispanic Elders in partnership with Exelon/PECO, which provides services for Spanish-speaking seniors in their own community and language. Kathy has been recognized by many nonprofit and public interest law centers and has served on many of their boards as ambassador and champion for access to justice.

**Teresa N. Cavenagh, Esq. (Hall of Fame Inductee)** joined SeniorLAW Center’s Board of Directors in 2009, serving as Board Chair, Officer, ambassador, champion and volunteer attorney. Teresa has been with Duane Morris LLP since 1976, initially as Duane Morris’ law librarian and since 1985 as an attorney. She has been a partner in Duane Morris’ Trial Department since 1995. Teresa’s practice focuses on commercial litigation with an emphasis on health care, energy and fraud-related issues. She often represents clients in the health care, energy and hospitality industries, providing regulatory and compliance counseling and investigation services, as well as litigation expertise. Teresa also leads by example through pro bono service. She is an outstanding volunteer attorney for SeniorLAW Center, providing legal services to hundreds of older adults through the Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine for the past several years. Her leadership skills and talents have been instrumental to SeniorLAW Center’s enormous growth and achievements throughout the last decade.

SeniorLAW Center: With five offices in Pennsylvania and a nonprofit staff of 35 attorneys and advocates, the Center provides free legal, educational and advocacy services to over 5,000 seniors each year. Through over ten special projects, its statewide SeniorLAW HelpLine serving seniors in all 67 counties of Pennsylvania, pro bono partnerships, 8 community legal clinics and national and statewide advocacy and leadership, SeniorLAW Center changes individual lives and works to change systems to promote justice, security, and independence for older people and their families.

For more information about SeniorLAW Center and the gala, visit www.seniorlawcenter.org.

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