



**Laurel Brennan
Secretary-Treasurer
New Jersey State AFL-CIO**

BIOGRAPHY

Laurel Brennan was elected to the position of Secretary-Treasurer of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO in January 1997 and was re-elected to her sixth term in 2016. She is the first woman to serve in this office in New Jersey and is one of only seven to do so across the nation.

In her position as Secretary-Treasurer, Laurel is responsible for the organizational budget and other financial obligations of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO. In partnership with New Jersey State AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech, she develops and implements statewide policies that impact one million union members and their families.

Laurel began her union career in a year-long internship with the New Jersey State Federation of Teachers where she worked with the teachers union on grievances, negotiations and collective bargaining campaigns. She then served as an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (now known as Workers United). She moved on to become a business agent for the Philadelphia-South Jersey District Council, where she was later elected Assistant Manager. Laurel served as the first woman elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Southern New Jersey Central Labor Council. She formed the Southern NJ CLUW Chapter, was elected chapter president, and later served on the CLUW National Executive Board.

Recognizing the need for a statewide program for union women, Laurel developed and organized the New Jersey State AFL-CIO's annual Women in Leadership Development Conference (WILD), with 2016 marking the conference's 13th Anniversary. The conference promotes leadership and diversity throughout the labor movement, while focusing on how unions help women and how women help unions.

She has been an instructor in the AFL-CIO's annual Northeast Regional Women's Summer School and at Penn State University's Union Leadership Academy, and is frequently invited to speak on women in the labor movement and working family issues. She serves as a member of the State Advisory Council of Rutgers University and the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS) Board of Trustees. Laurel is also a Trustee of the non-partisan grassroots coalition Working Families United for New Jersey, Inc., and helped create and guide the state federation's new statewide Young Workers Program. She played a pivotal role in New Jersey's Raise the Wage campaign and continues to be an advocate for raising the minimum wage.

Laurel was born in Newark and raised in Woodbridge. Her father was a police officer in Newark and her mother was a homemaker who raised eight children. She and her husband Michael live in Cherry Hill. Laurel is the proud mother of Erin Young, a union representative for Workers United, and the grandmother of Jack Young.