



A Publication of the Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association

## A Column of Content



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# Member News

See what's going on with WPLLA below!

- December 18th was our Holiday Banquet at The Speckled Egg!
- In January we'll be virtually meeting with AALL President Jenny Silbiger.
- Reminder that in February we'll formally open nominations for two big items:
  - Next year's 2026-2027 WPLLA board
  - AALL Conference Sponsorship\*

Blessed tidings this holiday season! Thank you to everyone who's assisted with the newsletter. Here's to many more. - Britiny



\*for more information about this year's AALL Conference, see page 19

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# Interview with a Former SCI Librarian

By Britiny Hommey

During the month of October I attended the annual Pennsylvania Library Association conference which was held in Erie. While networking with other librarians, I found that I recognized a few members from my time during the PALS Director's Institute program - one of whom is Roane Lytle - presently a Librarian at Williamsburg Public Library, formerly a State Correctional Institute Librarian. I reconnected with Roane and after some chatter, discovered his former job, which he hadn't opened up too much about. I inquired if he'd be open to a light Q and A and he graciously obliged. I prepped my questions with the intention to let peers know that this is one of the many types of jobs that librarians *can* do.

Q: What inspired you to work at a correctional facility?

A: I was a graduate assistant at Penn State, working on a degree in Higher Education. The head of the Higher Ed department took a sabbatical, and things went bad. I saw an ad for the librarian position at SCI Rockview. The salary and benefits were attractive, and I applied. I thought I would work for a few years, make some money, and then go back and finish my doctorate in Higher Ed. Thirty years later...

Q: What were the requirements prior to you getting the position?

A: At the time, the job was a Civil Service classified Librarian 1. There is a Civil Service test and a List for Librarians. It is mostly for positions in the State Library, but a few other state departments had librarians. Normally you must take the test and be on the Civil Service List to be hired for one of these jobs, but the position at Rockview had been open for over two years, and they were about to have their first Accreditation. They got permission to do an Emergency Civil Service Test, and I took it. The emergency test consisted of two written questions, list your library experience and list your corrections experience. I did, and I was hired within two weeks.

Q: How long were you in the position?

A: I worked in four different correctional institutions for a total of 30 years. During that time, I was also an officer (Corrections Director, Secretary, and then Vice President) of the Federation of State Cultural and Educational Professionals, the union representing the librarians in state service. At one point, the union worked with Civil Service to create the Corrections Librarian class. I headed the union committee that did that.

Q: Did you participate or oversee any local/state book donations from outside sources? One example would be from the Pittsburgh Prison Book Project (formerly, Book 'em).

A: These were few and far between for me. The Department of Corrections was paranoid about books coming in from "outside" as there had been instances where contraband was concealed in donated

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materials, and one prison escape orchestrated in blank spaces in interlibrary loan books. We had pretty decent budgets. Our money for the Main Library (below) came from the Inmate General Welfare Fund, a significant pot of money the DOC made from the work of inmates and later the inmate telephone system. We also had the opportunity to apply for LSTA grants. I had two (I think) collection development grants at the Institution level and participated in a couple at the Department level. Law Library materials were paid for out of the general fund.

**Q: Can you speak about the collection that a patron would find in your space? For example, within my Law Library there's primarily law books – no children's titles or graphic novels.**

**A: Our libraries have two collections, the Main Library and the Law Library:**

The Main Library consisted of the kind of materials you would find in a public library. Recreational reading, non-fiction including study materials to support inmate education, and periodicals. Not a lot of women's health, except for in the women's prisons. Not a lot of children's books either, except for specific programs like Read to Your Children. Graphic novels were particularly popular. We found them helpful for our low reading level inmates, especially the ones for whom English was a Second Language. There was a lot of stigma attached to having a children's book, but much less attached to a comic book.

The Law Library was mandated by a legal decision, providing the inmates access to the courts. The inmates had to be able to challenge their conviction. Some states like Texas provide attorneys in lieu of a library to provide access. When I started, we had all print materials but later transitioned to a computer-based system. Interesting aside, when I had been there for a few years, the ACLU sued the DOC challenging our system. One of the attorneys for the ACLU who cross-examined me in federal court wrote *The Rights of Prisoners*.

**Q: Were you on a team or was it a solo position?**

**A: Except for a few years at SCI Camp Hill, there was only one professional librarian at each institution. We each had one or two civilian Library Assistants working for us, as well as inmate library workers. That varied from jail to jail; anywhere from eight to twenty inmates.**

**Q: Did you ever have any fear while working?**

**A: I was very lucky. While I had some tense situations, I never felt myself in serious danger. That said, at least two of my fellow librarians were in their respective institutions when serious incidents happened. One of my friends was in the library with inmates when the riot at Camp Hill kicked off. In the event of an incident, policy was for correctional officers to escort inmates (like the ones in the library) back to the cellblock while staff remained locked in place until they were evacuated to a safe place. By the time my friend was evacuated, the building containing the library was on fire. Half of the building was destroyed while the library sustained heavy smoke damage. He was later told that they were less than five minutes from being taken hostage. Several of the staff members who were taken hostage were seriously harmed.**

Q: Have you recognized translatable skills from your former position to your current librarian job (or vice versa)?

A: Yes, my experience in corrections taught me how to work with bureaucracies, how to work with bad supervisors, and how to hopefully be a good one.

Q: Was there a favorite part of your job? Or a moment that really stood out from the rest?

A: There were times when I thought we were just spinning our wheels, and others when it looked like we actually made a difference. One conversation I had with an inmate at SCI Cresson stands out. Cresson was a medium/minimum facility primarily housing drug offenders. We were referred to as a “revolving door”. Inmates were arrested for a drug offense, came to us, did what they had to do to make parole, went back home, had their parole revoked for a drug incident, and came back to us. At that time, we had an LSTA funded program to provide the inmates with resumes. As part of the grant, we were given a computer and laser printer and taught how to write a good resume. Inmates had to have a home plan and job plan to make parole. Our resumes were a big part of their job plans. One day an inmate came into the library and asked to update his resume. I recognized him as one of our previous resume patrons, and he said that updating his resume at the library was his first stop when he came back to jail. He would get out, work for a while, and then for whatever reason get sent back to jail. Several of his prospective employers commented that his well-written resume was a big factor in getting the job. I looked at our records, and we had written five resumes for this man, one every year or year and a half. Yes, he ended up back in prison again, but I wondered how many other of our resumes gave someone else a chance to get out of prison and maybe even turn their lives around.

Thank you to Roane Lytle at Williamsburg Public Library for taking the time to complete our interview. I appreciate your cooperation and insight. I hope sharing this experience opens some eyes to see the different opportunities that being a librarian can be.

# Researching Legislators of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

By Joel Fishman, Ph. D., M.L.S.

I recently did a report on the Women Legislators in the PA General Assembly 1923/24-2023/24 for the Pennsylvania Commission on Fairness & Justice (formerly the Pennsylvania Interbranch Commission on Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Fairness).

My research is primarily done using several sources. First, biographies of legislators (as well as members of the Executive and Judicial branches) in the Pennsylvania Manual. This biennial publication is a comprehensive book outlining the Pennsylvania government containing the constitution, sections on the three branches of government, local government, elections, federal government, appendix, and indexes. The bios are succinct summaries of professional careers along with a picture. The online version from 116 to 126 (2024) is available online, but sometimes difficult to find. It is under the Pennsylvania Department of General Services, [www.dgs.pa.gov](http://www.dgs.pa.gov), at <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dgs/documents/publications/documents/pa-manual-v-126.pdf>. Earlier versions can also be found in Hathitrust.

Second, the General Assembly provides bios of its legislators. If you go to the website, [www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us) there are tabs at the top of the front page for the House and Senate. The website has just been recently updated (though the older site is still available at this writing). The Senate biographies go back to 1790 when the Senate was created under the 1790 Constitution. The House biographies date back to the period of 1815-40 as part of the online project back to 1682 (thanks to Jesse Teitelbaum, Archivist for the House in providing information).

Third, Dr. William Cox, archivist and professor at Wilkes College, has created the Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682-2004 database, available at Pennsylvania Election Statistics. The General Assembly is broken down in date ranges of 1682-1776, 1776-1790, 1790-2004. Alphabetical indexes are available for the Senate 1776-1790 and 1790-1869 and for the House of Representatives (1790-2004). The link is Legislatures - 1776-2004.

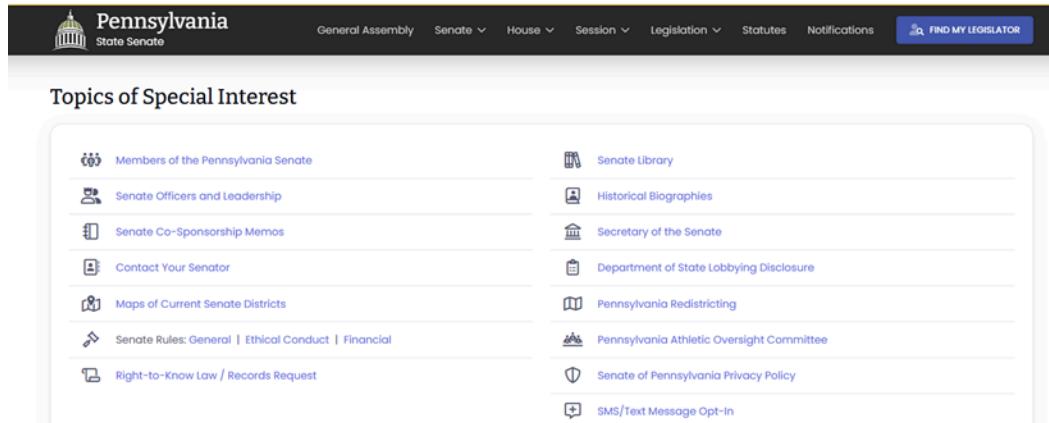
Fourth, for the colonial legislature, Craig W. Horle, ed. *Lawmakers and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary* (4v. in 3, 1991-2006). This is an excellent work containing wide-ranging historical essays on the legislature—books are broken down 1682-1710; 1710-1756; 1757-1775—and biographies of all Assembly members from one page to fifty pages (small print, double column, with footnotes), e.g., Andrew Hamilton (2:416-49), William Allen (3:231-80) or Ben Franklin (3:531-72), Joseph Galloway (3:585-629). Each volume also has a bibliography of sources used that can be useful for additional sources.

Fifth, there are a wide variety of books on biographies of individuals such as county and city histories, collective biographies: *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography*, *Bench and Bar of Pennsylvania*, *Courts and Lawyers of Pennsylvania 1623-1923: A History*, *Dictionary of American*

Biography, The Cyclopædia of American Biography, etc. Periodicals like Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Pennsylvania History, and individual historical society journals provide biographies as well.

Finally, there are the online databases like Academic Premiere, EbscoHost, JStor, HeinOnline, Wikipedia, Ballotpedia, Find My Grave, and legislator's individual webpages for current legislators.

For the Senate, click on the Home Tab and scroll down the page to Topics of Special Interest to find "Historical Biographies" that cover up to 2006. For 2007 to present, see description below.



The screenshot shows the Pennsylvania State Senate website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for General Assembly, Senate, House, Session, Legislation, Statutes, Notifications, and a 'FIND MY LEGISLATOR' button. Below the navigation bar, the page title 'Topics of Special Interest' is displayed. The main content area contains a grid of links, each with an icon and a descriptive label. The links are arranged in two columns. The first column includes: 'Members of the Pennsylvania Senate' (icon: people), 'Senate Officers and Leadership' (icon: people), 'Senate Co-Sponsorship Memos' (icon: document), 'Contact Your Senator' (icon: envelope), 'Maps of Current Senate Districts' (icon: map), 'Senate Rules: General | Ethical Conduct | Financial' (icon: shield), and 'Right-to-Know Law / Records Request' (icon: document). The second column includes: 'Senate Library' (icon: book), 'Historical Biographies' (icon: person), 'Secretary of the Senate' (icon: building), 'Department of State Lobbying Disclosure' (icon: document), 'Pennsylvania Redistricting' (icon: map), 'Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee' (icon: people), 'Senate of Pennsylvania Privacy Policy' (icon: shield), and 'SMS/Text Message Opt-In' (icon: mobile phone). A double arrow icon is located on the right side of the grid.

Click on the link and it will take the user to a form to fill out by name, year, gender, position, served in, party, and keywords. Given these categories, one can find legislators of all kinds.



## — Historical Biographies

Use the search form below, or [browse this alphabetical list](#) of individuals who have served in the Senate of Pennsylvania.

A screenshot of the search interface for the Senate Historical Biographies. The interface is set against a background of a library or study room with bookshelves. It includes fields for Name (First, Middle, Last), Year (Born and Died in YYYY), Gender (a dropdown menu), Position (a dropdown menu), Served in (Year, District, Select County), Party (a dropdown menu), and Keywords (a text input field). At the bottom are two buttons: a dark green "SEARCH" button and a yellow "RESET" button.

Searching this database will give you historical biographies up to 2006. For current legislators, you need to go under the Senate link and click on “Members of the Senate” on the right side under, “Find my Senator.” Here’s a historical biography of Senator Shirley M. Kitchen:

*Senate Library*

Collections Exhibitions Digital Exhibits Historical Biographies Gallery Educators Kids' Corner Senate Links

**Shirley M. Kitchen**

Sessions	Office	Position	District	Party
1997			3	Democrat
1998			3	Democrat
1999			3	Democrat
2000			3	Democrat
2001			3	Democrat
2002			3	Democrat

COUNTIES: Philadelphia

**Biography**

09/18/1946 -

Shirley M. Kitchen (D) Philadelphia (Part) County 1996-2016

**Early Life:**

Shirley M. Kitchen, born September 18, 1946, Augusta, Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia; daughter of Ferman and Ruth Sanders Few; education, Philadelphia Public School System; Antioch University human services, (B.A.), 1979; Temple University (Certificates), Child Care, Behavior Modification and Economic Development; social worker, Philadelphia County; director of constituent services, Philadelphia city council President John F. Street 1986-1987; leader, 20th Ward Democratic Executive Committee; member, Democratic State Committee 2001-2006; elected, Democrat, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 1987-1988; unsuccessful campaign, reelection, 1989 term; elected, Democrat, Pennsylvania State Senate 1997-2016; appointed, board, Public School Employees Retirement System (2009-2010); five children.

**Early Career:**

Social worker; board member, Saint Joseph's Hospital; Philadelphia Democratic Executive Committee; North Philadelphia Housing Community Development Corporation; member ex officio, North Central Empowerment Zone; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); member, advisory committee, Calcutta House; ward leader, 20th ward; East of Broad Coalition; co-sponsor/founder, North Philly Dazzling Diamonds.

**Pennsylvania Politics:**

Elected, Democrat, Pennsylvania House of Representatives 1987-1988; unsuccessful campaign, reelection, 1989 term.

Elected, Democrat, Pennsylvania State Senate, 3rd district, Philadelphia (Part) County, 1996-2016; committee assignments, Agricultural and Rural Affairs, Public Health and Welfare (Minority Chairwoman), Transportation, Urban Affairs and Housing; member, Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus; Second African American woman to serve in the Pennsylvania State Senate, at the time of her retirement, was the only African American woman member of the Senate.

**Pennsylvania House of Representatives Biography**

[Official Website - PA House Archives Official Website \(state.pa.us\)](#)

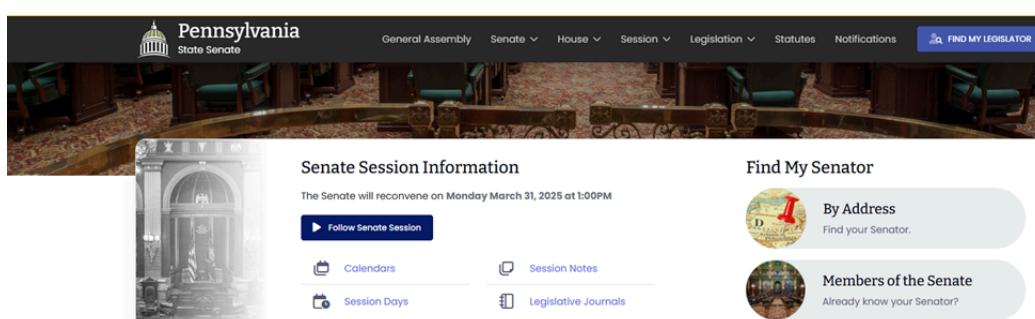
**Cited:**

Cox, Harold. ["Senate Members K." Wilkes University Election Statistics Project](#). Wilkes University.

The Pennsylvania Manual, (1999-2000). Crowell, G.; Secretary, Department of General Services. (Volume 114) Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, pages 3-34; 3-42; Biographies of Members of the Senate, page 3-16.

The Pennsylvania Manual, (2016-2016). Bogden, S., (Editor). (Volume 122). Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; pages 3-32; 3-39; Biographies of Members of the Senate, page 3-19.

On the Senate home page, click on “Members of the Senate” to bring up the current legislature of 2025-2026.



**Senate Session Information**  
The Senate will reconvene on Monday March 31, 2025 at 1:00PM  
[Follow Senate Session](#)

 Calendars	 Session Notes
 Session Days	 Legislative Journals

**Find My Senator**  
 By Address  
Find your Senator.

 **Members of the Senate**  
Already know your Senator?

Once you click on “Members of the Senate,” you will come to the current page of 2025-2026 members of the Senate. The members are listed alphabetically in order, but you can search by county or by party. If you click on the drop down box that contains the 2025-2026 Session, the dates go back to 2007-2008 for the legislature you may want to search.

The screenshot shows the Pennsylvania State Senate website's 'Members of the Senate' page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for General Assembly, Senate, House, Session, Legislation, Statutes, Notifications, and a 'FIND MY LEGISLATOR' search bar. Below the navigation is a banner for the '2025-2026 Session'. The main content area has a sidebar on the left with links for Senate, Members of the Senate, Leadership, Co-Sponsorship, Committees, Committee Assignments, and Historical Biographies. The main area displays a grid of four member portraits: David G. Argall (Republican), Lisa Baker (Republican), Camra Bartolotta (Republican), and Lisa M. Boscola (Democrat). Each portrait includes the member's name, party, and a small 'REPUBLICAN' or 'DEMOCRAT' label.

If you click on the member, you obtain information on current practice, biography, and career. The career sometimes gives you more of a personal statement of activities. For Lisa Baker, the following information is given:

The screenshot shows the biography page for Lisa Baker. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for General Assembly, Senate, House, Session, Legislation, Statutes, Notifications, and a 'FIND MY LEGISLATOR' search bar. Below the navigation is a message: 'The 5 most recent are displayed. View more'. The main content area has a 'Biography' section. Under 'Personal History', it lists 'Married to Gary Baker' and 'One son'. Under 'Occupation', it lists 'State Senator'. Under 'Education', it lists 'Shippensburg University, B.A. Government Administration, 1983'. Under 'Career', it lists a detailed list of her professional achievements and awards, including her role as research analyst for Sen. Robert Jubelirer, her work for Gov. Tom Ridge, and her executive director role for the Blue Ribbon Foundation.

In the House, scroll down to find House Histories with House Speaker Biographies, Archives, and Historical Biographies.

**HB 491**

**Rep. Chris Pielli**  
House District 156

**Memo:** Protecting Military Children and Families Through Concurrent Jurisdiction

**Short Title:** An Act amending Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in juvenile matters, providing for concurrent jurisdiction on military installations.

**Last Action:** PN 0480 Removed from table, March 26, 2025

**House History**

**House Speaker Biographies**  
Search and view House Speaker biographies.

**House Archives**  
View archived historical information for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

**House Historical Biographies**  
Search and view biographies for the members of Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

House Archives homepage:

**About the House Archives**

**About** **People** **Institution** **Exhibits & Publications** **Oral History** **Collections & Research** **Internships**

**About the Archives**

The Archives of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives is home to permanently valuable historical records created by its Members, Committees, Offices, and staff.

Visitors to the Archives are able to acquire a better understanding of the history of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, one of the oldest governmental bodies in the United States, and its impact on Pennsylvania's citizens today.

This site is dedicated to sharing the resources that tell the story of the House of Representatives and its Members. Documents, images, artifacts, electronic records, and oral histories are examples of the types of records found in our Archives.

**Internships**

This internship provides a great opportunity for students interested in public history to gain valuable training and experience which can be applied later to their professional careers.

**Oral History Project**

**VIEW MORE ON OUR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT HERE**

The House Archives also administers the Oral History Project where staff conducts interviews with former Representatives to capture their personal experiences of serving in the House of Representatives. Numerous interviews have been completed and each one is as unique as the individuals and the districts that they served.

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**HERE**

Click on “Exhibits and Publications” to find the following page:



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HOME > PUBLICATIONS

### Books



### Newsletters



#### Filter Newsletters By

- [Current](#)
- [2007-2013](#)
- [2004-2020](#)

Here is the House Speaker Biographies:

Welcome to the new PA General Assembly website. Some pages on this site may still be under construction, but you can switch back to the old site at any time by clicking here: [Switch back to our legacy site](#) [Give us your feedback](#)

 General Assembly Senate House Session Legislation Statutes Notifications [FIND MY LEGISLATOR](#)

Search Speaker Biographies

Use the search form below, or browse this chronological list of the individuals who have served as Speaker of the House in Pennsylvania.

**Speaker Details**

<input type="text" value="First"/>	<input type="text" value="Middle"/>	<input type="text" value="Last"/>
<input type="text" value="Suffix"/>	<input type="text" value="Born"/>	

**Session Details**

<input type="text" value="Session Year"/>	<input type="text" value="County"/>	<input type="text" value="Party"/>
---	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------

**Biography Details**

<input type="text" value="Keyword"/>
--------------------------------------

**Additional Resources**

 [Speaker Facts](#)

 [Notes](#)

**Historical Member Biographies**

Search and view biographies for the members of Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

[House Archives](#)

**Historical Bill Text**

Search and view the text of prior session bills.

[Search Legislation](#)

## House Historical Biographies:



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Use the search form below, or browse this [alphabetical list of individuals who have served in the House of Pennsylvania](#).

In addition to the biographies found here, the House Archives maintains physical files of every Member of the PA House. These files include news clippings, newsletters, press releases, and other documents. [Contact the House Archives](#) to review the files.

First
Middle
Last

Name
Born
Died

Year
YYYY
YYYY

Gender
- Select Gender -

Leadership Position
- Select Leadership Position -

Served in
Year
District
County

Party
- Select Party -

Keyword

SEARCH
RESET

\* The information included in this database is presented as completely as possible. If you would like to suggest definitions or corrections, please [use this form to submit them](#).

**RELATED PAGES**

- » [Speakers of the House \(1682-present\)](#)
- » [Chief Clerks of the House \(1682-present\)](#)
- » [Parliamentarians of the House \(1931-present\)](#)
- » [Sergeant at Arms \(1712-present\)](#)
- » [Doorkeepers of the House \(1682-1915\)](#)
- » [Postmasters of the House \(1858-1958\)](#)
- » [Chaplains of the House \(1865-1993\)](#)
- » [Secretaries of the House \(1939-1979\)](#)

**LEGISLATION**

Search and view text of bills and resolutions from current and prior sessions here.

[Bills and Amendments](#)

Here is Speaker Joanna McClinton's biography. The sessions box shows all years the individual served in the position. In some cases, the individual will represent different counties in different years.



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**Joanna McClinton**  
HOME > PEOPLE > MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES > MEMBER BIOGRAPHY



**Sessions**

Year	Role	County	Party
2019	Representative	Minority Caucus Chairman	Democrat
2020	Representative	Minority Caucus Chairman	Democrat
2021	Representative	Minority Floor Leader	Democrat
2022	Representative	Minority Floor Leader	Democrat
2023	Representative	Majority Floor Leader, Speaker	Democrat
2024	Representative	Speaker	Democrat
2025	Representative	Speaker	Democrat

**Counties** [Delaware, Philadelphia](#)

# Biography

08/19/1982 -

**McCLINTON, Joanna Elizabeth**, a Representative from Delaware and Philadelphia Counties; born, August 19, 1982 in Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pa.; graduated, Grace Temple Christian Academy; B.A., *magna cum laude*, political science, leadership and global understanding, La Salle University, 2003; J.D., Villanova University School of Law, 2006; assistant public defender, Philadelphia (2006-2012); chief counsel, Pennsylvania State Senator Anthony Hardy Williams (2013-2014); elected, board of directors, La Salle University Alumni Association; president, La Salle University African American Alumni Association; elected as a Democrat to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in a Special Election, August 11, 2015; Sworn-In, August 25, 2015 to serve the remaining 2015 term; reelected to the House for 4 more consecutive terms; appointed, Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing (2017-2020); elected, Minority Caucus Chair (2019-2020); elected, Minority Floor Leader (2021-2022); appointed, Joint State Government Commission (2021-present); appointed, Legislative Data Processing Commission (2021-present); appointed, Pennsylvania Legislative Reapportionment Commission (2021); elected, Majority Floor Leader (January 3, 2023-February 28, 2023); elected, Speaker (February 28, 2023-present).

Within the Historical House Biographies, a search for women in the legislature, select Gender and then Female to retrieve 217 members:

Search Results					
<a href="#">HOME</a> > <a href="#">PEOPLE</a> > <a href="#">MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</a> > <a href="#">SEARCH RESULTS</a>					
SORT RESULTS BY: <input type="button" value="Name"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Ascending <input type="radio"/> Descending					
<a href="#">NARROW SEARCH</a>					
Name	Position	Session	Party	County	District
<a href="#">ACOSTA, LESLIE</a>		2015-2017	D	Philadelphia	197
					
<a href="#">ADAMS, ELLA LOUELLA COLLIER</a>		1927-1930	R	Fayette	0
					
<a href="#">ALEXANDER, JANE M.</a>		1965-1968	D	York	0
					
<a href="#">ANDERSON, SARAH A.</a>		1955-1972	D	Philadelphia	0,193
					
<small>* served non-consecutive terms</small>					
<small>&lt; Previous</small> <a href="#">1</a> <a href="#">2</a> <a href="#">3</a> <a href="#">4</a> <a href="#">5</a> <small>Next &gt;</small>					

In conclusion, the General Assembly website as well as books and electronic sources provide the necessary search tools to identify almost every Pennsylvania legislation from the colonial period to the present.

# Recounting Hopes and Hardships

By Britny Hommey

On October 1st 2025 the federal government went into shutdown mode. As of the time of this writing, November 7th, it's still shut down\*. In addition to the federal shutdown, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has missed the deadline of June 30, 2025 to pass the state budget for the Fiscal Year of 2025-26. The commonwealth also [missed the deadline in 2024](#) and 2023. The impasse impacts county governments, public schools, mass transit and other essential services.

\*Editor's Note: it is mentioned below, but let it be known that the government shutdown ended after 43 days - also, Pennsylvania passed the 2025-26 FY budget prior to this time of publication.

I recall seeing some worries going around social media where users were reporting that their 'Libby' app had not been working properly due to a litany of reasons surrounding the federal government shutdown - the issue with the Libby app had, in fact, been linked to the user's library and whether that library had continued/renewed its contractual service with Libby. Some libraries depend on certain funds to maintain collections or databases like Libby. Each library or system utilizes some form of e-book platform whether it's Hoopla, Libby, or CloudLibrary. There was an additional misconception that all libraries have Libby, when this we know, in fact, to not be the case.

Here are a few accounts as to how libraries have been impacted:

- At the federal level, some librarians have been furloughed since the beginning of October - this means that their pay is withheld until the government exits shutdown. Obviously, this can be concerning for those with little-to-no nest egg to help keep them afloat financially in the meantime. Other workers of the federal government have also been furloughed - like those who work for the National Park Service.
  - In Pennsylvania, around 102,000 federal workers were affected by the federal shutdown (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/government-shutdown-clock/> ).
- The Westmoreland County Law Library had been closed since at least October 15th, this was due to the state budget impasse.
- At the District Center in Beaver County, they've had to use library funds to cover District expenses since July 1st. They have:  
"suspended digital and print purchases for district collections, suspended renewals for county-wide databases, and started to slow program spending. The database providers have promised to keep their services live on our website with the understanding that we will pay when our funds are secured. Additionally, the district is holding off on purchasing new staff computers and updating the copying/printing contract - which should have been completed in September."

Other districts have had it much harder. Several ran out of funding in August and September and have been using loans as a stopgap. These loans carry interest which will be taken from their designated state funding - they will not receive additional funding to cover the interest from those loans.

On the bright side, this library [B.F. Jones Memorial Library] has had a great in-pouring of food and personal care item donations for the little free pantry. The pantry sponsor, Little Free Pantry from House of Prayer, has also seen significant donations due to the cut to SNAP. We are trying our best to keep all of our services available through these troubling times, but it does create great stress for our patrons and the library's staff."

- Kristen Janci, Library Director & District Administrator

- As of November 13th, the federal government has reopened - ending the longest period of shutdown (43 days) in this nation's history - and Pennsylvania has passed the state budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026 - *with* a \$5 million increase in the public library subsidy *and* a \$400,000 increase for library services to LAMP! For those who reached out to their legislators, thank you, thank you! Advocacy takes everyone.
- Current AALL President Jenny Silbiger expressed her support to fellow Government Law Librarians in the GLL-SIS forum with the following message:

As we near the end of October, I wanted to take a moment to reach out to our government librarian community, especially our friends and colleagues in the federal sector who are directly affected by the shutdown. Over the past week, I've been in touch with several of our federal members. Many shared that they are managing as best they can under difficult circumstances, doing what they can to ease the strain. Some are working from home to save on commuting costs. I know these steps can help a little, but they don't take away the uncertainty and worry that come with a shutdown. I also know that not everyone has these options, and I wanted to send a message of care and support to each of you.

I remember from my own time in federal service (2013–2014) that messages like this might not reach everyone when offices are closed. If you can, I encourage you to update your AALL email address to a personal one so that you can stay connected with your colleagues and with our community. Times like these can feel isolating, and it helps to stay connected where we can - with family, with friends, and with one another. Please know that your GLL-SIS colleagues and the larger AALL community are thinking of you and stand with you. I share this as a longtime member of GLL-SIS and as your AALL president. You are valued, you are appreciated, and your well-being is very much on our minds. If you would like to share how you're doing or if there is any way we can support you, please don't hesitate to reach out. (Jenny Silbiger, October 2025)

There is hope and support in each other. I leave this article with a message of strength to keep moving forward.

# From the Shelf

A Selection of Recent Reads<sup>1</sup>

- *Katabasis* by R.F. Kuang (2025)
  - Kuang's latest dark academia fiction takes two graduate students on a journey to Hell. If you've read *Babel* (2024), this book has a similar beautiful prose and is full of literary references. Magic is very real with rigid rules and preferences over magic chalk.
- *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* by Cal Newport (2016)
  - This nonfiction text has a wide-range of issues relating to knowledge work. In Deep Work, author and professor Cal Newport flips the narrative on impact in a connected age. Instead of arguing distraction is bad, he instead celebrates the power of its opposite. Dividing this book into two parts, he first makes the case that in almost any profession, cultivating a deep work ethic will produce massive benefits. He then presents a rigorous training regimen, presented as a series of four "rules," for transforming your mind and habits to support this skill.
- *Stop Pursuing Greatness & Do This Instead* by Cal Newport & Kendra Adachi, Deep Questions Podcast, December 5, 2024
  - For those who are a fan of Cal Newport - he did an interview with Kendra Adachi, author of *The Lazy Genius Way* (2021). Kendra discusses the "lazy genius" philosophy of work, the PLAN framework (Prepare, Live, Adjust, and Notice), and encourages flexibility over perfection. Needing to know when and how to pivot is vital to planning. "Plans should guide you, not control you."
- *Die, My Love* by Ariana Harwicz (2017)
  - A woman battles her postpartum demons in this modern book set in the French countryside - craving freedom whilst feeling trapped, yearning for family life, but at the same time wanting to burn the entire house down. This book has a raw intensity that looks at motherhood, womanhood, the banality of love, the terrors of desire, and the inexplicable brutality of another person carrying your heart forever.
  - While reading I kept thinking back to Kristen Stewart's portrayal of Princess Diana in the movie, *Spencer* - specifically, the pearl necklace dinner table scene.
- *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller (2011)
  - You may *think* you know the titular character's story, but not told like this. Come get your heart crushed as you know the inevitable end of Achilles.

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<sup>1</sup> If you would like to suggest a book you have read recently (fiction, nonfiction, audiobook, etc.) send an email to Britiny Hommey; include in the subject line: **WPLLA Newsletter Book Suggestion**.

# Last Call for Comment

## Job Opportunities:

- [Penn State Dickinson Law](#) invites applications for an innovative and collaborative Law Librarian to join the library team at the Law School's University Park location. This is a tenure-track faculty appointment, with tenure administered through the Penn State University Libraries.

Founded in 1834, Penn State Dickinson Law is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's first law school and one of the oldest in the nation. Fully accredited by the ABA and a member of the AALS since 1912, Dickinson Law's mission is to educate and train lawyers equipped to excel in an evolving legal profession. The Law School is guided by core values of teaching, scholarship, service, and community, which define our mission and culture.

**Position Overview:** The successful candidate will provide expert legal research support, teach legal research to first-year law students, and collaborate closely with faculty, staff, and students to advance the Law School's academic mission. This position offers the opportunity to engage meaningfully in the Law School's clinics, outreach programs, and faculty governance.

**Key Responsibilities** include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provide reference and research assistance to law students, faculty, administrators, and the public (in person, via email, and phone).
- Serve as library liaison to various law school clinics and programs.
- Develop and implement outreach efforts to students, faculty, and the broader community.
- Teach introductory legal research in the required first-year curriculum and contribute to other instructional opportunities.
- Participate in collection development and resource curation.
- Create and maintain research guides (LibGuides) and other digital resources.
- Contribute to creating a diverse, inclusive, and student-centered library environment.
- Collaborate on library communications, including social media and website content.
- Participate fully as a member of the law faculty, including service on faculty committees.

## Requirements

### Qualifications

- Required: J.D. from an ABA-accredited law school (or equivalent non-U.S. law degree).
- Preferred: M.L.S. (or equivalent) from an ALA-accredited institution. Substantial experience in legal research may substitute for this requirement.
- Demonstrated knowledge of legal research databases and resources.
- Strong interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced academic setting.

Applications should be submitted through Penn State's Jobs Website. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and resume or CV, with a brief statement indicating how they would contribute to creating and maintaining an inclusive and respectful environment for all. Please share with your networks. Please contact Laura Ax-Fultz, Associate Dean for Library and Information Services, or Becky Mattson, Director of Operations and Scholarship, with any questions.

- The [William A. Wise Law Library](#) at the University of Colorado Boulder seeks candidates for the position of Collection Services and Research Librarian.

Sitting at the base of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Boulder, Colorado offers an unmatched blend of natural beauty and vibrant culture. Known for its world-class outdoor activities, thriving food scene, and dynamic arts and cultural community, Boulder provides an exceptional quality of life and is just a short drive from Denver.

The full position description is posted [here](#). This position enjoys a hybrid work schedule, and the salary range is \$90,000-\$110,000. Applicants must have a J.D. from an ABA-accredited law school, a M.L.S. / M.I.S from an ALA-accredited institution, and two years of law library experience.

Applications are due by **Monday, January 5, 2026**.

#### AALL Conference Quick Look:

- For those even minutely interested in attending next year's conference, I've linked AALL's information [here](#).
  - **Date + Location:** July 18 - 21, 2026 in Cleveland, OH. This runs from Saturday - Tuesday.
    - Conveniently, Cleveland is roughly a two-hour drive from Pittsburgh, PA!
    - If there are members who wish to carpool, utilize the listserv - whether you're going for 1 or 2 days or the full conference, having a conference buddy can make a world of difference. There will be additional reminders as the date gets closer, but it's good to start planning early.
  - Options for lodging will open in early 2026. Additionally, any proposals that were submitted will be receiving their responses in January.

**Happy Holidays!**



- Happy Holidays from the DC Court of Appeals and Libby (kikstep mascot)!

# WPLLA Contacts

Members: consider becoming an active part of our organization by assisting with the newsletter, or serving on our social media team. We promote our profession every day through educational events, forums, social events, and more.

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